

# THE WORKS

OF

## JOHN ANGELL JAMES

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN  
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM

EDITED BY HIS SON.

Vol. XIV.

CONTROVERSIAL.

LONDON HAMILTON ADAMS & SON.  
BIRMINGHAM HUDSON & SON.

MDCCCLXII.



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**Quinta Press**

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry,  
Shropshire, England, SY10 7RN

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## PREFACE.

IN this volume will be found all that the Author printed on the subject of nonconformity, and it may seem a large amount of polemics; but the preface to the ninth edition of "Christian Fellowship" was simply a defence of that work; "Dissent and the Church of England" was chiefly a retort on an assailant in his own style; and the "Pastor's Address on the Principles of Dissent," is a didactic, uncontroversial statement of principles.

Some may wish that these pieces had not been inserted, but it seemed to the Editor that an Author's writings in defence of himself and his opinions could not be omitted in a collective edition of his works, unless he had himself retracted them, or unless the omission were dictated by consideration for his reputation. That any change occurred in the Author's principles, or in his feelings in respect to what he had written in their defence, is disproved by the circumstance that the passages complained of in "Christian Fellowship" are to be found (as they were slightly altered in consequence of the criticism in the "British Review") in the abridged edition reprinted in the last year of his life. On the other hand, the Editor considers that the spirit and temper which the Author preserved throughout the controversy, notwithstanding the many sources of irritation connected with it, are among the most striking proofs of his natural amiability, and of the degree in which he was enabled by the grace of God to practise that christian love to the observance of which he was so publicly pledged. And as much success attended his efforts as is often secured in similar contests; his own party were of opinion that he had the victory, and it was understood that the Bishop of London thought "Dissent and the Church of England" of so much importance as to offer ordination and a good living to a layman who wrote an answer to it.

It may seem a more serious defect in the arrangement here adopted that repetitions are more easily noticed in the tracts thus brought together; but no further omission than that at p. 197 has appeared necessary in them. For as they were written for different purposes, though the principles and illustrations may for the most part be the same, there is great difference in the manner of stating them; and no piece, it seemed to the Editor, could be spared.

The preface above referred to appears here instead of in the "Christian Life," and the two pages in that work referring to the Church of England would have been transferred with it, if they had not been necessary to the author's argument there; for the Editor would gladly have removed from every other volume than this every passage which would be distasteful to an episcopalian.

The Editor has inserted here from the history of Nonconformity in Birmingham the sketch of its history in the nation. The account of the Author's congregation is reserved for the autobiographical volume; while that of the other congregations in the town is altogether omitted, and the short descriptions of the chief denominations in England having nothing of a controversial nature will be found in the miscellaneous volume.

The petition to parliament and the address to the Queen will show the manner in which the author practically dealt with the questions there alluded to.

The larger pastoral address on the papal aggression will be found to contain much that bears on matters discussed in the tracts on dissent.

It is necessary to notice that "dissent," in many passages of this volume means "Congregational principles," which are held by almost all English "Dissenters," as distinguished from the "Methodists."

It was a bolder step to subjoin to the author's controversial writings his essay on Christian Union. But this has been done in the full confidence that he so advocated, or rather defended, his opinions on church government, as to give the great party whom he combated no ground for standing aloof from him, or for upbraiding him as inconsistent when he exhorted all trinitarian protestants to own each other as brethren. What he always desired and strove to bring about was unity, not uniformity; what he always condemned was sectarianism, not denominationalism; he knew that in the present

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state of the church there must be many christian denominations in every country in which men are free to think for themselves, and he was most anxious that those whom he addressed should acknowledge and exhibit the brotherhood which really exists between them. It appeared to him that the systems of diocesan prelacy and state endowment of religion were incompatible with the unity which he sought, and for that reason he wrote against them.

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**DISSENT AND THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND;**

OR

**A DEFENCE**

OF

THE PRINCIPLES OF NONCONFORMITY

CONTAINED IN "THE CHURCH MEMBERS GUIDE" IN REPLY TO A  
PAMPHLET  
ENTITLED "THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND DISSENT."

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## PREFACE.

IT is now nearly nine years since I published a small volume, entitled, "Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member's Guide." which was intended, of course, for those whose views of church government accorded with my own. It is a manual of duties, rather than a synopsis of arguments, and was designed to be, what it certainly is, more practical than controversial. An introductory chapter contains, what I should have supposed no one could have deemed out of place in such a work, a compendious description of the nature of a christian church, that is, of the community for the members of which the work was designed. That involved, of necessity, a statement of the principles of nonconformity. Shortly after the book appeared, it was reviewed in a quarterly periodical, since defunct, entitled, "The British Review;" which, during its short-lived career, was chiefly supported, I believe, by what are called the evangelical clergymen of the church of England. The critique seemed to me at the time to claim some notice, but knowing that the work which contained it had but a limited circulation, and wishing to avoid a controversy for which my numerous and important engagements allowed me little leisure, I let it pass. Acting, however, upon the sentiment of the proverb that wisdom is to be learnt even from an enemy, I altered, in the subsequent editions, the wording of several of the reasons of dissent, which, I confess, were, not

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originally stated with sufficient precision; and I also obliterated several passages, against which objections were taken, as being sarcastic, contemptuous and bitter.

Last year a reprint of this critique appeared, designed, as the title page informs us, for gratuitous distribution; and I find it has been industriously pushed into circulation in various directions, and especially in this town and neighbourhood. Still I was unwilling to continue a discussion which might in any degree endanger the good feeling and friendly intercourse which are happily increasing between churchmen and dissenters in this town. Moreover, as certain works of a very extraordinary character have lately been published by clerical members of the establishment, I felt myself relieved from the necessity of a reply to my anonymous opponent, who, in much that he has advanced, is answered by the works of the Rev. Messrs. Acaster, Nihill, Cox, and Riland. At length, however, this Protean critique has assumed a third shape, and is now in the arena, corrected and enlarged, in the form of a two shilling pamphlet. Here then my silence must be broken. Quiescence would now be construed into defeat or cowardice.

I have just cause of complaint against the candour and equity of my opponent, for permitting two reprints of his critique to be circulated without even noticing the alterations introduced into those editions of my book which have been published subsequently to the appearance of his remarks in the *British Review*. When concessions of inadvertency have been made, when expressions partaking of severity have been withdrawn, is it fair, is it honourable, still to send forth a pamphlet founded in part on the matter thus surrendered? Let any man of candour now look through the volume, and

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affirm if he can, that there is one particle more of severity or acrimony than the mildest writer could be expected to employ on any controversial subject whatever. I fearlessly assert that a more incorrect impression never was produced, by any objector, as to the tone and temper of a book, than has been made as to the spirit of my volume as it now exists by this critique from the *British Review*. I have been immeasurably more severe against my own denomination, than against the established church. If my work contained any thing offensive to the members of the church of England, they had their opportunity of retaliation by the original publication of the article in question, and I have had mine for revision and alteration. Here the matter might have rested; but a zeal as injudicious as it is uncandid, has determined to revive the subject. I make these remarks to vindicate myself against the imputation of disturbing the peace of the religious public by unnecessary controversy.

It is the infelicity of dissenters, if it may be called so, that they cannot state or defend their own principles, without impugning those of the church of England. The terms, "dissent" and "nonconformity," by which as separatists from the national establishment, we are designated, do not express our theological opinions, and our relation to the New Testament, but our views of church government and our position in reference to the diocesan episcopacy set up by law. Hence the very explanation of our indentifying names, much more the defence of our principles, necessarily places us in opposition to the establishment as such, invests the most candid of our statements with the semblance of controversy, and imparts to the mildest defence the appearance of aggression. It is impossible not to observe a morbid

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sensitiveness on this subject on the part of many churchmen. In their ardent, tender, and sincere zeal for their church polity, they lose all forbearance for those who dissent from it, and become irritable, petulant, and intolerable towards them, as if it was insolence, almost irreligion in them to justify their conduct. The privilege of defence, much more of attack must be all on one side. Is this quite fair?

It is astonishing to perceive how blind men sometimes are to their motives, and the qualities of their actions. I never dreamt when I was writing my book of being otherwise than candid. I now see that in some few particulars I erred on this point. The Reviewer in his preface to his pamphlet says he hopes there is "nothing in its spirit unchristian, or in its style un-courteous." Strange! But perhaps he will think otherwise another day. As for myself, I feel it neither difficult nor degrading, to express thus publicly my regret, if in the course of my sermons, my conversation, or my publications, I have uttered in the heat of the moment a single syllable calculated to give pain, beyond what was necessary, to any member of the church of England, or to the member of any other communion on earth; and I will endeavour, by God's help, in this defence of my principles, to avoid every thing that the most rigid censor can with truth declare to be incompatible with the courtesy of a gentleman, the charity of a christian, or the dignity of a minister of religion. I am purposed, that in this respect, neither my tongue nor my pen shall transgress. If I have no arguments, I will not supply the lack of them by sarcasms or jokes, which not only do not convince the judgment, but help to close it against whatever has a tendency to accomplish that object. To mortify an opponent, and to convince him



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are different ends, and are reached by different means. We ought all to be anxious to diffuse the spirit of charity, as well as the light of truth: and whoever has truth without charity, it is to him at least, of little worth. If we defended and propagated the truth, as well as held it, in love, our controversies about its nature, while they neither injured our own personal piety, nor the character of religion generally, would be of great service to the cause of our common Christianity. To borrow a beautiful allusion of Milton's, we should then imitate the search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, and as the inquisitive friends of the dismembered frame of truth, we should go up and down in different ways, gathering up limb by limb as we could find them, till at length every joint shall be brought together, and all shall be moulded into a form of immortal loveliness and perfection. Against the severe ordeal of hyper-criticism, to which the literary character of my work has been subjected, I shall enter no protest and raise no complaint; neither shall I set up any extenuation of the faults of my composition. To an elaborate and classical style I make no pretension; I write for christians not for critics, though I would be the last man to despise the vocation of the latter. I shall always appreciate their corrections according to their justness, but the correctors according to their candour. My diction may be redundant, and my metaphors incongruous: but what has that to do with the question between the church and dissent? I quite agree with the Reviewer that some of my figures cannot be justified: a wild imagination is tamed with as much difficulty, and often with as little success, as a voluble tongue. Vicious metaphors may be forgiven in so humble an author as I am, when Blair found them in Addison's writings, and Johnson in Milton's. I shall

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defend my principles, therefore, but not my similes: the controversy is not about rhetoric, but religion: it is a question not of tropes, but of church government.

Let no one complain of the method I have adopted in selecting so largely from clerical works, and making the advocates of the church of England her assailants. This is but an equitable employment of the argumentum ad hominem. My opponent selects from my volume admissions of the practical abuses of their principles that exist among dissenters, and bringing them together, says, "look, here is a picture of dissent." I, therefore, turn his own weapon upon himself, and having given large extracts from the writings of churchmen, which admit the existence of evils in their communion, say, "look, here is a picture of the church of England." The only objection that can be brought against my extracts is, that they are more numerous, and, as I think, more conclusive, than those employed against me. May this mutual exposure of opposing evils do us both good.

It is not desirable, nor is it necessary, for me to meet the Reviewer in all the minor and less important points of attack. It would be an easy task to select instances in which he has, unintentionally perhaps, perverted my meaning, charged me with opinions and feelings that I disavow, employed jokes unworthy the seriousness of a theological controvertist, and had recourse to sophistry instead of sound and legitimate argumentation. These things do not affect the main question, and the discussion of them would introduce into this pamphlet more of petty controversy than I wish to bring before the public attention, which I feel far more anxious to fix upon the general merits of the subject, rather than upon the mere logical acumen of the disputants. And after all it is not

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merely by such controversies as ours, that the great question will be ultimately decided; they do but float upon the surface of a current, that is setting in, in my opinion, steadily against the church of England. The course of events is against her, and some of those events of a character to yield no gratification to protestant dissenters. As a generous dissenter, this is not the time that I should have selected to make an attack upon a system which its own friends seem to fear will prove a falling cause: but I am compelled to come forward. The conflict of opinion in reference to all religious subjects, is perhaps but beginning, and nothing but that which can stand the test of Scripture will return in safety from the strife. Truth is in the field, give it room and time to bring its forces to bear, and fall who or what may, her victory is certain, and her triumph will be ultimately complete. Towards the Reviewer personally, I cherish no feelings but those of good will and christian kindness; and although he has dealt out to me a full measure of severity, I shall return it only with my prayers for his abundant success in the ministry which he has received from the Lord. As a christian, capable I trust of rising far above the low grounds of sectarian feelings and party spirit into the more elevated and healthy region of christian truth and charity, I delight in piety wherever I find it, whatever may be its denominational costume, or its party dialect; and witnessing with ineffable joy and gratitude the increase of truly pious and devoted clergymen within the pale of the establishment, I most cordially say, "grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." We are all one in Christ. There is but one church after all, and its essential unity cannot be destroyed. Within the comprehension of that

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holy community the truly pious, of every denomination, will at last be found, but neither the hypocrite nor the mere nominalist of any one.

Deeply anxious do I feel to abstain from every mode of expression that would be offensive to any one, especially to the clergy of this town, with many of whom, it is my happiness to live in habits of friendly intercourse and christian co-operation in those great objects that admit of union without compromise. I should much regret if this discussion were for a moment to sever the few ties by which, amidst some differences, we are held in sawed concord, and enabled to prove the truth of Lord Bacon's aphorism, "that unity and uniformity are two things." With these brethren I have no contention, beyond what my conscience compels me to maintain with the system, which they as conscientiously uphold. Pious, zealous, and successful, and some of them growing hoary amidst scenes of useful labour, they are the objects at once of my affection and esteem. I would imitate their virtues, pray for their success, and retain their friendship, although I not only dissent from their communion, but thus publicly state the grounds of my separation from them.

Whether the Reviewer or any one else will think this pamphlet of sufficient importance to be entitled to a reply, it is impossible for me to conjecture: but having defended my principles, I shall, in all probability, leave the controversy, should it be continued, to others who have more leisure, more health, and more talents for polemics than myself, and return to those works of peace and labours of love, which the interests of my flock demand, and which are far more congenial with my own predilections, than the warfare of opinion.

Birmingham, October, 1830.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF NONCONFORMITY, AND THE ALLEGED INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THOSE PRIN- CIPLES AND THE PRACTICE OF DISSENTERS.

FOR the regulation of all our affairs social civil and domestic, we need a law; and for the decision of all our disputes, an arbiter. This applies to religion as truly as to any other subject. What then in reference to this momentous subject is to guide our opinions, to direct our practice, to relieve our doubts, and to decide our controversies? It must be either reason, which is manifestly insufficient; tradition, which is precarious and uncertain; human authority, which is incompetent and unauthorized; or the word of God, which is sufficient, and in fact is granted for this purpose. The beautiful language of the great Chillingworth fully expresses the opinion of Protestant Dissenters on the rule of faith.

“By the religion of Protestants,” he says, “I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the confession of Augsburg, or Geneva; nor the Catechism of Heidelberg; nor the Articles of the Church of England; no, nor the harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is, the Bible. The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the

religion of Protestants! Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion; but as a matter of faith and religion, neither can they, with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption.

“I, for my part, after a long, (and as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon this rock only. I see plainly, and with mine own eyes, that there are popes against popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves, a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age, the church of one age against the church of another age. Traditional interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found. No tradition, but only of Scripture, can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved either to have been brought in in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon. This, therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe. This I will profess. According to this I will live, and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my life, though I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me. Propose to me anything out of this book, and require whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this, God hath said so, therefore it is true. In other things, I will take no man’s liberty of judgment from him, neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse man, nor the worse Christian; I will love no man the less for differing in opinion from me. And what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that man ought not to require any more of any man than this, to believe the scripture to be God’s word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it.”

In Conformity with these sentiments, I stated in my book that the following are the first three principles of Protestant Nonconformity: I, The all-sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, as a rule of faith and practice: II, The consequent denial of the right of

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legislatures, and ecclesiastical conventions, to impose any rites, ceremonies, observances, or interpretations of the word of God, upon our belief and practice: III, the unlimited and inalienable right of every man to expound the word of God for himself, and to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. "But," says the Reviewer, "the first, respecting the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the third, concerning the right of every man to expound the word of God for himself, are the recognized principles of our own church." In proof of this we are referred to the sixth article, and the first homily. By leaving out the second principle which I have stated, and not claiming it for his church, he tacitly confesses that she has a right to impose rites, ceremonies, and observances. Indeed this right is claimed in the twentieth article, which says, "The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." Now whatever be meant by the church to which this power belongs, (for I really do not quite understand whether the defunct convocation or the three estates of the realm be intended,) the claim appears to me, to be opposed both to the sufficiency and the exclusive authority of Scripture, and no less so to the right of private judgment. If the church has a power to decree ceremonies, this is an authority distinct from, and added to, the word of God, and obedience must be due to it, under the threat of some punishment for non-compliance. But where is the scriptural charter of this authority? Let it be shewn where and when this power was granted. The ceremonies so decreed must be found in the word of God or not; if they are found there, they are already enjoined by Christ; if not, then the Scriptures are not a sufficient rule, for in the

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matter decreed, they are declared to be deficient. But it will be said perhaps that the power extends only to things indifferent, that is to such as are neither enjoined nor forbidden. If these things are indifferent, that is a reason why they ought not to be enjoined; for is it not a most arbitrary use of power, and the way to bring it into contempt, to employ it in matters of indifference? And who is to be the judge of their being matters of indifference? The people on whom these matters are enjoined; then where is the power of the church? The church; then she may go on to multiply these ceremonies, till her service is as much burdened with ritual as that of Rome. She once enjoined by her supreme authority, the reading of the book of sports, may she do this again? It will be said No, because it is contrary to Scripture. But who is to be the judge of this? Herself? Then resistance is illegal. The people? Then what becomes of her authority? So also with the power to decide controversies. She must decide according to Scripture, but who is to pronounce upon the agreement of her decisions with the Scripture? If this right is hers, then the right of private judgment is denied: if the people after all are to judge of her decisions, then her power is a nullity. "Thus while the Scriptures are professedly acknowledged to be the only rule, this rule must needs be determined and defined by another rule, which other rule is itself to be tried by the first and only rule. Matchless paradox!" Hence we see how well founded are the opinions and gratitude of a zealous defender of the church, who in a sermon lately published says, "The right of private interpretation, thanks be to God, never has been, and I trust never will be held by the Church of England. I will just observe



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before I quit this subject, that she tacitly condemns those liberal and latitudinarian divines, who in their appetite for popular applause, foist upon the public their crude conjectures for irrefragable truths, and scruple not to belie the principles of the church, while they hold the preferments of the establishment.”\* This it must be confessed is speaking out. But whom are we to believe, Mr Hook or the Reviewer? The former certainly appears in this particular to be most in accordance with the articles of the church.

This is proved also by a reference to her Canons, which, the second to the twelfth inclusive, declare that all persons, who either deny the king’s ecclesiastical supremacy, or the Church of England to be an apostolical church, or affirm that the Book of Common Prayer contains any thing repugnant to the Scriptures,† or that the thirty-nine articles are in any part erroneous, or that the rites of the church are superstitious, or that the offices of Archbishop, Bishop, Deans, and Archdeacons are contrary to the word of God, or who separate from the church are ipso facto excommunicated, &c. Now were these canons ever annulled? If not, they are still the law of the church, and do most clearly and explicitly deny the right of private judgment. And is not the language of the thirty-fourth Article to the same effect?

“Whosoever through his private judgment, willing and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and ordained and be

\* A Sermon preached in Trinity Church, Coventry, by the Rev. W. F. Hook, A.M.

† Query. Are not Mr Riland and some others, by the fourth canon of their own church, declared to be in a state of excommunication, for what they have affirmed of the book of common prayer?

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approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as lie that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate.”

Nor is it enough to say that the church has granted toleration, and thus suspended the operation of its canons and articles, for this is incorrect. It is the civil power that has granted toleration, not the church. Toleration by a church which prescribes a creed and ritual, and formularies for the nation, and enjoins them with unrevoked penalties, seems to me a solecism. The church may be tolerant in its spirit, (which a very large portion of it is in an eminent degree,) while at the same time as a body corporate, it may be and indeed is intolerant in its constitution.

Hooker has observed, “The testimonies of God are true; the testimonies of God are perfect; the testimonies of God are sufficient for that purpose for which they are given. Therefore accordingly we do receive them. We do not think that in them he hath omitted any thing needful unto his purpose, and left this intent to be accomplished by our devising.” Now this is the first article in the creed of dissent, but how does it comport with a claim of power for the church to decree rites and ceremonies? A claim founded on a tacit admission of defect as to rites and ceremonies in the scriptures.

But I now go on to reply to the charge of inconsistency brought against Dissenters, of acting in numerous instances in opposition to their own principles. Suppose that this charge were well sustained, what does it prove? Nothing more than that they need to be called back from their wanderings, and to be admonished to cleave more closely to their guide. But the

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charge is not well founded, and rests only on a misconception, perversion, or forgetfulness, of our avowed sentiments. Our views are these: The New Testament contains in its recorded facts such general principles on the subject of church government and discipline, as are sufficiently explicit for the guidance of all who are willing to take God's word for their rule; principles which need no addition, allow of no alteration, and demand universal submission. With these such of our usages as cannot plead express command or example ought to be in accordance, and to the application of these all our customs must be directed. Whatever we do must be an act of obedience to the authority of Christ, as the only king and head of the church, and designed to carry into effect some law, which he has enjoined as the supreme and exclusive legislator. We deny all right to decree, all power to impose; and feel that we have only one master, who is the Lord that bought us; and only one rule to guide us, which is the word of God.

The general principles for which we contend are as follows: Christian churches are congregations of faithful men, united by voluntary consent, and for the purpose of mutual edification; the only officers of such churches are bishops and deacons; the former being not the overseers of many ministers, but each the pastor of one church; and the latter being appointed to take care of the poor; these officers are to be chosen by the people among whom they are to serve; the pastors are to be supported by the free-will offerings of the people who enjoy the benefit of their labours; the government and discipline of a church are entirely within its own control; the reception and exclusion of members belong

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to the church, and not exclusively to the pastor. These are our principles which we think are to be found in the word of God, and may be defended by the practices of the earliest christian churches. To the application of these principles we wish all our customs and usages to be directed.

In carrying these principles into effect, it must be expected that a considerable diversity of opinion in minor things will exist. And here the Reviewer has confounded two things so essentially distinct, as a diverse mode of executing the same general law, and the rejection of it. We contend for the right of private judgment, which in many cases leads to a different result; the general law is acknowledged, although there is a contrariety of opinion as to the best mode of carrying it into effect. One or two instances may serve for the sake of illustration. It is our general principle that the people should choose their own minister; but we differ as to the best mode of applying this to practice, some thinking that the whole body, subscribers as well as communicants, should have the right of choice; others, that only the communicants should have this privilege. Again, it is our general principle, that the church should receive members on satisfactory evidence of their personal religion; but we differ as to the manner in which that evidence should come before us. This will be a sufficient answer to all that has been advanced by my opponent, and will defend us from the charge of inconsistency, which he supposes he has proved from my pages. We have essential agreement combined with circumstantial difference. As to what is said about "lord deacons," "chairmen," "presidents," "influential members," &c. &c, constituting other officers than

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those we admit to be scriptural, it was unworthy of his candour to write it, and would be only a waste of my time and labour to reply to it.

Dissenters do not pretend to find scripture precedent or precept for all their usages, any further than as those usages are involved in and deduced from general principles, or are necessary to carry them into effect. Some things (such, for instance, as the frequency and order of our public services on the sabbath,) are admitted by them to be truly indifferent, but then they are not considered essential, or imposed upon others as terms of communion.

“The proposition that everything relating to the worship of God, which is not commanded or implied in a command, is forbidden, presents, when rightly understood, the only satisfactory conclusion on which we can rest. As those co-necessary, natural circumstances which adhere to every action, are virtually comprehended in the precept, which is the basis of the instituted duty; so whatever circumstances considered strictly as means of discharging what is positively enjoined conduce to the more decent and impressive performance of the duty, are strictly consonant with the divine command, are permissively, although not specifically involved in it. On the contrary, whatever does not partake of the strictly subordinate character of means, or if the term may be allowed, does not come under the description of modal circumstances of obedience; whatever is added as a moral or religious circumstance, with a view of constituting the action more efficient, or more acceptable to the Lord of worship, is to be condemned as superstition.”\*

Thus far do Dissenters go in admitting things indifferent, but then it must be ever kept in view, that matters of acknowledged indifference are not terms of communion, or considered to be essential to religious actions: for to use the words of Stillingfleet, “what charter hath Christ given the church, to bind up men more than himself hath done?” And we may carry the question still

\* Conder on Nonconformity, vol. ii, page 349.

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further, and add, to bind up itself? From what has been said, it may be seen what is intended by the great fundamental principle of dissent, I mean the sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Scripture. This is so far sufficient, that nothing is essential to the performance of individual, or of social worship, which is not enjoined by express command, or implied in some precept, or set before us by example: and it is exclusively authoritative, inasmuch as nothing but what is so enjoined or implied can be lawfully taught by any human authority whatever. "It is our only rule, both in the sense of a law, and standard; a rule sufficient as opposed to all deficiency; exclusive as relates to the divine authority from which it emanates: universal, as embracing all the principles of human actions, and ultimate, as admitting of no appeal. For all religious purposes it is literally the only rule, because the divine command constitutes the only reason, as well as the only law of religious actions; and there can therefore be no scope for other rules, except with regard to the mere outward circumstantial of religious duties, which do not come within the obligations of any law."\*

If we attempt to carry the principle of indifference beyond what have been called the modal circumstances of religious actions, and make it apply otherwise than to the means of carrying into effect principles clearly inculcated, and laws expressly laid down, and claim a power for the church to decree rites and ceremonies in themselves partaking of a religious character, such for instance as the cross and sponsors in baptism, the posture of kneeling at the Lord's Supper, or bowing at the name of Jesus, or turning at particular parts of the service

\* Conder.

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towards the east, we open a door for endless innovations on the simplicity of christian worship. The power that may decree one rite or ceremony, may decree ten; if ten, a hundred. If the English church may decree the cross in baptism, the Roman church undoubtedly may decree the oil, the salt, and the spittle; if the former may decree the rite of turning to the east, what is to prevent the latter from decreeing the use of holy water; if in one case it be only a decent circumstance to decree the consecration of churches and burial grounds, what makes it unlawful in the other to use the same ceremony in reference to vestments, bells, and water? Where is this practice of multiplying uncommanded ceremonies to end?

If in the view of a member of the Church of England one thing be necessary, to render the worship of God more instructive by emblem, or more conducive to effect, another of a more gorgeous kind may be equally necessary in the view of a catholic. The point between doing things decently and in order and superstition can on this principle never be defined. I think the members of the Church of England who support the power claimed by their articles to decree rites and ceremonies, can consistently bring no other charge against the Church of Rome, in reference to this matter, than that of carrying her liberty to a greater length, and indulging in a more splendid and ceremonial taste. It is a question of degree, not of fact.

It will perhaps be replied to this reasoning, that as the Church of England legislates only for her own members, and dissenters claim the same privilege for themselves, they cannot with any consistency or propriety object to the exercise of such a power on the part of the establishment. But this is a mistake, dissenters claim

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no power of legislation whatever, no not even over themselves; it is their principle that Christ is the only legislator, and the New Testament the only statute book, and that no church has a right even to decree for itself any rites and ceremonies whatever, or to enjoin any but such as are to be found in the word of God. Whatever is added by human authority to the ritual prescribed by scripture precept or example, partakes in our view, of the character of will-worship, invades the prerogative of Christ as the only king of his church, and implies, as far as the matter in question is concerned, a deficiency in the New Testament as the sole rule of faith and practice.



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**CHAPTER II.**  
THE MEANING OF THE WORD CHURCH, AND THE  
LAWFULNESS AND BENEFIT OF ECCLESIASTICAL  
ESTABLISHMENTS.

I HAVE asserted in my book, that the word “church” is employed by the writers of the New Testament in two, and but two senses; in some passages of scripture it signifies the aggregate of the people of God, of every age and nation, the whole company of the redeemed; and in others, it means a single congregation, associated in the bonds of christian fellowship, and accustomed to assemble for religious worship in one place. In the former sense we read of “the church of the first-born,” “the church which Christ hath purchased with his own blood;” and in the latter, “the church of Corinth, the church of the Thessalonians, the churches of Galatia.” The Reviewer thinks that he has found no less than five different meanings of this term, and having enumerated them remarks, “Our readers may now decide whether the word has never more than two significations, and whether Mr. James be a fit person to quote and interpret scripture.” A few paragraphs will indeed decide this matter. I shall consider my opponent’s five meanings of the word, though not exactly in the order in which he has arranged them.

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1. "The word signifies all the people of God, of all climes and ages, from the beginning to the end of the world." In this view of the term we are agreed.

2. "It signifies the faithful Christians of some one district or province." "The church of the Thessalonians," 2 Thess. i. 1. "Ye Philippians know also that no church communicated with me but ye only." Phil. iv. 15. I am surprised that it should have escaped the Reviewer's recollection, for he certainly could not be ignorant of the fact, that Thessalonica and Philippi were cities, and neither districts nor provinces. His second meaning of the term then, as signifying a district or provincial church, must be given up, as contrary to the passages he quotes.

3. "The governors of the church." "Tell it to the church." Matt, xviii. 17- But this is an obvious begging of the question. By what argument can it be proved that the church means the governors of the church. He has yet to prove his assertion from scripture. We might as well contend that a nation means the governors of the nation; that when the English nation, for instance, is spoken of, it means the parliament. This signification must therefore be abandoned.

4. "The Christians of one family, who with a few other Christians were wont to meet with God in a house." "The church in their house." Rom. xvi. 5. There are other instances of a church in a house. 1 Cor. xvi. 19, &c. Mr. Scott, in his commentary, has given a very probable meaning of the expression "a church in a house." "The family of Archippus was so pious and well regulated, that it was in some sense a christian church." The term in these cases is used figuratively, and not to be taken in its literal import. Or if, as the Reviewer observes, other Christians were united with the family,

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although this is assumed without being proved, then the company thus associated, celebrated all divine ordinances, in a stated and regular manner, in the house where they met; and these are instances directly and powerfully in support of my view of the term, as meaning a company of believers assembling in one place. But then it is contended, that if this be correct, it overthrows my position that the word is never employed to comprehend more congregations than one. Priscilla and Aquila, it is said, dwelt at Rome, and had a church in their house. Now, unless all the Christians of Rome met in the house of this pious couple, there must have been at least two congregations in that city. Well, admitting that there were, which probably there might have been, how does this prove the point, unless it can be shewn, which I defy the Reviewer to do, that all the Christians at Rome are ever called a church. No, they are called "saints," "beloved of God," &c, but not a church. Aquila and Priscilla had also, says my opponent, a church in their house at Ephesus, 1 Cor. xvi. 19: and as we cannot suppose that the whole body of the Ephesians were assembled under their roof, and yet the believers in that city are addressed in the book of the Revelation as one church, the term means sometimes more congregations than one. This by no means follows, since the Apocalypse was written forty years after the first epistle to the Corinthians; in all probability, long after the church had ceased to exist in the house of Aquila and Priscilla, who appear to have spent a very migratory kind of life. The church in their house may have been the embryo of that larger one, which forty years after ceased to assemble under their roof, either because they were dead or had removed, or because their house

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was too small. This supposition is surely more consistent, than to suppose that the comparatively little company still met at Aquila's house. My opponent is visibly hard driven, when he assumes the continued existence of this independent society in a private habitation, after the establishment of the much larger society to which the Apocalypse alludes. He must be fond of schism indeed, and suppose the early believers so too, to make two separate communities at Ephesus, and the one so inconsiderable that its numbers can scarcely be supposed to have incommoded the other. But perhaps it will be said, that from the account furnished by the Acts of the Apostles, of Paul's extraordinary success at Ephesus, it cannot be thought that the whole body of believers could assemble in a private house, and hence there must have been two or more churches simultaneously existing in that city. What then? Suppose there were? Though this cannot be proved inasmuch as we know not the dimensions of Aquila's house, which, for ought we can tell, might have had an outbuilding large enough to contain all that really embraced Christianity and held it fast. But admitting that there were two churches in Ephesus at the time the apostle speaks of the church in Aquila's house, this does not prove the point that the word is used in this case to signify more congregations than one, as the expression "The church at Ephesus," is used no where else in the New Testament besides the Apocalypse. The point to be proved is the simultaneous existence of two or more separate societies of Christians, which are addressed in the singular number as the Church; till this is done, the argument of the Reviewer is obviously invalid. The other instances advanced by

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my opponent may be disposed of no less easily and satisfactorily.

5. "The word means a number of believers called by divine grace out of the world, and worshipping God in one place." "The church at Jerusalem." Acts viii, 1. Now this view of the term would seem to accord with that which is taken by myself and all protestant dissenters of the Independent denomination; and if by the word "place," in this sentence, were meant the building in which the believers assembled, and not the city in which they dwelt, the accordance would be real; but the subsequent reasoning of the Reviewer, in reference to the church at Jerusalem, plainly shews that he applies the word "place," in the latter sense. We are asked, "was there only one congregation of Christians at Jerusalem? what when three thousand were added to the church at one time; and when it is said in another place, 'Thou seest brother how many myriads, (for so I admit the word signifies) 'of Jews there are which believe?'" Acts xxi, 20. I will first give Doddridge's comment on this last passage, and then make some general remarks on the case of the church at Jerusalem. "I do not apprehend," says that expositor, "that it can be certainly argued from hence, that there were more than thirty or even twenty thousand Jewish believers now present at Jerusalem; for the word (myriads) may only in general denote a great number, but it is certain that the greater part of them were not stated inhabitants of Jerusalem; but only visited it on occasion of the great festival; (compare verse 27) so that no certain argument can be deduced from hence, as to the plurality of congregations supposed to have

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been now under the care of the bishop of Jerusalem." Besides I remark, it matters not what the numbers were, since it is said in the next verse but one, "What is it therefore? The multitude must needs come together, for they will hear that thou art come." Here it is necessarily implied, that notwithstanding their great number, they did congregate, did meet together for conference and instruction. If it be asked, where? I reply in the court and precincts of the temple, for we are informed this was their practice from the beginning; "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple;" "and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch;" "and daily in the temple, they ceased not to teach:" "then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them:" "and when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church; then all the multitude kept silence." Acts ii, 46; v. 12; v. 42: vi, 2; xv, 4, 12. We may not know how such a multitude could conveniently assemble and conduct worship, nor is it our business to explain the matter; we have only to prove the fact that they did assemble, and this fact is asserted in the Acts of the Apostles with a frequency which puts the case beyond all doubt. The church of Jerusalem was one church, and as such they were in the habit of assembling in one place.

Where now are the Reviewer's five significations of the word church? Not I think in the New Testament. But, had he even proved his point, it might be asked if among these five significations he can find the prototype of his own church. He has given us a church in a house, a church in a city, a church of governors, a church in a district, a church in heaven and earth; but has he found a church established by and united with

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any secular government? Had he even overthrown my position, he has not proved the scriptural authority of his own system. He has not proved one other sense of the word church. We cannot yet find a national church, nor a provincial church, nor a church extending beyond a single convenable society.

I refer the Reviewer to all the Greek Lexicons in existence, for the meaning of the word about which we are contending, and if they do not determine that it signifies a congregation, an assembly, I yield the point in debate; but if they do thus fix the meaning, I believe it must be conceded that the views of protestant dissenters are correct, and that it means either the general assembly and church of the firstborn which is at last to be gathered round the throne of God, or a particular company of them assembling in one place for christian worship.

But I appeal now to an authority to which my opponent is solemnly bound to pay the greatest deference, I mean the nineteenth article of his own church; where we find a definition, than which none can more accurately express our views: "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men." What then is the meaning of the word congregation? It does not merely signify some general relationship, such as an order, a fellowship, a profession; but it is a complex term, including the ideas of number, person, and locality. The Church of England has thus authoritatively decided the question for us. And it is no matter that in other places, her ritual gives a different view of the subject, or that her whole constitution supposes another meaning; this only shews her inconsistency with herself, and that as a national establishment she is opposed to her

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own definition of a church. A national church is therefore a notion opposed to the etymological meaning of the term, to the usage of it by the sacred writers, and to the definition of it given in the thirty-nine articles.

Here, it might be supposed, the controversy terminates. No argument for a national establishment of religion can, in my opinion, be valid in opposition to these facts. But the Reviewer, like many other advocates of the same system, contends, not only for the utility of such an establishment, but for its scriptural origin and support. "The instance of the Jews," he says, "proves the lawfulness, expediency, and advantages of a religious establishment. Their religion was established, and their establishment was national. Church and state were with them allied; were incorporated; were one. God himself was the King and the Head both of church and state. Were it not then an impeachment of divine wisdom, and a reflection on divine goodness, to assert the unlawfulness of all religious establishments? The argument derived from the Jewish establishment can be repelled only by denying what no one acquainted with Scripture will deny, that God was the supreme civil magistrate of the Jews."

Now be it observed, (and it is of consequence to attend to the remark,) that this, with the exception of a quotation from the prophecies of Isaiah, on which I presume, no great stress is laid, is the only scriptural argument for establishments which my opponent has advanced, or which any writer on his side of the question ever I believe, pretended to find in the word of God. Is not this a virtual surrender of the cause, so far, at least, as scripture proof is concerned? Is it not saying



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that Christianity does not supply us with a single argument, and we must therefore go back for one to Judaism? Must not that cause be weak, which, though it contends for a grand national institute for the maintenance of Christianity, can find nothing in the christian records to support it?

I am indeed astonished, that any man who professes to understand the genius and design of the Jewish Theocracy should attempt to find in that extraordinary system any argument for modern national establishments of religion. Let us examine the strength of this only scriptural proof of the propriety of such a system. An attentive investigation of the Jewish Theocracy must, I think, convince every candid person that it is characterized, from beginning to end, by such striking peculiarities, as not only to place it in many respects beyond the power of imitation, but actually to render any attempt to imitate it unlawful. That its constitution yields no support whatever to our national establishment, or any of a similar kind, is evident from the following considerations.

1. The Theocracy of the Jews was not a mere union of church and state, which allowed each to retain its own separate identity, distinct laws, and different objects; but it was an amalgamation of the two; or, as the Reviewer says, they were one. The church was the state, and the state was the church. Is this the case with the Church of England? Hooker says it is.

“We hold that there is not any man of the Church of England, but the same is also a member of the commonwealth; nor any member of the commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England.”  
“Our state is according to the pattern of God’s own antient elect People, which people was not part of them the commonwealth, and Part of them the church of God; but the self same people, whole and

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entire, and both under one chief governor, on whose suprême authority they did all depend." He then goes on as matter of course to infer from the supremacy of our king as head of the church and the commonwealth, his right to make ecclesiastical laws. "David and Jehoshaphat, Josias and the rest, made those laws and orders, which sacred history speaketh of concerning matters of mere religion, the affairs of the temple, and service of God. According to the pattern of which example, the like power in causes ecclesiastical is by the laws of this realm annexed to the Crown." (Eccles. Pol. c. viii. p. 290-6.) The same sentiments are advanced, and with equal explicitness, in a high church periodical. "The system of our ecclesiastical judicature," says the British Critic, "as it exists at this moment, is founded upon the presumption, not only that every man, woman, and child is a member of the English Church, but that not a soul of them is at liberty to consider themselves otherwise; that the christian community is identical with the national establishment. For certain purposes, a man is with us no more permitted to renounce his churchmanship, than he is to abjure his allegiance."

It is thus declared, that the English establishment, and the English nation, are not two separate bodies, but only one community having two aspects; not simply a union, but an amalgamation of church and state. The Reviewer, so far as appears from his reasoning, holds the same opinion; and indeed the argument for establishments founded on the Theocracy requires this, since it is good for nothing without it. It is thus admitted that the English nation and the English church are one, like the commonwealth of the Jews! Now let us observe the consequences: the king, of course, is the head of the church; the parliament is the legislature of the church; the army and navy are the bulwarks of the church; all the subjects of the realm, not excepting the vilest reprobates, are members of the church. All this results, and necessarily results, from the argument for establishments taken from the Theocracy. Now we ask, docs this resemble the description given in the New Testament of

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the church of Christ? "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world." But the Church of England, according to the reasoning of Hooker, the British Critic, and of the Reviewer, is of this world, for it is "amalgamated, it is one with the state;" it has no existence separate from it.

Each church of Christ described in the New Testament was a select, a peculiar, a separate, a holy people; but the Church of England comprises the whole of the nation, and admits of no such distinction. The church of Christ is every where spoken of as a spiritual body, of which men do not become members by geographical situation, by birth, or by temporal allegiance; but all persons are members of the Church of England, who happen to be born within the limits of the English territories, for the church and the state are "amalgamated, are one," like the Theocracy of the Jews. I want no stronger proof than this reference to the Theocracy as the prototype of the alliance between church and state, to demonstrate its contrariety to the whole letter and spirit of the christian dispensation. Such is the situation of those advocates of establishments who are unwise enough to contend for them on scriptural grounds. They confess that the New Testament is silent on the subject, and in default of proof from the christian record to sustain an alleged christian institute, they go back to the laws of Moses, for an example to which to conform the church of Christ. Here they suppose they find one, but it is such an one as upon examination ruins their cause, since it is impossible to construct the church on the plan of the Theocracy, without making it such as opposes the description which Christ has given us of his unworldly kingdom, and such as equally opposes the

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views which the apostles give us of this spiritual community. If, then, the church and state in this country are like the Theocracy, one and undivided, the English Establishment is in opposition to the New Testament; and if they are not one, the argument from the Jewish polity being null and void, the whole system is left without the shadow of proof from the word of God.

2. The Theocracy was not a spiritual structure founded upon a basis of human legislation, and leaning for support upon a civil code enacted by temporal authority, but a divine institute altogether, in which nothing was left to be devised by the wisdom, nor enjoined by the authority of man, but all was given by the direction of God, even to the minutest particular. Can the Church of England plead a divine institution, and boast of a code of laws given immediately by God, in which civil legislation has no place; a system to which nothing is to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken by man; that selects particular families, from which its officers are to be taken, and in which the dignity is to be hereditary? Altogether the contrary.

3. The Theocracy, as its name imports, had Jehovah himself for its political head. He was the King of the Jews as well as their God. He made all their laws, and presided over the observance of them. He combined in himself the legislative and executive powers. Even the introduction of the kingly office among the Jews made no change in the constitution, which still continued to retain its sublime character as a Theocracy. Should the contrary of this be maintained by the advocates of establishments, and should it be affirmed that at the election of Saul, a human prince became the head of the system, they will gain nothing by it, for

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the precedent contended for is such as at the time of its assumption received the displeasure and rebuke of the Almighty. But Jehovah did not vacate his place for the Kings of Judah. He was still the sovereign prince, after their elevation to the throne, while they were only his vicegerents. So long as they were obedient they acted under his direction and by his authority. Can it be shewn that is the case in the Church of England? Can it be said that God has taken this nation, church and state, into especial covenant with himself, and deigned in mysterious condescension to be our political sovereign? Except this can be shewn, except this grand peculiarity can be found in our constitution, and the real features of a Theocracy can be traced in it, the Jewish law yields no argument in favour of national establishments of religion.

4. The Jewish Theocracy was a typical institute. The law was a shadow of good things to come. Its ordinances, its rites, its ceremonies, and its offices, were all typical. David was as truly a type of Christ, as Aaron and Moses. The supreme authority among the Jews, symbolized by Judah's sceptre, was no less typical than the office and functions of the Priesthood: and when the prefiguring purposes of both were fulfilled in Him, who is a "priest upon his throne," the sceptre and the mitre both departed. Where in the epistle to the Hebrews do we find the least hint of a revival in any earthly prince, or in any human government, of the unique character of the Jewish system? On the contrary, the house of Moses and of Jesus, are spoken of as widely different from each other. The advocates of establishments, to derive any support from the government of the Jews, must prove that christian princes

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succeed to the throne of David, as well as christian bishops to the order of Aaron; that christian nations are not under a civil government, but are cherished like antient Israel under the wings of a Theocracy. When this can be done we will certainly yield to the force of the argument.\*

That Roman Catholics should appeal to the Jewish system, can scarcely excite surprise, but that Protestants should do so, is indeed a matter of astonishment. How many errors owe their origin to this judaizing temper. To this we must trace the application of the term priests to the ministers of religion; and as a priest without a sacrifice is but a name, to this must also be ascribed the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass. Here also we find the origin of that fruitful source of fierce litigation and hatred, the system of tithes. And because the Theocracy has been considered as furnishing a model for the forms of church government among Christians, the wars of Joshua and of David have been pleaded by some in excuse for the wars which have been undertaken in the abused name of religion.

It must be admitted that all the advocates of establishments do not rest their defence on this argument. Hoadley and Paley abandon it, and contend for them on the ground of expediency; and Dean Milner treads so softly and cautiously, and passes so swiftly over this

\* See Graham on Religious Establishments, chap. 1, sect. 1; and an able little work, lately published by an episcopalian, entitled "Letters on the Church," in which the author contends for an unestablished episcopacy, and insists that the Jewish Establishment supplies not the slightest support to a Christian Establishment. His argument on this point is lucid and powerful. I recommend my Reviewer to enter the lists with this High Churchman.

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ground, that I suspect he was aware of the insecurity of his footing. And indeed if the argument for establishments drawn from the theocracy have any force, it will authorise the employment of the sword for the propagation of religion, and all the horrible inventions of a relentless and cruel intolerance for its support. If this wretched and hopeless expedient may be resorted to, and the alliance of things so different, and so little capable of unions as the church and the state, can be defended by a reference to the unique system of the Israelites, then may the fiercest advocates of persecution find in the extirpation of the Canaanites, and the destruction of other idolaters, something like a justification of their exterminating zeal. The argument must be taken whole and entire or abandoned. It involves consequences, which many who injudiciously employ it would shudder to contemplate, and which they would be among the last to embrace. No man should take up such a weapon in defence of his church, who is not prepared to affirm that error on the subject of religion is a capital crime, cognizable at the bar of the civil magistrate, and punishable by a sword which should never be sheathed by an act of toleration. To employ it only so far as to support the system of kingly interference in making laws, and priestly support by the aid of tithes, is not exhibiting its full power.

If the analogy is of any force it must surely be so in its first and most essential principle; and it must be so in its whole extent. The authority of the christian civil magistrate must run parallel and be equally political with that of the Jewish. Not only must his sceptre be as long, but his sword must be as sharp and as bloody. I not) you have pleaded an analogy not founded in

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Scripture any more than in reason, or in the nature of things. Toleration upon such a scheme is a heresy, it destroys the parallel, and ruins the argument. If, then, a churchman will take the theocracy as his defence, he is quite welcome to it; the dissenter may leave him to himself, since the only use he can make of his trusty and well-tempered weapon is to commit a felony de-se.

If there be then no scriptural support for these institutions in the Old Testament, there certainly is none in the New. The Reviewer, as I said before, does not pretend to find a single text in either of the Gospels or of the Epistles. The silence of the New Testament on the supposition of the propriety of such an alliance is indeed surprising, especially if we consider two things: I, The minuteness of the directions given by the sacred writers on so many other topics: bishops, deacons, deaconesses, with the qualifications of each are minutely specified, but not a syllable do we find about a temporal head over these. Nay, even the social relations, with the appropriate duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, are mentioned. The behaviour and the dress of women, their hair, and the covering of their head, are all the subjects of instruction, and yet not a word about a supreme earthly head of the church. See Graham, chapter i, section 3. But II, Consider the importance of such an office. I am speaking now of the supreme power, the main-spring of the whole ecclesiastical machinery. What is the office of a bishop, or of an archbishop, compared with his who has to appoint them all, and thus to diffuse an influence to the very extremities of the system? The head is surely



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of greater consequence to the body than many of the members; yet while the feet and hands are mentioned in Scripture, and directions given for their employment, the head is passed over in total silence. The reasoning which I now employ, was used by Dr. Barrow, one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England, in the time of Charles II, in his reasoning against the Church of Rome. In a sermon on the "Unity of the Church," he contends with great force of argument, and felicity of language, against any supreme earthly head of the universal church. And I shall quote his words to show how much like a dissenter a churchman argues in his controversy with the Church of Rome, and how completely the reasons of his secession from the Papacy, answer our purpose, and justify our conduct in separating from the Church of England.

"Whereas the apostolical writings do inculcate our subjection to one Lord in heaven", it is much they should never consider his vicegerent, or vicegerents upon earth; notifying and pressing the duties of obedience and reverence toward them. There are indeed exhortations to honour the elders, and to obey the guides of particular churches; but the honour and obedience due to those paramount authorities, or universal governors, is passed over in dead silence, as if no such thing had been thought of. They do expressly avow the secular pre-eminence, and press submission to the emperor as supreme; why do they not likewise mention this no less considerable ecclesiastical supremacy, or enjoin obedience thereto? Why honour the king, and be subject to principalities so often, but honour the spiritual prince or senate doth never, occur? If there had been any such authority, there would probably have been some intimation concerning the persons in whom it was settled, concerning the place of their residence, concerning the manner of its being conveyed, (by election, succession, or otherwise.) Probably the persons would have some proper name, title, or character, to distinguish them from inferior governors; that to the place some mark of pre-eminence would have been affixed. It is not unlikely that some rules or directions would have been prescribed for the management of so high

a trust, for preventing miscarriages and abuses to which it is notoriously liable. It would have been declared absolute, or the limits of it would have been determined, to prevent its enslaving God's heritage. But of these things in the apostolical writings, or in any near those times, there doth not appear any footstep or pregnant intimation.

“But supposing the church was designed to be one in this manner of political regiment, it must be quite another thing, nearly resembling a worldly state, yea in effect, soon resolving itself into such an one; supposing, as is now pretended, that its management is committed to an ecclesiastical monarch, it must become a worldly kingdom;\* for such a polity could not be upheld, without applying the same means and engines, without practising the same methods and arts, whereby secular governments are maintained. Its majesty must be maintained by conspicuous pomp and phantasy. Its dignity and power must be supported by wealth, which it must corrode and accumulate by largo incomes, by exaction of tributes and taxes. It must exert authority in enacting laws for keeping its state in order, and securing its interests, backed with rewards and pains; especially considering its title being so dark, and grounded on no clear warrant, many always will contest it. It must apply constraint and force for procuring obedience and correcting transgression. It must have guards to preserve its safety and authority. It must be engaged in wars to defend itself and make good its interests. It must use subtlety and artifice for promoting its interest, and countermining the policy of its adversaries. It must erect judicatories, and must decide causes with the formality of legal process: whence tedious suits, crafty pleadings, quirks of law and pettifoggeries, fees and charges, extortism and barratry, &c. will necessarily creep in. All which things do much disagree from the original constitution and design of the christian church, which is averse from pomp, doth reject domination, doth not require craft, wealth, or force to maintain it, but did at first, and may subsist, without any such means. I do not say that an ecclesiastical society may not lawfully, for its support, use power, policy, wealth, in some measure to uphold or defend itself; BUT THAT

\* “And,” says Mr Scales, in his admirable little volume on the principles of Dissent, “is the necessity less apparent, or less urgent, if he be a civil monarch, with ministers of state, mere men of the world as his counsellors?” I had made these extracts from Barrow before I saw Mr Scales's work.

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A CONSTITUTION NEEDING SUCH THINGS IS NOT DIVINE,\* or that so far as it doth use them it is nothing more than human.”

This is powerful reasoning; but it appears to me that while by such artillery the Doctor batters down the stronghold of Popery, the recoil of his guns shatters his own redoubts, and effectually overthrows the bulwarks of the Church of England.

But it can be shewn that this alliance is not only without scriptural authority, but against it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when standing at the bar of Cæsar's representative, expressed in one short but comprehensive sentence, all that is necessary on this important subject, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He did not assert that he had no kingdom in the world, for he had frequently claimed one, and spoken of it; but that his kingdom was not of this world; that it had reference to another, even a heavenly and eternal world, from which it derived the power that sustained it, the rewards and punishments that sanctioned it; that it was not founded by human wisdom, or maintained by secular means of coercion. On other occasions he gave the same intimations. When the multitude would have taken him by force to make him a king, he refused to accept of temporal royalty. When interrogated on the subject of paying tribute, he delivered an injunction full of instruction in reference to this matter, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the

\* The mark of emphasis on this passage is my own. But what a concession for a churchman! Has he not at once given up the Divine, that is, the apostolic constitution of his own church, in this passage? This acute and astonishing man saw what advantage might be made of his own reasoning against himself, and confessed its force: if he alludes, as is probable, to the Church of England.

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things that are God's." In this language he lays down a distinction between the province of Caesar and of God: and teaches that matters of civil government belong to the former, but matters of religion to the latter. In civil affairs man is amenable to civil government, but in the affairs of religion to God only. This comprehensive, fundamental maxim of the Bible deserves to be well studied by every citizen and every Christian.

What Christ delivered in public at the bar of Pilate, he also taught in the way of private instruction to his apostles: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister." I would ask whether the letter and spirit of these passages are not decidedly opposed to all national establishments of religion: whether it is possible to conceive of any incorporation of the church with the state that comports with this language? The apostles, of course, delivered the same sentiments as their Master; "Let every soul," says St. Paul, "be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God." Peter advances the same truth. It is manifest that these injunctions relate to temporal affairs, and not at all to religion, because the powers to which the Christians of that time were to be subject were Pagan governments, a circumstance which necessarily limits the obedience which was to be paid to them to civil matters.

In default of Scripture authority, the advocates of establishments have had recourse to general and theoretic reasoning, and it is matter of little surprise that they discover great contrariety of opinion as to the

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position on which they can most advantageously rest their defence. Paley, abandoning the argument of the Theocracy, defends them on the principle of utility. Others contend, that it is the duty of kings, as such, or at least of the civil government, to provide for the religious instruction of the people.

The reasoning of the Reviewer is of an analogical kind; he attempts to prove that as it is the duty of a father to provide religious instruction for his family, so it is the duty of a king to provide it for his subjects; and refers to a sermon of Dr Owen's, and a chapter of Milner's Church History, in support of this position, which he pronounces to be "absolutely invincible." Let us examine its strength. It should be recollected that the question is not what a king ought to do as an individual, as in fact, the first individual for wealth and influence of the realm. There can be no doubt whether he ought, like any other person, to devote the means which he possesses to the encouragement and support of the cause of religion. His example and private resources should be "holiness to the Lord," and in this way would the prophecy be accomplished, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers." Here there is ample scope for kingly influence, exerted in a manner that accords with the principles of the New Testament. Let the monarch patronize religion, without establishing it, in the same way as he patronizes any other good cause. The analogy between the head of a limited monarchy and the head of a family is too remote, the nature of their duties too dissimilar, and the rule of their conduct too diverse, to allow of our reasoning from one to the other. The parent is entrusted by God with the religious instruction of his children, and explicitly commanded to bring

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them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is one great end of the domestic economy. But can this be affirmed of the kingly office? Is there any reason that can be offered why a king, any king, and every king should be supposed to know more about religion than his subjects? The parent is to a certain extent responsible to God for the souls of his offspring. Does the like responsibility attach to monarchs? Poor men! Their characters in general are a sorry pledge to their subjects of their care even for their own souls. Let it be shewn us from the New Testament that God has intrusted the care of souls and the business of religious instruction to monarchs and the argument is at an end. But the argument as it now stands by proving too much, destroys itself. If the obligation of the monarch to provide a religion for the people rests on his regal relation to them, then it is the duty of all sovereigns to do this, and the Sultan of Turkey must establish Mahommedanism; the Emperor of China, Paganism; and the Emperor of Austria, Popery. Indeed this was actually admitted by an advocate of the Church. Dr. Balguy, in a charge to the clergy says,

“If it should be thought I am here affirming a defence of popery, it would be only a too candid interpretation; I mean to defend not popery only but paganism itself. I mean to defend every established religion under heaven.”

Mr. Scott saw so clearly the necessity of this inference, that he abandoned the argument.

“I must impartially own,” says that great and good man, “that establishments are often defended and extolled in an unscriptural manner. If no way of defending an establishment can be devised, which would not, if properly applied, defend the establishment of Popery, Mahommedanism, or Pagan Idolatry, by the authority of kings and rulers, I must acknowledge the cause to be desperate. Yet

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if it be a right of kings and rulers to prescribe the creed and manner of worship with its appendages to their subjects, and to enforce their concurrence, it must be equally the right of all kings; for they all think, or profess to think, their own religion to be the true religion. Again, if it be the duty of kings and rulers to prescribe these things to their subjects, it is equally the duty of all kings, and for the same reason. This is the palladium of those who oppose establishments, and how shall we deprive them of it?"

Moreover if the argument apply exclusively to christian kings, let them shew the divine patent of this prescriptive right. If it is not a natural appendage to the regal character; if it is not even a dictate of reason, let them prove it from revelation if they can. The assumption of such a right by kings is not only a presumptuous encroachment on individual responsibility, but its exercise requires that they should be gifted with infallibility, or they may establish a false religion, or connect so much of what is bad with the good as to destroy the influence of the latter. For instance, James the First, in virtue of his authority as king and head of the English Church, set up the book of sports, an edict drawn up by a christian bishop, and published by a christian king, encouraging the practice on the Sabbath of dancing either of men or women, archery, leaping, vaulting, may-games, whitsunales, may-poles, &c. This was ordered to be read in the churches of the Establishment; and at the instigation of the saintly primate Laud, was re-enacted by Charles I. James II, in virtue of his authority, did all he could to provide this country with popery. What he failed in, Mary in earlier times accomplished, and in virtue of her maternal character as queen, and her affection for her subjects, overturned the work of the reformation, and reconciled this country to the see of Rome.

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The exact limits of the kingly authority in matters of religion I do not pretend to determine, but the canons and constitutions of the church, as well as the writings of its ablest champion, stretch it very wide. Hooker says, "Christian kings have spiritual dominion or supreme power in ecclesiastical affairs and causes, and within their own precincts have an authority and power to command even in matters of christian religion, and there is no higher nor greater that can in these things over command them when they are placed as kings." Whatever, according to the canons and constitution of the church, may be their legitimate power, most extraordinary claims have been set up by and conceded to many of the sovereigns of this realm, Henry VIII. Edward VI. Mary, and Elizabeth, exercised the power of forbidding all preaching for a time: and Elizabeth James I. and Charles I. claimed the right to limit, instruct, and prescribe to the clergy what they should or should not preach. Should a controversy arise in the church, the king is the last and highest appeal for the decision of it: and all the bishops and clergy in the realm have not authority to declare a tenet heretical if the prince on the throne refuse his assent. Nor is it a mere supposeable case that the clergy and the royal mind may be opposed to each other. In the time of Ann, the two Houses of Convocation condemned as heretical the works of Whiston, who was an Arian.

"The decision of this venerable body was sent by one of the bishops to the Queen for her assent. Upon her Majesty's determination it entirely depended whether Whiston's works should be rejected by the Church of England as erroneous or not. Her Majesty in this case was of a different opinion from her two Houses of Convocation: she thought not fit to censure the books. So her single opinion strange to relate! her single opinion carried it against that of her



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bishops and clergy. She over-ruled and set aside all their proceedings, restrained and counteracted them in one of the very chief of their pastoral functions, the guarding against errors and heresies in the church." Towgood. "So Winston's affair sleeps," says Burnet, "though he has published a large work in four volumes in octavo, justifying his doctrine and maintaining the canonicalness of the apostolical constitutions, preferring their authority, not only to the Epistles but even to the Gospels."

Now to say nothing of the unseemliness of a woman controlling the opinions of the whole clerical body of the Church of England, to say nothing of the opposition of such a proceeding to the apostolical injunction which saith, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," how improper is it to vest in any one person, or any body of men not endowed with infallibility such a power as this.

Such work do monarchs make when they touch religion, and such are the insuperable objections to their interference with the consciences of their subjects by any act of legislation or imposition or dictation. "It is a temporizing with the awful prerogatives of Deity, a mimicry of his thunder, a usurpation of his sceptre and his sword, without ability to sway the one or wield the other." If the king, in virtue of his regal connexion with his people, is bound to provide them with religious instruction, and to establish a national creed and ritual, how is he to act when a majority of the people embrace opinions different from his own? A case not very unlikely to happen even in this country, if we may credit some church writers. Warburton, that great defender of the alliance, says, "If there be more than one religious society in a kingdom, the alliance is made by the state with the largest of the religious societies. It is fit it should be so,

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because the larger the religious society is, where the difference is not in essentials, the more enabled it will be to answer the ends of the alliance, as having the greatest number under its influence. It is scarce possible it should be otherwise." What is a king to do when the secession becomes so great as to be a majority? Must he oppose his own convictions, and set up a religion which he does not approve; or must he embrace the creed of the majority, because it is the creed of the majority, but against his conscience? This is to enforce hypocrisy by law. Moreover upon the ground of the argument of the king's paternal character, it may be shewn that toleration ought not to be granted. What father of a family would allow erroneous teachers to enter his house, and corrupt his children by what he conceives to be false and poisonous errors?

But, perhaps it may be said that it is not meant to detach the king from the other estates of the realm, but to consider him as a part of the whole, and to contend for the duty of the legislature to provide a religion for the people. If this be the case, then the argument, founded on the paternal character of the sovereign is abandoned; and the whole position is changed, the obligation being shifted from the king to the legislature. The question then will be, Ought the legislature to interfere in religious matters, and make laws to settle the creed and religious observances of the nation; to make laws which shall teach the people how they shall interpret the Bible, how they shall worship God and seek for eternal salvation? We ought to be well assured that those who claim the right of making such laws have a good understanding of the subjects on

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which they legislate. But without intending any reflection on parliaments, I may ask, are the members of them, with the exception of the bench of bishops, generally men acquainted with these matters? Are they so profound in theology as to determine such questions, for instance, as arise upon the Athanasian creed, or upon the articles of the Church of England from the eighth to the nineteenth inclusive? Mr Riland and a host of other clergymen wish an alteration in the articles, and catechisms, and creeds of the church. Now by whom must this be done? I presume by the Parliament. Even supposing that the convocation were revived, and instructed by the king to proceed in the business, and to prepare the revisions and alterations, still, nothing less than the authority of Parliament could enforce them. The adoption of the Prayer Book as it now stands, that is, of the catechisms, articles, creeds, and ritual of the national religion, was most certainly an act, not of convocation, but of parliament. A commission was first granted to some distinguished bishops and divines to revise the book as it had been prepared in the time of Elizabeth. The convocation then revised the alterations proposed by this commission, and finally these amendments and alterations were submitted for the approval of his majesty and both houses of parliament. This is stated in the preamble of the act of uniformity passed in the time of Charles II. Upon the supposition that a reform in the discipline, doctrine, or ritual of the Church of England, were, in accordance with the wishes of many of its members, to take place, or to be attempted, and a commission under the Great Seal appointed and empowered to prepare the proposed alterations and improvements,

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still it must be enacted by the legislature to become the law of the church. And let any one conceive of a cabinet council discussing points of theological doctrine, religious rites and ceremonies, matters of church discipline, confessions of sin, and prayers for penitents and minds suffering under soul trouble; what an idea! However excellent Lord Chancellor Brougham, and the Premier, and the Marquis of Lansdowne may be as statesmen, and excellent I think they are, yet they would be very sorry divines. Men who think that we are no more responsible for our belief than we are for the colour of our skin, or our stature, are not pre-eminently qualified for nice discrimination in matters of religious doctrine, and the service of Almighty God. It is true, the Primate would assist at the deliberations of the council, but these are not times when even such authority is received with implicit deference. Settled in the cabinet the reformed liturgy, articles, and ritual, would be carried before the knights of the shires and burgesses of towns composing the House of Commons, for their approval and consent, for their determination, in fact, what the nation should believe, and how they should pray and worship God.

“They address themselves,” says Mr Scales, “to the object with as much care and interest, it may be, as they would discuss the merits of a road bill, or an act for enclosing lands hitherto waste and common, not however, we fear, as zealously as they would legislate upon the game or corn laws, or any great question of national policy, which affected the commerce or manufactures of the country. Discussion however follows discussion, amendment is proposed after amendment, and when all its clauses have been committed, and the ayes have carried it in the lower house, and it has passed the same kind of ordeal in the upper, and then been conveyed to the foot of the throne, to receive the royal sanction and imprimatur, it becomes the law of the land, the established religion of the country. Thus the

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Commons have done their part, the Lords have done theirs, and the king has consummated the whole, and by his sign manual has sealed and delivered a religion which shall be binding on a whole nation, and be the religion of successive ages and generations. But where is the Lord God of heaven and earth all this while? and where his will his word, his law? are they to be set aside, or to be subordinated to the scheme which his creatures have fabricated; and must he submit to own their opinions as his divine truths, and to accept their ceremonies as his sacred institutions? Or is it pretended that this civil, this circuitous process, is intended to sanction and ratify the will and law of heaven? and to allow and tolerate men to love and worship him in a legal manner, and, (yes, at the risk of being pronounced uncandid and even unintelligent, I must say it,) with a statutable piety, an established devotion? The proton pseudos, here, not unlike that which deceived and ruined the founders of our race, 'ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,' the original sin, the fatal error, of all such proceedings, is the unnatural elevation of creatures into a sphere infinitely above them, and the impious and criminal debasement of the great Creator to the level, or even below the level of proud and sinful mortals. Have they forgotten, or did they never know that religion has come down from heaven, perfect in its institutions, with laws and doctrines and ordinances in which the wit and wisdom of man can discover no flaws and make no improvements, every way worthy of its divine author, and fitted to answer every purpose of his mercy, and of our instruction and salvation."

The views expressed in this chapter were held by Locke, who, though a member of the church of England in his practice, was an Independent dissenter in his reasonings. In his first Letter on Toleration, he thus writes,

"Now that the whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concerns, and that all civil power, right, and dominion is bounded and confined to the only care of promoting these things, and that it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the salvation of souls, the following considerations seem to me abundantly to demonstrate. First, because the care of souls is not committed by God to the magistrate any more than to other men. Secondly, the care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists only in the inward persuasion of the mind,

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without which nothing can be acceptable to God. Thirdly, the care of the salvation of men's souls cannot belong to the magistrate, because though the rigour of laws and force of penalties were capable to convince and change men's minds, yet would not that help at all to the salvation of their souls. For there being but one truth, one way to heaven, what hope is there that more men would be led into it, if they had no other rule to follow but the religion of the court, and were put under a necessity to quit the light of their own reason, to oppose the dictates of their own consciences, and blindly to resign up themselves to the will of their governors, and to the religion which either ignorance, ambition or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born."

Establishments in the opinion of Dissenters, are unnecessary for the support and spread of religion in the world. It is asserted by their advocates that if the state did not provide a religion for the people, the people would provide none for themselves. This is a question not to be determined by reasoning but by the facts. In the great conflict which Christianity sustained with paganism at the time of its original promulgation, "not a king smiled upon our faith till it may fairly be said to have won the day." It is true it achieved its first triumphs by the aid of miracles; but for nearly two centuries after this unearthly and mysterious agency was withdrawn, and with no other means than we in this age possess, it went forth from conquering to conquer, till at the time of Constantine such had been its success, that it is very probable as Paley remarks, the emperor declared on the side of the Christians because they were the stronger party in the divided state.

But I triumphantly appeal to the proof furnished by modern history, that establishments are unnecessary. It was eloquently and truly said at a missionary

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meeting in London by a minister from the United States of America, "I love my country, not because it is the land of my birth, though this feeling binds me to it, but I love it, because God is carrying on there such an experiment as the world has never seen since the days of Constantine, and perhaps never on so large a scale, an experiment whether the Church of Christ has virtue and purity and energy enough to sustain itself unsupported by the arm of civil power." It is now little more than two centuries since some of the persecuted puritans fled from the furious bigotry of Laud, and planted the christian religion on the desolate shores of the northern part of the new world, and we may now say of the holy vine which those pilgrim fathers of the gigantic western republic took with them to the land of their exile, that "God prepared room before it, and did cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills are covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof are like goodly cedars, she sends out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches to the river." Nearly ten thousand ministers of religion of various denominations are there labouring, and most of them successfully, in word and doctrine; societies for the circulation of the scriptures and religious tracts are in operation which rival our own; institutions for sending the gospel to their own back settlements and Indian tribes, as well as to the heathen nations of the earth, are founded and liberally supported; efforts of a most astonishing kind are being made to supply with well educated ministers the demands of a rapidly increasing population; and the United States, without the fostering or supporting aid

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of the civil power, are bidding fair to become, by the voluntary benevolence and the expansive force of the unbought zeal of her christian population, the most religious nation upon earth. We see then that people will provide a religion for themselves if the matter be left to them, but the interference of the state paralyses the energies of spontaneous charity, and destroys the spirit of holy enterprize. It blights and withers the celestial plant which it professes to nourish and to cultivate.

And what is the efficiency of establishments for promoting their own objects where they exist? What have the catholic establishments done in all the states of Europe that are connected with the Papacy; to say nothing of impiety, have they kept out infidelity? Let Mr. Blanco White's testimony be received on the state of Spain; let the history of France declare; let the travellers who have visited Italy and Austria make known their discoveries. Or to speak of Protestant countries, what have establishments done for them? For Germany, where neology tramples upon orthodoxy in the very scene of Luther's labours; for Switzerland, where, in spite of Calvinistic formularies, Arianism is almost universally prevalent; what has an establishment done for Russia, where a superstition almost as dark and dense as that which broods over Rome itself, wraps the people in the shadow of death; for Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland? Or to come to our own empire, what has an establishment done for Ireland? How much has it left undone for England and Wales? What would have been the condition of the neglected population of this kingdom at the present moment, but for the labours of the Dissenters and Methodists; and to shew how little



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security an establishment affords to religion I refer to the page of English History.\*

From the time of Henry VIII. to the restoration of Charles II. in what a vacillating state was the Church of England, and the affections of the people towards it. I shall cite but one proof of this fact.

“The Report of the state of the Provinces of Canterbury,” says an Edinburgh Reviewer of Dr. Southey’s late work, “as delivered by Laud to his master at the close of the year 1639, represents the Church of England as in the highest and most palmy state. There was scarcely the least appearance of dissent. Most of the bishops stated that all was well among their flocks. Seven or eight persons in the diocese of Peterborough had seemed refractory to the church, but had made ample submission. In Norfolk and Suffolk all whom there had been reason to suspect, had made profession of conformity, and appeared to observe it strictly. It is confessed, that there was a little difficulty in bringing some of the vulgar in Suffolk to take the sacrament at the rails in the church. This was the only open instance of non-conformity which the vigilant eye of Laud could find in all the dioceses of his twenty-one suffragans, on the very eve of a revolution in which primate and church, and monarch and monarchy, were to perish together.”†

And this revolution, be it recollected, was commenced by a parliament composed of members originally of the Church of England, and not as has been too frequently and disingenuously asserted, of dissenters from its communion.

\* It is quite unnecessary to reply to the remarks of the Reviewer (page 31) on the establishment of Dissent. This is only a quibble upon terms. He knows that Lord Mansfield used this word in a sense altogether diverse from that which is attached to it in the controversy between churchmen and dissenters, where it means, “The setting up by the legislature of a national creed and ritual, and the incorporation of a body of men with chartered privileges for teaching this religion.” In this sense, and this is the only one in which the term is used in the present controversy, Dissent is not established but merely protected.

† Lord Macaulay. *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 50, p. 552.

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But may not I refer to the present divided state of the Church of England for a most convincing and unanswerable argument to prove that her boasted uniformity exists no where but in the Act which was passed to put an end to all difference and schism, and to render her a beautiful model of christian unity, the glory of Christendom, and the admiration of the world? What has that celebrated act, the very bulwark of the Anglican Church, effected? It has destroyed unity without establishing uniformity. Are her formularies uniform with the scriptures, or with each other? Her own writers confess they are not. Are her clergy uniform in their opinions? Have they determined either the precise meaning which the prayer book attaches to the initiatory sacrament of baptism, or the theological views of the articles of faith, or the grounds on which the connexion of the church with the state can be defended? Their own interminable controversies prove that they have not. Is there any unity of spirit and temper among the sons and champions of the church? Mr Riland tells us that they are divided into two parties, "the Nominalists and the Realists;" and Mr. Acaster assures us that a fierce and malignant persecution is carried on by the former against the latter. Were it not an invidious task, what an array of hostile books and hostile men could I marshal against each other, books containing sentiments, and men breathing a spirit, as opposite as the east is from the west. It was the declaration of Lord Chatham in reference to the Church of England in his day, that the nation had "a Calvinistic creed, a popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy." What then is the efficiency of establishments, if they cannot preserve uniformity, much less maintain unity? All

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they can do, if we may argue from what they have done, is to maintain the adoption and use of the same formularies, unaccompanied either by agreement as to their meaning, or by the manifestation of any consentaneous spirit. It may be truly averred that there is in any one of the denominations into which the great body of dissenters is divided, more uniformity of religious opinion, and more unity of spirit, than can be found in the Church of England.

In the opinion of Dissenters, reason and history both prove that religious establishments are inconsistent with their own purpose, inasmuch as the objects to which they relate are naturally incapable of being enforced by secular power, while the imperfections of fallibility, mutability, and corruption, which attach to human authority, prove that it is unfit to govern the conscience, and to rule the Church of Christ. They are injurious in many ways, they deprive the church of its essential character, as a spiritual, voluntary, and independent body; they take from Christians their indefeasible privileges of an unrestricted right of private judgment, of voluntary association, and of electing their own ministers; they tend to corrupt the motives simplicity and spirituality of the clergy by the lure they hold out to ambition, earthly mindedness, and love of secular pomp; they weaken the force of the evidences of Christianity, by representing it as leaning in part for support on the arm of secular power, instead of exclusively resting for its defence upon its own credentials, and the grace of God; in many instances they present impediments to the progress of pure religion; they foster prejudices in the minds of those who support them, and cherish a spirit of intolerance, and carry on, if not by the enact-

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ments of law, yet by the force of opinion, a species of persecution against those who conscientiously secede from them, and they tend to weaken the strength by dividing the feelings of the christian part of the population.\*

As a proof of the correctness of the last mentioned effects of establishments, take the language and manner in which Justice Blackstone treats the subject in his commentaries. He brands nonconformity as a crime, and yet speaks of dissenters as if they were far more deserving of pity than of blame. "The sin of schism (non-conformity) is as such by no means the subject of temporal coercion and punishment. If, through weakness of intellect, through misdirected piety, through perverseness and acerbity of temper, or which is often the case, through a prospect of secular advantage in herding with a party, men quarrel with the establishment, the civil magistrate has nothing to do with it, unless their tenets and practice threaten ruin and disturbance to the state." What a demonstration this is of the tendency of establishments to destroy candour and foster prejudice! "The Church of England," says the Quarterly Review, "is vitally and inseparably connected with the state, and they who are discontented with it are but half Englishmen." To this it has been very properly replied, that had they but the alternative of being either half Englishmen, or half Christians, they would prefer to deserve the former appellation. And if, in order to become quite an Englishman, it were necessary to approve of every thing in the institutions of our country, it would follow that there was a time when

\* Many of these sentiments are discussed with great force in Graham's work.

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protestants at large were undeserving of that appellation, when all but papists were half Englishmen.

I shall conclude this part of my defence by another extract from the Edinburgh Review,

“The ark of God was never taken till it was surrounded by the arms of earthly defenders. In captivity, its sanctity was sufficient to vindicate it from insult, and to lay the hostile fiend prostrate on the threshold of his own temple. The real security of Christianity is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exquisite adaptation to the human heart, in the facility with which its scheme accommodates itself to the capacity of every human intellect, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the great mystery of the grave. To such a system it can bring no addition of dignity or of strength, that it is part and parcel of the common law. It is not now for the first time left to rely on the force of its own evidences, and the attractions of its own beauty. Its sublime theology confounded the Grecian schools in the fair conflict of reason with reason. The bravest and wisest of the Caesars found their arms and their policy unavailing when opposed to the weapons that were not carnal, and the kingdom that was not of this world. The victory which Porphyry and Dioclesian failed to gain, is not, to all appearance, reserved for any of those who have in this age directed their attacks against the last restraint of the powerful, and the last hope of the wretched. The whole history of the Christian Religion shows that she is in far greater danger of being corrupted by the alliance of power, than of being crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her, treat her as her prototypes treated her author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry hail! and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre into her hand, but it is a fragile reed; they crown her, but it is with thorns; they cover with purple the wounds which their own hands have inflicted on her; and inscribe magnificent titles over the cross on which they have fixed her to perish in ignominy and pain.”\*

\* Edinburgh Review, January, 1830.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### CHURCH OFFICERS.

IT is the belief of Protestant Dissenters, that the New Testament mentions only two kinds of officers as belonging to the church of Christ; this of course is to be understood with the exception of those of an extraordinary nature which appertained exclusively to the primitive times. The permanent ecclesiastical offices to be found in the Scriptures, are those of the Bishop and Deacon. Besides these there are no others, and of these there are no gradations. I stated in "The Church Member's Guide," that one of our grounds of dissent from the Church of England is, "that she multiplies offices in her communion, beyond all scriptural precedent." In reply to this the Reviewer says, "The essential officers of the Church of England are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." Does he not mean orders instead of officers? If not, Archbishops, Deans, and Archdeacons, are either no officers at all, or non-essential ones. Whatever may be the ecclesiastical meaning of the term office, the etymological meaning of it is, a public charge or employment, and where there are different duties to be performed, or a different charge to be borne, there is a difference of office. Now I contend that according to

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this definition, and this is the only sense in which I use it, there are many offices and titles in the Church of England that are not to be found in the word of God. There are their Graces the Most Reverend the Archbishops by divine providence, the Right Reverend the Bishops by divine permission, the Very Reverend the Deans, the Worshipful the Chancellors, the Venerable the Archdeacons, the Reverend the Priest, Rector or Vicar, and the Reverend the Deacon, Assistant or Curate. These are the officers I mean and that they are multiplied beyond all scripture precedent will not be doubted I think by any one who is really acquainted with the New Testament. If they are to be found there let them be shown us, and we will give up our objection. Let them be examined with all their attendant circumstances of high sounding titles, secular pomp, and worldly splendour, and compared with the scriptural account of that kingdom which is not of this world; whose sovereign forbade his ministers to be called masters; whose essentials are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; whose characteristic is humility; whose law is the will of Christ; whose force is that of truth; and whose support and success depend upon the influence of a divine Spirit, and not on that of human authority. These offices secularise the church, especially as in the case before us, when they are found in a church established and endowed by law. We should object to them under any circumstances, even in a system of unestablished episcopacy, but the objection is strengthened by the consideration, that they are set up by the civil power, are incorporated with the state, and partake of the pomp and the authority of the kingdoms of this world. They are in our opinion a wide departure from the simplicity that is in Christ, and

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open an inexhaustible source of corruption in the sacred subject of religion, by rendering the church of the Redeemer a field where pride, ambition, the love of power, and covetousness, have ample room to act their parts, and to carry on their devastations.

But the Reviewer says "The essential officers of the church of England, are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." I might here ask him for the scriptural authority for the term Priest,\* as a designation of a christian minister. Is this an apostolical designation? Is it ever employed to denote an ecclesiastical officer in the churches founded by the apostles of Christ? The priesthood of the New Testament are all real Christians, not ministers exclusively. There is not a single passage in which the word is used as a designation of office. This essential officer in the church of England, as the Reviewer calls him, has no warrant in the word of God. He must abandon it as wholly unauthorized. Bishop Stillingfleet in his condemnation of this application of the term, very justly remarks. "By the metaphorical names of priests and altars, at last came up the sacrifice of the mass, without which they thought the names of priests and altars insignificant." And as the name of priest is without scriptural authority, so also is the office of bishop in the modern acceptation of diocesan episcopacy. The question at issue between the episcopalians and dissenters is, whether there are three kinds of perma-

\* I am aware that in strict etymology Priest is a contraction of Presbyter; but I am now speaking of the ecclesiastical use of the term, which I suppose no one will deny is intended to convey the same idea as sacerdos in Latin and hiercus in Greek. This use of the word was introduced very early in the history of Christianity, and is to be traced up to the error of making the Theocracy the model of the christian church.



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nent church officers mentioned in the New Testament, or only two. The prelatists contend for three, the latter affirm that there are only bishops and deacons. By bishops are meant the same officers as in other places are called elders, pastors, or rulers, that is, teachers of religion, having the care of a single congregation. The Reviewer is correct therefore when he observes that the naked question between us is, "Whether bishops and elders be the same officers?" Now that the affirmative of this question is true, is as clear to me as that either of them is mentioned in the word of God.

Let us examine the celebrated passages in the xxth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: at the 17th verse it is said, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." They came, and Paul addressed to them the affecting charge contained in the latter part of the chapter. At the 28th verse he says, "Take heed therefore (ye elders) unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," episcopous. The English reader should understand that the Greek word for overseers is bishops, and so it ought unquestionably to have been translated. If it be the same persons that are called elders, who are addressed as bishops, it proves that the words are convertible, as designating the same office.\*

\* Since the publication of the first edition, it has been suggested to me by two very intelligent friends, that the term elder is a generic term, of which bishop and deacon are the species. Should this be conceded, it would only destroy so much of my argument as is intended to prove that the terms elder and bishop are of identical import, without at all weakening the proof of there having been but two orders of officers. The attempt to establish the existence of a third order, and the superiority of a bishop to a presbyter, is on this principle rendered no less futile, than on the supposition of the terms

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The apostle in writing to the church at Philippi, begins his epistle thus, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Here mention is made of bishops, but nothing is said of elders; there is no allusion whatever to a third order. Why? Because as it may fairly be presumed there was none. Would the apostle have mentioned deacons, an inferior order, and omitted elders, if there had been elders as distinct from bishops? It is not a little confirmatory of this remark, that Polycarp, as I shall presently shew, in an epistle addressed about sixty years afterwards to the Philippian church, mentions only two orders, but dropping the term bishops, employs that of elders. If we refer to the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, we shall find proofs equally conclusive, that the two terms designate the same office. No mention is made in his epistle to Timothy, where he states the qualifications of church officers, of any third order; bishops and deacons are specified, but not a

being used convertibly for designating the same office; for if the eldership includes the bishop, how can the species be above the genus? Mr Greville Ewing contends that the eldership means the first-fruits of the christian dispensation, and is not a designation of office at all. It consisted of those who had been first called by the ministry of the word. But though the elders were not officers in the usual acceptation of the term, yet the bishops and deacons were usually selected from their number. Mr Conder's idea is pretty nearly the same. It is observable, however, that the existence of the three orders, and the superiority of the bishop to the elders, is alike disproved upon all these views. There is some little difficulty, I confess, in ascertaining the precise meaning of the term, but none whatever in shewing that if it be employed by the New Testament writers as a designation of office, it necessarily excludes the existence of three orders, and of course all possibility of episcopal superiority.

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word is said of elders. If elders were a distinct office, why were they left out, and the qualifications of deacons, confessedly inferior officers, stated? But still stronger is the proof derived from the commencement of the epistle to Titus, chapter i. 5-7: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee; if any be blameless, &c; for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God." If this do not convince, then it is hopeless to attempt, by demonstration itself, to produce conviction. Titus was to ordain none to the eldership, but such as were blameless, because a bishop must be blameless. If the terms are not convertible, where is the force of the apostle's reasoning? If then elders and bishops are never referred to in any one passage as co-existing orders; if in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, where the qualifications of church officers are especially laid down, no mention is made of a third order; if when the title of bishop occurs that of elder is dropped, and vice versa, when the apostolic writers speak of elders they are silent with regard to bishops; if when we read of elders we find them in the same discourse addressed as bishops; and when we read of elders being ordained in every church no mention is made of there being likewise bishops ordained, surely it is a just and necessary inference, that the two titles are intended to designate the same office. Mr Scott with his usual candour concedes all we claim on this subject. In his notes upon Acts xx. 17, as compared with the 28th verse he says, "The same persons are in this chapter called elders or presbyters, and overseers or bishops: it must therefore be allowed, that there were not dis-

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tinct orders of ministers in the church at that time. Probably when the apostles founded a church they appointed pastors over it, according to the numbers to be superintended; these were at first called elders or overseers, that is presbyters or bishops indifferently." The same admission is made in his notes on 1st Tim. iii, Titus i.: and on 1 Peter, v. 2, he says, "The words 'taking the oversight,' literally signify 'performing the episcopal office,' and this must be allowed to be a decisive evidence that no express distinction was established between bishops and presbyters when the apostle wrote this epistle." Yet from the holy Scriptures, the Reviewer says, "it appears most clearly that a bishop is superior to a presbyter." I think there are few but will be of opinion, that Mr Scott's concessions are more accordant with the passages which I have quoted, than the reasoning of my opponent.

But I shall now state and answer the arguments by which, in opposition to this scriptural view of the subject, the Reviewer attempts to prove a distinction between the offices of a bishop and a presbyter, and the superiority of the former to the latter. It must be recollected, that the question is not whether this distinction and superiority were or were not introduced at an early period of the christian history, subsequently to the days of the apostles, but whether they were set up by apostolic authority and sanction. My appeal is to the New Testament, and if prelacy cannot be found there, my argument, in all that I contend for, is sound; my principles and practice as a dissenter are justified; and the claims of the church of England to an apostolic origin are shown to be unfounded. I admit the probability that before the third century closed, the

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distinction contended for by episcopalians existed, and so also did many other innovations and corruptions. But let us consider the arguments of the Reviewer.

1. "That a bishop is superior to a presbyter appears from the memorable fact, allowed by Calvin himself, that for fourteen hundred years a christian church could not be found without a presiding bishop." This does not touch the case. We contend for a bishop in every church, that is, in every regular society of christian worshippers. We believe the head of every such society is a bishop: but diocesan episcopacy is a different thing. That means not that there should be a bishop in every christian society that can be found, but a bishop over apostolic bishops; a bishop in fact without a church. The logic of this proof of the Reviewer will possibly not be thought much better than that which he has ridiculed in my volume. Even allowing that Calvin used the term "bishop," in the same sense as a modern episcopalian, still this authority would take us back only to the second century, when all the apostles had gone to their rest; and thus the argument fails again to establish the point of apostolic arrangement: but unfortunately for the Reviewer's argument, Calvin expressly asserts that the offices of bishops and presbyters were the same in the time of the apostles, and that the distinction between them, which was afterwards introduced, and which commenced only with the office of *primus inter pares*, and not in a separate order, was a departure from the institution of Christ. So that Calvin's testimony is certainly in favour of our views. See Calvin's *Institutes*, Book 4, chapter iv. 1, 2, 4.

2. "That a bishop is superior to a presbyter, further appears from the almost miraculous preservation of the

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Syrian Church in the east; and the Valdensian Church in the west; neither of which churches submitted to anti-Christ; both of which churches are to this day episcopal, and have been episcopal from the days of the apostles." Can the Reviewer be serious in offering this as a proof of the point in dispute between us? Why Dr. Buchanan himself does not pretend to trace the history of the Syrian Church further back than to the close of the second century, and this not by documentary evidence, but only upon the verbal testimony of its own members, who felt a pride and an interest in giving it as high an antiquity as possible. As to the Valdensian Church, the origin and early history of this community are too obscure and uncertain to afford any proof whatever on the subject. I must be permitted to say, that a more impressive confession of weakness or want of proof was never made, than in the attempt to found the apostolical appointment of diocesan episcopacy on these two particulars.

3. "That a bishop is superior to a presbyter appears from the records of ecclesiastical history, and from the writings of the primitive and apostolic fathers." If I am to grant the Reviewer this authority he could substantiate nearly all the fatal errors of popery. I still reiterate the sentiment, that this question is to be decided neither by the records of uninspired ecclesiastical history, nor by the writings of the fathers, but by the word of God. To appeal to writings which, as Chillingworth says, are neither consistent with each other nor with themselves, for the decision of a question which can only be set at rest by the word of God, is to remove the cause from an infallible and unvarying authority to one that is fallible and mutable. Eccle-

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siastical history and the fathers may be quoted in support of not a few corruptions. To show however that it is not from any apprehension lest these witnesses would bear testimony against us that we refuse to call them, I will quote two of them, Clemens Romanus and Polycarp:

“There are two very ancient testimonies,” says Dr. Fletcher, “which I shall cite from Dr. Campbell; one of them is from the most respectable remains of christian antiquity, next to the inspired writings. The piece I allude to is the first epistle of Clemens Romanus to the Corinthians, as it is commonly called, but as it styles itself, ‘The Epistle of the Church of God at Rome to the Church of God at Corinth.’ It is the same Clement whom Paul calls ‘his fellow-labourer.’ (Phil, iv, 3.) In this Epistle Clement informs us, that ‘the apostles having preached the gospel in countries and towns, constituted the first fruits of their ministry, whom they approved by the spirit, bishops and deacons of those who should believe.’ And in order to satisfy us that he did not use the word in a vague manner for church officers in general, but as expressive of all the distinct orders that were established by them in the church, he adds, ‘nor was this a new device, inasmuch as bishops and deacons had been pointed out many ages before; for thus says the scripture, I will constitute their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.” The passage quoted is the last clause of the 17th verse of the 60th chapter of Isaiah. ‘Whether this venerable ancient,’ observes Dr C, “has given a just translation or made a proper application of this prediction, is not the point in question. It is enough that it evinces what his notion was of the established ministers then in the church. And if (as no critic ever questioned, and as his own argument necessarily requires,) he means the same by bishops with those who in the Acts are called presbyters or elders, whom the apostles ordained in every church, and whom Clement, in other parts of this epistle also calls elders, namely, the ordinary teachers, it would seem strange that the bishop properly so called, the principal officer of all, should be the only one in his account, of whom the Holy Spirit in sacred writ, had given no previous intimation. Nay do not the words of this father manifestly imply, that any other office in the church than the two he had mentioned, might be justly styled ‘a new device.’ If the above account given by Clement is not to be considered as an enumeration, I know not what to call it. If two were actually all the

orders then in the church, could he have introduced the mention of them by telling us he was about to publish a list or catalogue, or even to make an enumeration of the ecclesiastical degrees? Is this the way of prefacing the mention of so small a number as two? It is this writer's express design to acquaint us what the Apostles did for accommodating the several churches they planted with pastors and assistants. And can we suppose he would have omitted the chief point of all, namely, that they supplied every church with a prelate, ruler, or head, if any one had really been entitled to this distinction?" "The other testimony I shall produce is that of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John, and must certainly have written his epistle to the Philippians a considerable time before the middle of the second century. He also takes notice of two orders of ministers in the church, enjoining the people, (chap. v.) to be subject to their presbyters and deacons, as to God and Christ. He could go no higher for a similitude; nor could he decently have gone so high had he known of a higher order in the church. Not a syllable of the bishop, as a distinct and superior officer, who in less than a hundred and fifty years after would have been the principal, if not the only, person to whom their subjection would have been enjoined by any christian writer. Let it be observed further, that though in chap. v. he lays down the duties and qualifications of deacons, and in chap. vi. those of presbyters, where every thing befitting judges and governors is included, and through the whole epistle those of the people, there is no mention of what is proper in the character and conduct of a bishop. It is evident that Polycarp knew of no christian ministers superior to the presbyters. If the bishop was of a different order, and yet included in the term, he has been as little observant of accuracy in the distinction of the names, as of propriety and decency in his injunctions on this head."\*

These quotations will show how unfortunate the Reviewer is in his reference to the apostolical fathers. If any one wishes to see this subject pursued at greater length, I refer him to Lord King's "Enquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church," which shows that the concurrent testimony of the early fathers is in favour of the equality of the bishops and presbyters;

\* Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 134. Fletcher's Lectures on the Roman Catholic Religion.



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and that episcopacy, when it did commence, was parochial and not diocesan.

4. "That a bishop is superior to a presbyter appears most clearly from the holy Scriptures." What! after the quotations I have already given! "Most clearly from the Scriptures"! It might appear so to the Reviewer, for there is no accounting for the illusions of our mental optics. But in what part of the Scriptures is this superiority discovered? In the following: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order things that are wanting, (things left undone,) and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee." Titus i. 5. "I besought thee still to abide at Ephesus, (where were many presbyters,) that thou charge some that they preach no other doctrine;" *admonere quosdam ne doctrinam alienam a vera et pura religione Christiana ab apostolis traditâ inveherent.* Schleusner. 1 Tim. i. 3, and vi. 3. "Against a presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." 1 Tim. v. 19. "If then to order things left undone; if to ordain presbyters in every city; if to charge presbyters to preach sound doctrine; if to receive accusations against presbyters; if all this does not prove that a bishop is superior to presbyters, we know not by what fact superiority can be proved, nor in what language superiority can be expressed!"

Can the Reviewer be in earnest when he talks of this as most clearly proving from the Scriptures, the superiority of the episcopal to the presbyterian office? We may be sure that this is all that he can find to support his position, but whether it most clearly proves his point, let any candid reader judge! How does it prove his point? This is not stated, but I presume the force of proof

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lies in this; Timothy was a bishop, and ordained elders, and as the ordainer is superior to the ordained, therefore a bishop is superior to a presbyter. But this is assumption, assumption all, and not most clear proof. It is assumed but not proved that Timothy and Titus were bishops, in the usual Scriptural sense of the term; their mission was clearly of an extraordinary nature, and had little in common with the pastoral and episcopal office. Again it is assumed, that ordination necessarily infers superiority of office in him who performs it. Is this the case in the Church of England? Virtually the king ordains all the bishops and archbishops, nominally the dean and chapter elect, and ceremonially bishops ordain bishops. If the two archbishops died together, who would consecrate their successors? Let my friend's argument be resorted to for a solution of the difficulty, or rather the circle of difficulties, with which he is now encompassed. Will he still maintain that the ordainer is necessarily superior to the ordained?

“Why,” says Milton, “should the performance of ordination which is a lower office exalt a prelate? Verily neither the nature nor example of ordination doth any way require an imparity of character between the ordainer and the ordained; for what more natural than every like to produce his like, man to beget man, fire to propagate fire; and in example of highest opinion, the ordainer is inferior to the ordained; for the pope is not made by the precedent pope, but by cardinals, who ordain and consecrate to a higher and greater office than their own.”

But I refer to better authority than the practice of the Vatican, I mean the practice of the apostles. If Timothy was a bishop, then he was ordained by inferiors, for he was “set apart by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” Paul an apostle, and Barnabas, were ordained to a special mission, by the prophets and

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teachers of the church at Antioch. "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Acts xiii. 3. What now becomes of the clear proof from the Holy Scriptures, of the superiority of bishops to presbyters? But my opponent asserts, "that the argument which attempts to prove that the offices of the bishop and presbyter are the same, by proving too much, would destroy itself; for if all presbyters are bishops, it would prove that all presbyters are apostles, for the apostle John (1 John, ii. 1. iii. John, 1.) calls himself a presbyter; and the apostle Peter (1 Peter, v. 1.) styles himself a fellow-presbyter, of the presbyters. But must we hence conclude that all presbyters were apostles?" No certainly; any more than we are to conclude that because Jesus Christ is called an apostle, (Heb. iii. 1.) therefore all apostles sustained the offices of the Saviour. Mr. Scott has given the meaning of these passages in his comment on 1. Pet. v. 1. where he says, "The elders were in general the rulers and teachers of the churches: and St. Peter, waiving the mention of his apostolical office, addressed them as one of their company, and as acquainted with the nature and difficulties of their work." That is, he applies the term to himself in a way of condescension and accommodation, but not as importing that in the full literal meaning of the word, he actually sustained an elder's office. The apostles were elders in the same way as the Saviour was an apostle. They included, as the fountains of authority, all offices in themselves, and when they pleased discharged the duties of all, without belonging to any one, or being otherwise than apostles. It is asked "How it happened that the plan of governing the church without bishops," (this means

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diocesan bishops of course) “was not discovered for fourteen centuries, and was discovered at last by the turbulent bigot Robert Brown.” This is best answered by shewing, which I have already done, and shall do at still greater length, that long before fourteen centuries had rolled away, the discovery was made, and made by other men than Robert Brown. John Wycliffe is a great name, and the common boast of Protestants, whether they belong to the Church of England or not. Perhaps episcopalians would be less fond of this name, were they aware of all the sentiments of the illustrious man who bore it. I will here give the views of this morning star of the Reformation, on the point we are now considering.

“I boldly assert one thing, viz. that in the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is a priest and a deacon. In like manner, I affirm, that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of the epistle to Titus; and the same is testified by that profound theologian Jerome. ‘By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one. But afterwards the emperor divided them, and made bishops lords, and priests their servants; and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. For the ordinances of Christ are formed in meekness, in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches and high estate.’ Vaughan’s *Life of Wycliffe*, vol. ii. p. 309.

There were others also who before Robert Brown, discovered this secret. Cranmer is the pride of the advocates of the Church of England, of which he was one of the principal founders. Let us hear his sentiments. In a highly interesting document, containing the answers of the venerable prelate to questions, propounded to a select assembly at Windsor Castle in the reign of Edward VI., is the following avowal. “The

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bishops and priests were at one time and were not two things, but both one office, in the beginning of Christ's religion." Nor is this all, for, whether the Reviewer knows it or not, it was the current doctrine of the principal instruments of the English Reformation, in the reigns of Henry VIII., and Edward VI.

The learned Joseph Boyce, of Dublin, in the post-script to his "Vindication of Remarks on the Bishop of Derry's Discourse," has collected together a mass of evidence on this point, of which the following is a brief summary. The testimonies of Tyndal, Lambert, and Barnes, who sealed their testimony to the reformed faith with their blood, are extant in the "Healing Attempt." They are to the following effect:

"That there were but two officers of divine institution in the church, viz. elders or bishops, to feed the flock, and deacons, to minister the charity of the church, to the poor and needy." In "A declaration made of the functions and divine institution of bishops and priests," issued in the reign of Henry VIII. and subscribed in 1537 or 1538, by Thomas Cromwell, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, eleven bishops, and many doctors and civilians, it is asserted, "That in the New Testament there is no mention made of any degrees or distinctions in orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and of priests or bishops." The same declaration occurs in the book called "The erudition of a christian man, composed by the ecclesiastical committees, appointed by the king, and published by royal authority A.D. 1510." St. Jerome's opinion, that the scriptural bishop and presbyter were the same office, as well as name, is expressly approved by Bishop Alley, in the reign of Elizabeth, "Poor Man's Library," vol. i. p. 95, and by Bishop Pilkington, "Healing Attempt," 16. It is vindicated more at large by Bishop Jewel in the defence of his "Apology" against Harding; in which he cites Austin, Chrysostom, and Ambrose as additional testimonies in favour of the identity of the order of bishop and priest. The same sentiment is defended by Dr. Willet, another famous writer of the same reign, in his "Synopsis Papismi;" by Bishop Munton, by Dr. Whitaker, by Dr. Lawrence Humphrey; and lastly, by another Oxford divine, Dr. Holland, who delivered the same doctrine in the Act, July 9, 1608, in which he concluded the

contrary opinion to be most false against the scriptures, the fathers, and the doctrines of the Church of England. And he was so offended with Dr. Laud for asserting that "Episcopacy, as a distinct order from presbytery, was of divine and necessary right, that he told him he was a schismatic, and went about to make a division between the .English and Reformed Churches." See Boyce's Works, folio, vol. ii. p. 149, 153. Conder, vol. i. p. 246.

I submit these testimonies in favour of the opinions of protestant dissenters, on the subject of church affairs, to the candid consideration of my readers, as a proof that "the turbulent bigot, Robert Brown," who died in the year 1630, was not the first to discover a plan for governing the church without diocesan bishops.\* Others of greater name and purer reputation, discovered the same fact. When the foundations of the church of England were laid, the sentiment was echoed through the land by the founders themselves, who then furnished not only a justification of our dissent from a system which by their own showing is unscriptural, but gave a proof of inconsistency more flagrant than any of those inconsistencies of dissenters of which the Reviewer has attempted to find so many in the admissions of my volume. It is too well known to be dwelt upon, that

\* I would charitably hope, that the introduction of Brown's name twice into his remarks, was not intended by the Reviewer to foster the obloquy of his misconduct upon the Independents, of whom he is called the father and founder, in the same sentence, in which he is styled "The immoral, the infamous, Robert Brown." Indeed my opponent disclaims this, at least hypothetically. Yet the introduction of his name has something suspicious about it, considering the manner in which it is done. We disclaim Brown as our father and founder; but if he actually stands in this relation to us, he may be thought a saint, compared with Henry viii. the founder of the English church. Brown, with all his immorality and infamy, whether it be more or less, of which it is difficult to form a correct opinion, was received in the communion of the Church of England, and died beneath her altars, as one of her ministers.

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the church of Scotland and most of the reformed churches of the continent of Europe, take the same view of this subject as the dissenters do. Even the episcopacy of the Lutheran church is quite different, in some of its essential features, from that of the English church; which latter, in her hierarchy, symbolizes more with the Greek and Roman churches, than with any of the other spiritual communities which threw off the yoke of Rome. And it is matter of record, and of undoubted fact, that her founders contemplated a much more perfect work of reformation than they effected; and would, in all probability, have introduced a scheme of church government, to say the least of it, approaching the presbyterian, had God spared the life of the youthful Edward. It will be seen, therefore, that in asserting, as one ground of dissent, that the church of England multiplies offices "beyond all scriptural authority, I am borne out most abundantly, not only by the word of God, but by nearly all the Protestant churches in Europe, and what is of no small weight, the almost concurrent testimony of the founders of the English church itself.

I now come to the cardinal questions in church polity, the right of a church to elect its church officers.

It will be known by all who read the account which the Reviewer has extracted from my book, that the schisms which sometimes exist in our churches, may be traced, in great part at least, to the popular mode of electing our ministers. But still, when the invaluable nature of this privilege is considered, few will be disposed to surrender it on account of the contingent evils with which it may sometimes be attended. The right

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and practice are clearly deducible from the records of the New Testament. True it is that we have no express mention of a case in which it is said that the people chose their pastors: but as the people are every where represented in the Acts of the apostles, as in whole or in part the elective body in all other matters, they are of course to be considered as having the right to elect in this matter also. The people chose the two disciples to be presented to the Lord as candidates for the vacancy in the apostolic college; Acts i. 15, 26. The people chose the seven deacons; Acts ii. The people joined in the deliberations and decisions of the council at Jerusalem on the subject of circumcision; and the decree resulting from that council, went forth in their name also, joined with the names of the apostles and elders. Acts xv. The whole tenor of the Acts of the apostles shews, that though the primitive churches were not pure democracies, yet that they were essentially popular assemblies as to their government, since the people were consulted and called upon to decide in church matters. Surely then their right to choose their pastors, even without a special precedent, may be fairly deduced from the general principle. And if, as I think can be abundantly proved, the first churches were voluntary societies, exclusively spiritual in their nature, the idea of a foreign and political interference is altogether incongruous. Surely I ought to be allowed to judge of the opinions of him who is to teach me doctrines, which are to decide my eternal destiny, and of the conduct of him who is to be my example. We are commanded to "try the spirits whether they be of God:" "to beware of false prophets:" "not to receive into our houses, or bid God speed to any one who brings false



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doctrine:" to "take heed what we hear." From such injunctions as these, the right of the people to choose their own ministers may be justly inferred; for without such a right it would be impossible to find any meaning in the command, or any power in the people to obey it.

If it were at all necessary to proceed beyond the word of God, I could, with unhesitating confidence, refer to the facts of ecclesiastical history, as furnishing ample proof that the mode of the popular election of bishops prevailed in the early ages of the christian history.\*

"One inspector or bishop," says the learned Mosheim, "presided over each assembly, to which office he was elected by the voice of the whole people:" but this is so generally admitted, that quotations are unnecessary. This point has been also conceded by episcopalian writers of great eminence, and even by the founders of the English Church. Dr. Barrow admits "that it was the primitive practice to do nothing without consent of the people;" and quotes Clement of Rome, to prove "that the Apostles did not ordain pastors over the churches, without the consent of the people." In the production of Cranmer, already alluded to, we find the following expressions. "In the apostles' time, when there were no Christian princes, by whose authority ministers of God's word might be appointed, nor synnes by the sword corrected; there was no remedy then for the correction of vice, or appointeinge of ministers, but only the consent of christien multitude amonge themselves, by an uniform consent to follow the advice and persuasion of such persons whom God had most endued with the spirit of wisdom and counsaile. And at that time, for as much as christien people had no sword nor governour among them, they were constrained of necessity to take such curates and priests as either they knew themselves to be meet thereunto, or else as were commended unto them by others that were so replete with the Spirit

\* If the Reviewer or any other episcopalian entertains any doubt on this subject, he may consult the first and second chapters of the 4th book of Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church. Episcopalianism must dispose of that very learned authority, before they can expect us to relinquish so natural, useful, and ancient a right. We can defend it from scripture and their own most-valued authorities.

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of God, with such knowledge in the profession of Christ, such wisdom, such conversation and couucell, that they ought even of very-conscience to give credit unto them, and to accept such as by theym were presented. And so some tyme the apostles and other unto whom God had given abundantly his spirit sent or appointed ministers of God's word, sometime the people did chuse such as they thought meet thereunto. And when any were appointed or sent by the apostles or other, the people of their owne voluntary will with thanks did accept them: not for the supremitie, imperie, or dominion, that the apostles had over them to command as their princes or masters, but as good people, ready to obey the advice of good counsellors, and to accept any thing that was necessary for their edification and benefit." Conder, Vol. I, p. 245.

Our opinions on the right of the people to choose their own ministers are supported also by the practice which prevails among the members of the Church of England, and is sanctioned by many of her clergy, of leaving their own parish church and legally appointed minister, to attend the ministry of a clergyman, whose views more exactly accord with their own.\* There are to be found innumerable cases of persons leaving not only one parish for another in the same town, but one village or town for another, to hear a preacher whom they prefer to their own parochial clergyman. And what is the ground of this preference? The evangelical sentiments of the men for whom they leave their own appointed spiritual guide: so that the members of the establishment continually exercise in opposition to their own ecclesiastical system, a right, which is a fundamental principle of dissent; a principle which a due regard to the authority of Christ, and our own spiritual welfare, will not allow us to surrender, persuaded as we are that the contingent evils which occasionally arise out of the system of popular choice

\* See Appendix Note A.

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are far less than those which are necessarily connected with the system of patronage in the establishment. Notwithstanding then the abuses, which in consequence of the imperfection of our nature will occasionally, and indeed not unfrequently, connect themselves with the right of popular suffrage in the election of a minister, we still value it as a privilege which we have no more inclination to surrender, than the freeholders of a county have to abandon the elective franchise, because of the evils which sometimes connect themselves with a contested election. It may also be added that, as in the latter case those evils are less to be dreaded in the civil community than the oppression of despotic authority, so the occasional collisions into which Christians are brought by the election of a minister, are in the end less injurious to the cause of real piety, than the quiescence of the flock in receiving whomsoever comes to them as their shepherd, from the patron who has bought them at a public auction, or earned them as a reward for services to a political faction, or received them as a patrimony from his ancestors. I advocate not contention and strife, as my book will testify. The system which allows the right of Christians to choose their spiritual instructors, although it gives occasion to such hearts as ours to put forth some of their latent corruption, is inconceivably more in accordance with reason and revelation, than that which converts the care of men's souls into a "lottery of rich prizes, where younger sons and the relations of men in power, try their fortune, after other sources of promotion have failed." Riland.

If my opponent thinks that balancing evils is a better, a more equitable way of settling the question between the church and dissent, than an appeal to the

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Scripture, he will gain little by his choice. Will he venture to assert that patronage has a less injurious influence upon the cause of religion, than popular choice? Will he affirm that it has introduced fewer hirelings and bad ministers into the ministry of the word? Will he assert that the contentions of dissenters have been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ, and the spiritual interests of mankind, than the withering blight of patronage, which has left but “a few gleaning grapes on the topmost boughs of their spreading vine?” But my appeal is to the word of God, and to this I am determined to adhere.

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**CHAPTER IV.****THE SPECIAL OBJECTIONS MADE BY DISSENTERS TO THE  
FORMULARIES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.**

THAT the Prayer Book is not without many and great faults, is confessed by churchmen themselves. A volume has been lately published, by the Rev. Robert Cox, A.M. perpetual curate of Stonehouse, North Devon, entitled, "The Liturgy revised," and another, entitled "Church Reform," by a clergyman who conceals his name; both of which acknowledge that the liturgy has many spots and blemishes, and both importunately, though respectfully, ask for alterations. But the most extraordinary work, for the extent, candour, and boldness of its concessions, perhaps ever yet published by a clergyman of the church of England, is the volume of the Rev. John Riland, A.M, entitled, "Ecclesiæ Decus et Tutamen." This able, pious, and intrepid writer has gone through the whole Prayer Book with the zeal, spirit, and courage of a Reformer. Happy would it be for the church of England if his plan of reform could be adopted. But he is evidently, in his own conviction, only one of a forlorn hope which has gone forth to attack the corruptions of the church.

Mr Cox remarks, "Notwithstanding however the peculiar excellency of our liturgy, it is not without imperfections, and those too of a description not easily to escape observation, but of so conspicuous a character as immediately to arrest the attention, and at the same time of so indefensible a nature, that the warmest admirers of our church have been unanimous in regretting their existence:" pp. 4, 5. In accounting for the present imperfections of the Prayer Book, Mr Cox remarks, "Several years elapsed after the accession of Elizabeth before the church reverted to the state in which it was left at the death of her brother. By her directions the ecclesiastical habits enjoined by the first book of King Edward and proscribed by the second, were restored, and a rubric at the end of the communion service against the notion of our Lord's 'real and essential presence in the sacrament,' was omitted; the Queen being anxious that this subject should be considered as a speculative and undetermined opinion, in which every one was left to the freedom of his own mind. Such indeed was her attachment to a variety of popish ceremonies, that numbers of Roman catholics conformed for years to the established church. Even the Pope intimated his willingness to sanction the Anglican liturgy, and the administration of the Lord's supper in both kinds, provided the Queen would acknowledge his supremacy." 21, 22. "A cursory reference to the rubrics will convince us that many of them are vague, defective, or even contradictory; that some are inapplicable to modern times; that others, without sufficient reason, are so universally abandoned, that the resumption of them would excite considerable offence; whereas others again, though cogent reasons might be assigned for their disuse, have from some unaccountable prejudice been so rigorously observed, that the least deviation from them would subject the clergyman to the disapprobation of his hearers, and the ecclesiastical censures of his diocesan:" p. 161.

Mr. Cox pleads for a complete revision of the liturgy and rubrics; in fact, for a thoroughly expurgated Prayer Book. Very few of the church services, either occasional or stated, are allowed to pass without an acknowledgment of their containing some blemishes, and a wish to have them effaced. Several of these will be noted in the sequel. I shall now state our objections to the Prayer Book, with the manner in which the Reviewer repels them.

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In reference to regeneration, I affirmed, "that the church of England teaches that baptism is regeneration." This mode of expression, perhaps is not strictly correct, it should have been stated that "she teaches that children are regenerated by baptism."

Mr Scott, in his *Essay on Regeneration*, has remarked,

"The fathers, as they are called, that is, the teachers of the christian church during some ages after the death of the apostles soon began to speak on this subject in unscriptural language: and our pious reformers, from an undue regard to them, and to the circumstances of the times, have retained a few expressions in the liturgy, which not only are inconsistent with their other doctrine, but also tend to perplex men's minds, and mislead their judgment on this important subject."

In the catechism it is expressly stated that in baptism the child is "made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In the article it is called, a sign of regeneration or new birth; "whereby as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church," &c. In the office of baptism occurs such an expression as this, "I certify you, that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptizing of this child; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now by the laver of regeneration in baptism received into the number of the children of God and heirs of everlasting life." This certainly looks a little like confounding baptism and regeneration, as if they were the same.\* Again, "seeing how this child is by

\* Probably I was not far wrong after all in the opinion of some when I asserted that the church of England teaches that baptism is regeneration. Mr Simeon in his "Appeal to men of wisdom and candour," represents the advocates of baptismal regeneration as

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baptism regenerate,” “we yield thee most hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit.” From these passages it appears to be the doctrine of the church of England, that all persons partake of the new birth who are rightly baptized; or in other words, that regenerating grace invariably accompanies the application of the baptismal fluid when administered according to its rites and rules. The whole of the population of this country therefore who have been baptized by the ministers of the church of England, although from the dawn of reason multitudes of them never manifested a single symptom of piety, but on the contrary have shewn every sign of an unholy disposition and unrenewed heart, have all been regenerated. This is virtually stated by the Reviewer to be the doctrine not only of the church of England, but also of the New Testament, because he says, “when baptism has been rightly administered and rightly received, we challenge our author to prove that regeneration has not been effected.” The proof lies with the Reviewer to show that it has, and to this he is challenged by many members of his own church who engaged in the baptismal controversy, and by the evangelical clergy in their writings on the subject of regeneration. If, however I am still called upon for proof that all who are rightly baptized are not regenerated, one or two passages of scripture are quite enough for this purpose: “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed

holding this sentiment. “Which,” says he, “has the preference in point of sobriety, the doctrine of a new and spiritual birth by the operations of the Spirit of God; or that of baptism being the new birth.” “But now observe the doctrine of our adversaries, viz: of those who identify baptism with the new birth.”



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remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John iii, 9; v, 4. Can this be affirmed in reference to all who are baptized? Yet all who are baptized are born again, according to the doctrine of the church of England.

That dissenters are not the only persons who think the language of the prayer book in reference to baptism unscriptural and dangerous, is evident from the language of Mr Scott, and also from the concessions of Mr Cox.

"It is far more difficult to decide respecting the nature and extent of any alteration in those passages which refer to the 'regeneration' of the infant. Many persons evidently wish that all the terms which bear upon the subject should be considerably modified, if not entirely expunged; others perhaps coincide in the opinion of the author of 'Church Reform,' that it would 'be useful to give in the rubric a clear and short explanation of the liturgical sense of the word 'regeneration;' whereas a considerable number, perhaps the majority of the clergy, regard all the proposed alterations as a culpable surrender of the peculiar glory of a christian sacrament, and an abandonment of the distinguishing privileges of infants under the christian dispensation." p. 98.

Will it now be denied that baptismal regeneration is the doctrine of the church of England? What, in the face of her ritual, the published opinions of the greater part of her clergy, and the known belief of the overwhelming majority of her members? The Reviewer must not attempt to escape by verbal inaccuracies, and cover his retreat by sophistical questions. If he can prove that the New Testament affirms the regeneration of all who are baptized in accordance with due ecclesiastical order and ritual precision, and that this order and precision are to be found only in his own

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churchy then my objection falls to the ground, and not till then. Will he admit there is any discrepancy between the language of the ritual of the establishment and the scripture? If so, he concedes my objection. If he deny that his church teaches this doctrine, he is contradicted by the major part of her clergy. If he say that both the scripture and the church teach it, I ask for his proof. And when he has found such as he deems to be sufficient, I then ask whether his evangelical brethren will be satisfied with his proofs?

2. "The church of England teaches that her bishops have the power of conferring the Holy Ghost in the ordination of her ministers." The Reviewer very correctly observes that this objection is founded on the form of words in "The ordering of Priests;" "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands." "It is evident," says my opponent, "that these words, 'Receive the Holy Ghost' are copied from the words of our Lord when he ordained his apostles to preach the gospel to all the world: 'As my father hath sent me, even so I send you; and when he had said this he breathed on them, and saith unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost.'" John xx, 21, 22. The Reviewer then goes on to shew that the words as employed by the bishops in the solemnity of ordination, cannot mean more than they did as employed by our Lord, and that as they did not then mean the conferring of the Holy Ghost, so they cannot mean this in the rubric. But let him speak for himself: "It is evident that these words cannot mean more in the 'ordering of priests/ than they mean in the gospel of St. John. It is further evident that the words in St. John, do not

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mean the conferring of the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost was not then but afterwards 'given.' Finally therefore it is evident that the words 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost,' do not mean the conferring of the Holy Ghost in the ordering of priests. What then is the meaning of these words of our Lord? Let any commentator be consulted."

"Receive the Holy Ghost. Receive now the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost for your assistance and success in the ministerial work which I now commit to you." (Guyse.) "Receive the Holy Ghost, and take this as an earnest of what you shall further receive not many days hence; for thus will I shortly breathe out the miraculous influences of my Spirit upon you, to qualify you for this important office." (Doddridge.) "Receive the Holy Ghost: ye are soon to receive the Holy Ghost in the fulness of his communication, whereby you will be qualified to declare the only terms on which men's sins are to be pardoned." (Macknight.)<sup>\*</sup> Never surely did any writer more directly confute himself than the Reviewer has done by bringing forward these quotations from Doddridge, Guyse, and Macknight. His position is this, the words "receive ye the Holy Ghost," as employed by the bishops means no more than they meant as employed by our Lord: three commentators are then quoted to prove that as used by Christ they did not mean the conferring of the Holy Ghost; while, the fact is that each one of them says, that they did mean the communication at that time, and

<sup>\*</sup> Why did not the Reviewer give the former part of Macknight's paraphrase? Why thus garble the paragraph? For very obvious reasons. "The illumination they now received from Jesus," says that commentator, "who in token that he bestowed it, breathed upon them and bade them receive it."

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an ampler communication very soon after, of the Holy Ghost. He has thus shewn by his own authorities, that the bishops do claim the power of conferring the Holy Ghost; for he concedes that the words in question as used by them mean the same as when used by Christ. He then goes on to say, "That all commentators will agree in the sound exposition of Hooker, who explains the language as signifying the authority and commission of the Holy Ghost to baptise, to preach," &c, &c. Here again is just occasion for surprise: instead of all commentators agreeing with Hooker, who limits the expression to the authority and commission to baptise and preach, not one of the commentators which he himself quotes takes this view, nor perhaps any commentator which he has in his library. All without exception that I have consulted, Lightfoot, Poole, Scott, Clarke, Henry, Bloomfield, refer this language not to the commission to preach exclusively, but to the qualifications for executing it, that is the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; and most do not consider it to refer to the commission at all. Now let my readers judge whether the church of England does not teach that her bishops claim a power to confer the Holy Ghost: and that this language is used not in the form of prayer but of authoritative bestowment, is apparent from what immediately follows in the address of the bishop to the priest, (which appears to me no less objectionable than the expression in question,) "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained."

"These are tremendous powers," says Towgood, "to be claimed and exercised by any mortal!" "Morinus, a learned priest, has published sixteen of the most ancient rituals or forms of ordination, used in the church from the earliest ages of Christianity in which

any such are found. In the several changes and additions under which these forms have successively past is seen how the spirit of superstition gradually wrought, every age adding some ridiculous rite or some extravagant claim to the inventions of the former, till it grew to the present enormous mass in the Roman pontifical. But it is peculiarly worthy of attention that in not one of the first fifteen rituals (from the fifth to the twelfth century) doth the form now used, Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins, &c. appear. It is the last only, the sixteenth, (which Morinus takes to be but about three hundred years old) which assumes to itself this power. Yea, amidst the pride and intoxication of this corruptest state of the church, so much sense and modesty seem still to have remained, that this extravagant claim was not universally admitted; for the learned priest observes, that in two other pontificals of the same age, this form, Receive the Holy Ghost, &c. was not found. And is this extravagant pretension, which the church of Borne, amidst all its pride and wantonness of superstition from the fifth to the twelfth century never presumed to make, now openly avowed and adopted by our Church?" Towgood 329.

3. My remark that the church of England teaches that her bishops have the power of conferring the Holy Ghost in the confirmation of the young, was most certainly an inadvertency and I retract it.

4. The church of England teaches that her priests have power to forgive sins. In this expression I refer to the office for the visitation of the sick, which must also be taken in connexion with the expressions used by the bishop at the ordination of a priest, "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained." Now let us add to this the form of absolution. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners, who truly repent and believe in him; of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Whatever special pleading may be employed to explain away the import of this

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language, there it stands, and in its plain and literal meaning claims for the clergy a power to forgive sins. "By his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins." If this means only as the Reviewer asserts, "I declare to thee thy sins are forgiven," what authority is there committed to a minister which does not belong to every private Christian? A power to declare that all are forgiven who are truly penitent is a power to do nothing. The word of God has done this already, and every man, woman, or child, in Christendom, may repeat it. Does the solemn announcement in the ordination service amount then to nothing more than an authority to declare from the Scriptures that every man's sins are forgiven who is penitent? It is worthy of remark that the Romanists defend their practice, pretty much on the same grounds as those adopted by the Reviewer, and in fact, the form is almost identical in the liturgies of the church of Rome, and the church of England. I will give the two forms in separate columns.

Form of absolution in the  
church of Rome.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee; and I by his authority absolve thee\* from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Form of absolution in the  
church of England.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe on him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, &c.

\* There is another expression in the Catholic form, but it is purely ritual and preparatory, "absolvo ab omni vinculo exeommu-

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It will not fail to strike any attentive reader that the protestant form is still stronger than the catholic one; inasmuch as the former has introduced the adjective "all," (all thy sins) which is wanting in the latter. Have not protestants continually referred, and in my judgment with propriety, to the power claimed by the church of Rome to forgive sins as an unscriptural and dangerous assumption? Then of course equally unscriptural is the claim of the church of England, which asserts and exercises her right in the same language.

The canons also of the two churches are so much alike, that when Sir J. Hippenley read in the House of Commons a canon of the English church in 1808, enjoining the priest not to make known to any one what has been revealed to him in confession, no less a theologian than Mr Wilberforce interrupted him by saying that was a canon, not of the church of England, but of the Romish church; and expressed his astonishment, when Sir John shewed it to be one of the most recent canons that has been enacted for the government of the church of England. *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xvii. page 18.

"Mr Cox calls the form of absolution, 'the unguarded language of the absolution,' and proposes an alteration. The author of 'Church Reform,' says, this office has been repeatedly and ably defended, still I acknowledge, that it might be a relief to many of the friends of the church, and might assist in disarming some of its adversaries, if the expressions in this form of absolution were less strong." p. 158.

"We will now," says Mr Kiland, "retire for a moment from the Anti-Christianity of Rome, to mark what the adversary of God and man has achieved among the formal members of our own cherished establishment. We have in our ritual two forms of absolution.

nicationis (suspensionis) et interdicti, in quantum possum, et tu indigos."

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On that in the office for the sick it may be expedient to be silent, as it has almost universally fallen into disuse. Of the form succeeding the general confession much has been said, as to whether it simply declares, or directly conveys forgiveness. As might be expected, the Antinomian or Papal side of this question has been warmly espoused by the nominalists of our Church. They insist upon the fact that the priest, (a designation of the pastoral office exceedingly acceptable to persons of their character,) by the pronouncement of the formulary in question, actually imparts to the repeaters of the confession a certain measure of pardon.\* To all practical purposes, this is a counterpart to the Papal transfer of guilt from the people to their minister, and an opiate to the Protestant conscience." Riland's *Anti-Christ, Papal, Protestant, and Infidel*, p. 205.

In what sense is this language "unguarded," according to the declaration of Mr Cox; for what reasons is it expedient to "be silent about it," as stated by Mr Riland; on what account has the office fallen into disuse? Only one answer can be given; because of its great and manifest impropriety. Men who are determined to defend every rite and every syllable connected with the church service may, by the aid of dialectic skill, find something like arguments for their purpose; but are they sufficient to satisfy others, whose conscience is as tender as their judgment is enlightened? Do their arguments satisfy themselves? Does the Reviewer use the absolution? If not, why not? Besides, the great question for the clerical casuist to determine is, not whether learned clerks have ably defended, and to save their own consciences as protestants, subtilly dealt with these ensnaring words, but what is the effect of the service on the popular mind? How do the

\* Is not this a decisive proof that the greater part of the clergy consider themselves as invested with a power to do much more than to declare the sins of the penitent forgiven; and in fact, that they believe the prerogative of absolving, in the plain meaning of the term, belongs to their order?



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vulgar understand the words? All objections and explanations alike laid aside, let the clergy enquire what meaning enters the mind of the common people? Let them make the experiment upon a few out of the many cases that continually occur in which the high prerogative is exercised, and thus ascertain whether the penitent has not taken up the notion that his clerical visitor had the power to forgive sins. This is the gravamen of the dispute. If a judge were to say to a poor criminal under sentence of death, "by virtue of the king's authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy crimes, &c," the poor felon would reasonably infer that the judge really had some power vested with him, not simply to affirm that criminals were pardoned, but actually to pardon them; some discretionary authority, as is really the case, to bestow upon them the forgiveness of the monarch, and he would of course expect that his punishment was over, and that the prison doors would soon open to let him go free.

5. The Church of England teaches that all who die go to heaven whatever their previous character.

The Reviewer is exceedingly indignant that I should have preferred such an accusation as this; and labours to prove it unfounded and defamatory. The expression refers of course to the burial service, and to that exclusively. Perhaps it would not be difficult to make out the charge even thus broadly stated and defined, at least in effect. The question to be settled is this: Is the burial service so framed as to pronounce upon the eternal state of all who are interred, and does it pronounce that they all go to heaven? This can be decided by a reference to the Prayer Book. We find there the following expressions: "Forasmuch as it hath pleased

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Almighty God, of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." It is said by those who defend the Prayer Book, that the words are, in sure and certain hope not of the resurrection to life eternal of him who is so buried, but of the resurrection generally. But let any man of candour say whether the latter part of the paragraph is not connected with the former, and whether it is not intended to apply to the individual whose body has been committed to the grave? Why should it not? If God has in great mercy taken his soul to himself, it is a matter of inevitable consequence that his body will obtain a resurrection to eternal life. We find also the following expressions: "We give thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world, we meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from a death of sin, to a life of righteousness, that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth." Now in all this there is a mode of speaking which leads so far as this service goes to the conclusion that all who die go to heaven, whatever their previous character might have been. I do not say the church of England teaches this any where else, or teaches it here in so many words; but that the service is so framed as naturally to lead to this conclusion. I speak of the general impression of the construction which every hearer naturally puts; not of the absence of a pronoun, but of the sentiment of the whole service respecting the buried person. Do not the relatives of the deceased feel persuaded that the clergyman has pronounced their departed friend to be a Christian; and

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consoled them with the assurance that he has gone to heaven, and that they will meet him at the resurrection of the just? I again say, make the experiment, ask the people whether this is not their view of the meaning of the service. There are but three cases in which the church refuses this solemn service of burial; namely, to those who die unbaptized, to self-murderers, and to those who are under the sentence of the greater excommunication. To all others, let them die in what circumstances they may, the sixty-eighth canon commands the clergyman, under pain of suspension, to grant the rite of sepulture, and read the office of burial. They may have died in a duel, a pugilistic contest, a brothel, or a drunken fit at an ale-house; over every one of them, the church orders the clergyman to say that "Almighty God of his great mercy has taken to himself the soul of this his brother," and "to give God hearty thanks, that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the miseries of this sinful world;" and to pray, "that the spectators of the funeral, when they shall depart, may rest in Christ, as their hope is their deceased brother doth." And what is still more strange, the same man on whom the church pronounces eternal damnation while living for not believing the Athanasian creed, she declares to be safe when he dies, although his last breath should have been a declaration of Arian or Socinian sentiments. Now does not all this in effect teach the unreflecting multitude that all men go to heaven, whatever may have been their previous character. To what conclusion will the great mass come who attend such a service?★ They

★ Dr Whately, President of St Alban's Hall, Oxford, has lately added to the works written by churchmen which furnish some of the best defences of nonconformist principles. In his work, on the source

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know the life of the individual who has been interred, if the clergyman does not; they in many instances know his dark and vicious career: and have seen him go out of life without a single mark of piety, and yet they have heard the church, through the medium of her minister, pronounce him to be safe in heaven. Multitudes of the spectators of funerals, in consequence of their neglect of public worship, hear no other office of the church but the matrimonial and the burial services; and therefore are out of the way of those wholesome instructions and checks to delusion which its other offices supply.

In the first and second editions of my book, I used the expression to which the Reviewer so strongly objects; in later editions however it has been altered, and now reads thus; "Her burial service, in manifest opposition to some parts of itself, and to other parts of the liturgy, leads us to conclude that all who are interred with the prescribed rites of sepulture, certainly go to heaven, whatever were their previous characters."

How objectionable the service is, let the feelings of thousands of clergymen testify, whose consciences have been wounded by reading it over some persons of whose salvation they entertained no hope whatever. This was once admitted by a clergyman, on our way to the grave of one of my congregation.

of Romish Errors, he gives the following instance and proof of the delusive tendency of the burial service, as read over all persons indiscriminately. "I have known a person in speaking of a deceased neigh, hour whose character had been irreligious and profligate remark, how great a comfort it was to hear the words of the funeral service read over her, "because, poor woman, she had been such a bad liver:"" p. 70. Is not this the common impression produced by that office of the English church, and does it not thus, in effect, lead to a most fatal conclusion, that all who are interred by her ministers in consecrated ground, go to heaven whatever was their previous character?

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But let me here bring forward the testimony of the clergymen to whose works I have already referred. The author of "Church Reform," says,

"But though these expressions are thus ably defended, I certainly feel that in many cases they make an injurious impression. The generality of the lower orders are apt to think, that they apply to the case of each person over whose remains they are used. They thus contribute to the too prevalent notion, that every deceased person, at least every person who has not enjoyed much of the good things of this world is, as a matter of course, gone to a better place. Some, when they hear them read over men who were notorious sinners, and of whose repentance no evidence had been given, derive from them encouragement to continue in sin. And others, who are more disposed to exercise their reason, consider the use of these expressions, as implying a disregard for truth and holiness in the church and her ministers." p. 159.

"There are," says Mr. Cox, "however, two alterations which appear to be highly desirable; the first is an expression of resignation to the divine will, in the place of the thanksgiving for the removal of the deceased; and the other is the omission of those sentences which refer to the state of the individual. Both of these objections are removed in the American prayer book, and might with equal facility be obviated in our own." p. 110.

Mr. Riland, in speaking of the present objectionable form of the burial service, says, "If one of my parishioners should be killed this evening in a drunken quarrel, I shall be compelled in a few days, verbally to include my own gratitude to God, with that of the drunkard's family and friends, in these words: 'We give Thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching Thee that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect.' But in point of fact, I am astounded at the terrible reality that the man was cut off in a moment in the very act of sin; that he was hurried away from the miseries and guilt of a wicked life, into miseries still greater; that he died without the possibility of repentance; and I found, on such a death, a prayer that God would complete the number of his elect!" Again,

"It would be considered a high insult to recommend a groom, discharged for embezzlement in the stables, to a neighbouring gentleman, with a note, expressive of a hope that this our brother leaves the scene of his fraud an honest and trusty man. And suppose that the recom-

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mender repeats his repulsed hope with a suggestion that the man ought to be received as a reformed character, in the judgment of charity, no matter what facts were against him; and although four and twenty hours ago he was selling oats out of his master's granary, and boasting of his exploits to the partners of his crime. Yet when this man stands as sponsor next Sunday, I tell him not to doubt, but earnestly to believe, in terms exclusively applicable to sound and consistent Christians. The same individual is commanded to communicate thrice a year. If he be sick, he may require the sacrament. If he die, I am to be thankful for his dissolution. In all these cases, I am to treat him exactly as I would treat a veteran in the service of Christ, who had shone for a long life as a light of the world, and died at last full of joy and peace in believing." Riland, p. 145.

6. The church of England uses liturgical forms, which we deem less edifying than extempore prayer; and her liturgy abounds with vain repetitions. Let us read what the Reviewer writes in defence of pre-composed forms of prayer: 1st. "The Jews employed them in the temple service:" That they used the Psalms, is very evident, but these were metrical compositions, answering to our hymns and spiritual songs, and formed in fact, the psalmody of the Jewish public worship; but I challenge the Reviewer and all other advocates of the liturgy, to bring forward a single instance, either from the Old Testament or the New, of any liturgical services, answering to the pre-composed and stated forms of the prose prayers of the church of England Prayer Book: and even if the Jews employed them, this would be no argument for our employing them, unless it is our duty to imitate their worship in all things. 2. "Our Lord taught an incomparable form of prayer." Without being guilty of so great a sin as to detract from the incomparable excellence of this sublime and comprehensive prayer, or the propriety of using it, I may express my doubts whether it was given to be used

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statedly as a form, or to be considered in any other light than as a model and direction for all our prayers. The injunction runs thus: "After this manner pray ye." It is a little remarkable that this prayer is never referred to by any of the apostles, and so far as appears from the history of these holy men, was never used by them. Does not this look as if they regarded it more as a model than a form? Besides, admitting that it is a form as well as a model, it does not prove that all our public worship should be in liturgical forms. 3. St. Paul says, "Hold fast the form of sound words." This has no reference to prayer, but to doctrines, and is rather an argument for creeds than forms of prayer. 4. "If we reject forms of prayer, we ought to reject forms of praise." This by no means follows, because it is possible to pray without forms of prayer, but it is impossible to sing without hymns. We cannot argue from possibilities to impossibilities. But after all it is quite enough on this part of the subject to repeat that we esteem extempore prayer more edifying than liturgical forms. They are so in our experience. They are sanctioned by primitive practice; the contrary method is not; therefore we feel justified in preferring them.

We are also of opinion, that there are "vain repetitions" in the service of the church. Here I make a distinction, which is more than nominal; between the repetition of a vain thing, and a vain repetition. The most sublime and important matters in the world, if the repetition of them be unreasonably multiplied, may be called vain repetitions, though not repetitions of vain things. The epithet applies to the repetition, and not to the thing repeated. Mr. Cox admits that "the liturgy is encumbered with unnecessary repetitions." "A

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judicious selection should be made from the whole, containing all that is needful for devotion, and omitting whatever is superfluous, or savours of unnecessary repetition." Now put these things together; "encumbrance," "unnecessary repetitions," "retaining all that is needful for devotion," "superfluous," "judicious selection," and we must conclude that there is something as matters stand, injudicious, needless, and therefore vain. Mr. Cox gives us some instances of these repetitions:

"The Lord's prayer is necessarily repeated every Sunday morning five times, on sacramental days six: and should the services for baptism, and the churching of women occur, (both of which are appointed to be read during public worship,) the same prayer will be repeated not less than eight times in the course of one continued service. By the same appointment two distinct prayers are offered up for the king, two creeds are recited, the collect for the day is twice read, the gloria patri is eight, and occasionally ten times repeated; and if we take into the account the comprehensive prayer for the church militant, and the various versicles interspersed throughout the service, there is scarcely a petition for any blessing, or a prayer for any work, office, or condition of man, which is not reiterated. But how easily might these lamented evils be removed." pp. 7, 8, 9.

I have thus gone through the Reviewer's defence of the Prayer Book, against my objections. It should be recollected that dissenters have many more objections than those I have stated; some of these I will give, not in my own language, but in that of a circular drawn up by a member of the church of England, and which "has," says the Evangelical Magazine, "been sent to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, to the Bishops, to the Duke of Wellington, and Mr. Peel, and to several of the Heads of Houses at Oxford and Cambridge."

"Is not the sponsorial part of the baptismal service a mere frag-



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ment of popery, without the shadow of a foundation in the holy scriptures? and do not the godfathers and godmothers in a great majority of instances, promise to 'renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh,' while they have no intention whatever of fulfilling their engagements? Are not multitudes of young people brought to the rite of confirmation, merely that they may renew the solemn farce which was performed by their sponsors at baptism, and that they may take a vow which they never intend to fulfil? Does not the conduct of the great majority of these young people both before and after confirmation, give a direct contradiction to the following declaration of the bishop, 'Almighty and ever-living God, who has vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins,' &c.

"Are not the services for 'King Charles the Martyr,' and for the restoration of the Royal family, a solemn burlesque; and do they not contain several blasphemous perversions of holy scripture?"

"Is it not high time to expunge the apocryphal lessons from the calendar?"

I would also refer to the article concerning homilies, as in our view sufficient to keep us from entering into the communion of the church of England. It is declared in the xxxv article, that the book of homilies doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times. Yet in the homily on "Good order and obedience," the Book of Wisdom, which is admitted by implication in the sixth article to be uninspired, is called "the infallible and undeceivable word of God." In the homily on alms deeds is the following passage, "The same lesson doth the Holy Ghost also teach in sundry places of Scripture saying, (quoted from Tobit) 'Mercifulness and almsgiving purgeth from all sins, and delivereth from death, and suffereth not the soul to come into darkness.'" Second Statement of the Edinburgh Committee of the Bible Society on the Apocryphal Question, p. 104.

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I shall here give some quotations from Mr. Riland's book by themselves.

#### THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES.

Mr Riland, after eulogising the Confession of the church of Scotland, and declaring it to be greatly superior to the formulary of the church of England, observes, "That the formulary of the latter has blemishes which sadly mar its beauty, and in some instances, have proved extremely embarrassing to the persons who have most favourably interpreted apparent, if not indisputable contradictions. The church would gain abundantly by the Articles being re-cast in a more accurate mould." He then proceeds to a review of the Articles seriatim; the first should be "substituted" by something else; the second might be "re-constructed;" the third is a "redundancy, an excrescence, a deformity without the shadow of apology for its introduction: it is, in fact, a kind of ecclesiastical anachronism." The fifth is "included in the Athanasian Creed;" the sixth ought to have been the first; the eighth is "quite superfluous as it now stands;" the nineteenth "partakes of the confusion and inconsistency which, in the regions of controversy, would appear to be inseparably connected with the subject it professes to define; and cannot be reconciled, either with the twenty-sixth, or with the definition in the Homily. Here then, we have a choice of difficulties; either to harmonize discords, or to obey an uncertain sound." The twentieth "bears a near resemblance to what is called the vicious circle of the Latin church." The twenty-second "is a singular example of laxity and of uselessness, and is not merely objectionable from its unaccountable slovenliness of structure, but from its laxity of doctrine." "Whether the several Articles on the two Sacraments, are perfectly consistent with the Sacramental offices and rubrics, is a discussion too extensive for our immediate purpose. They certainly have afforded ample occasion for debate among churchmen." The thirty-sixth Article "is entirely superfluous." The next "cannot well be designated an article of religion, and belongs rather to acts of Parliament." The thirty-eighth illustrates the evil of singling out a transient and rude error as matter of grave animadversion, when many permanent, and pernicious, and popular delusions are passed over. Riland, pages 187 to 204.

## THE HOMILIES IN CONNEXION WITH THE ARTICLES.

They are sanctioned by the articles as containing good and wholesome doctrine,

“Yet they are at variance with the principles of the British constitution; and if they do not unchurch our own protestant hierarchy, by declaring that the channel through which our orders were conveyed was no church at all, it is difficult to say what words mean, and in cases of doubt, by what dictionary they are to be interpreted.”

“The question is, do the clergy give their full assent and consent to the Homilies? And if not, what do they give. It is too serious an enquiry to be resolved by a loose and equivocal reply.” Riland, 205-6.

## APOCRYPHAL LESSONS.

“What comparative purity may be found in selections from the plays of Dryden and Wycherley is known to those who have read them. I can only add myself that there are low scenes in Shakspeare, and jocose chapters in the Waverley Novels, which would be eminently pure and edifying if addressed to a christian congregation, when compared with the nauseous gabble which a clergyman is required to read as the first lesson for the evening service of the thirtieth of September.” Kiland, 157.

## CREEDS.

Of the Apostles' creed as it is called, Mr Riland says,

“I utter a long suppressed astonishment, that this indefinite, deficient, and ill-assorted compend of the gospel, could ever have been palmed upon the universal church under the abused name of ‘The Apostles' Creed.’ It maintains a deep dead silence on the two great fundamental doctrines of revelation, Original Sin and the Atonement. With regard to the Athanasian symbol, it is high time that something should be done to close for ever this hitherto inexhaustible source of evil to the Church of Christ. It is a dry, abstract, unapplied series of positions about the Trinity: a theory without an explicit reference to practical utility.” Riland, 158, 165.

## STATE SERVICES.

“The services for the fifth of November, the thirtieth of January, and twenty-ninth of May furnish revolting examples, and such as need not be particularized. They are an illegitimate scion of the Liturgy, and have long since lapsed into desuetude; or if used, have been read by all men of reflection with feelings of disgust, grief, and shame.”

## GENERAL SUMMARY AND REVIEW OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

“What do we gain by the party spirit of the preface to the Liturgy; the ill-selection of proper lessons, epistles and gospels; the retention of legendary names and allusions in the Calendar; the lection of the Apocrypha, and the omission of the Apocalypse; the mention of feasts and fasts never observed; the repetition of the Paternoster, Kyrie, Eleison, and Gloria Patria; the wearisome length of the services; the redundance and assumption in the state prayers; the unsatisfactoriness of the three creeds; the disputable character of the baptismal and the burial offices; the incompleteness and dubious construction of the Catechism, and of the order of confirmation; the inapplicable nature and absolution of the visitation of the sick; the imperfection of the commination service; the discordance between the Prayer Book and Bible translation of the psalms; the contumelious and offensive language of the state services; and, added to all these sources of weakness, similar causes of inefficiency in the Articles and Homilies?” Kiland, p. 209.

## ON SUBSCRIPTION TO THE ARTICLES.

“This reflection awakens the painful remembrance, that never have the arts of evasion, sophistry, palliation, and management, been more notoriously developed, than in attempts to explain away the strictness of subscription to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies.” Biland, p. 266.

RELATION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO THAT  
OF ROME.

“In the second part of the Homily for Whitsunday it is said, ‘The bishops of Rome and their adherents are not the true church.’ In the third part of the Homily against peril of idolatry, the church

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of Rome is called 'a foul, filthy, old, withered harlot; whereas on the contrary part, the true church of God is a chaste matron.' Yet," says Mr. Riland, "from this nonentity, or a harlot of now upwards of a thousand years duration, the solecism cannot be helped, does the Anglican hierarchy derive the whole of its authority, while numbers of its adherents pride themselves, it is their own language, on the fidelity of their attachment to the only legitimate successors of the apostles, and on their steady renunciation of all other pretenders to pastoral power." Eiland, p. 206.

Such are some of the grounds on which in reference to the Prayer Book dissenters secede from the Established Church. It is well known that every clergyman is required before he is admitted to a benefice, to declare *ex animo*, his belief "that the book of common prayer containeth in it nothing contrary to the word of God; and at the same time to declare his unfeigned assent and consent to every thing contained therein." Some have argued that this unfeigned assent and consent which the Act of Uniformity requires, relate only to the use of the things prescribed, and not to the inward and entire approbation of them. That this however is incorrect is shewn not only from the language of the Act, "unfeigned assent and consent," but also from the decision of the legislature itself; for on the final settlement the year after the Act passed, an attempt was made to give this latitudinarian interpretation of the clause, but the effort failed, and the sense of the legislature was declared to be that the unfeigned assent and consent relates not only to the use, but to the inward and entire approbation of whatever is contained and prescribed in the book of common prayer. See Towgood.

The objectionable parts of this book, and its imposition by human authority, formed originally almost the exclusive ground of nonconformity. The great body

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of the two thousand holy men who were then thrust out of the church of England had no objection to an alliance of the church with the state, provided they were allowed to exercise their own choice in the mode of conducting public worship. But so objectionable did the book of common prayer appear to them, at least to those of them who had an opportunity of reading it before the time prescribed for their signing, that rather than forswear themselves by subscribing to that which they could not approve, they resigned their livings and cast themselves upon Providence for their support. That which with some dissenters constitutes the weakest ground of secession was with them almost the exclusive one. They became outcasts, exiles, and prisoners, and exposed themselves to all kinds of sufferings, and mockeries, and losses, rather than give their assent to that which they did not believe. They consulted not with flesh and blood; they hearkened to no such reasoning as that in quitting the established church, they were putting a stop to their own usefulness, and extinguishing so many lamps of the sanctuary, which were throwing their light upon the moral darkness of the land. They were mighty men whose talents equalled by their piety would have adorned any communion; and while the dissenters can mention the names of Owen, Baxter, Howe, and Bates, with many others, they need not fear the reproaches which may be cast on them by ignorance or prejudice.

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**CHAPTER V.****THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,  
AS DESCRIBED IN THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED WORKS  
OF SEVERAL OF HER PIOUS CLERGY.**

I come now to that portion of the Reviewer's remarks which is designed to give from my own concessions a frightful and revolting picture of the evils of dissent. These evils are classed under seven divisions, and are intended to produce an impression to the disadvantage of nonconformity. I shall not stop now to enquire into the fairness of so representing exceptions, as to convey the idea that they form the general rule, but go on to lay before my readers an exposé of the state of the establishment, which has been drawn up by some of its most devoted supporters, and which therefore is furnished by men of whose competency and motives there can exist no doubt. They, at least, cannot be suspected of bearing false witness against the church; their testimony will be read without the suspicion usually awakened by the deposition of an interested or irritated foe. To this part of my pamphlet, I feel peculiarly anxious to draw the attention of my readers, whether they are churchmen or dissenters; that the latter may learn from the writings of episcopa-

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lians how strong are the reasons of nonconformity, and the former be stirred up to seek with unwearied, undiscouraged zeal, the removal of evils so flagrant and afflictive. As it regards my own feelings on this melancholy subject, I can truly aver, that although no degree of reformation could reconcile me to a church which leans for support on the arm of secular power, (although in all probability such a reformation would remove the objections of many dissenters, and draw them back into the communion of the church, and thus weaken the cause of nonconformity;) yet I should most truly rejoice in the removal of those abuses, which not only strengthen the grounds of dissent, but are a grief to many pious and zealous churchmen. I should hail the day when episcopacy should shine forth with a radiance as pure and bright as such a system admits of; when those impediments to its usefulness would be taken out of its path, and its career rendered as illustrious and successful in the spread of true religion as the most devoted of its friends could desire. I trust that without hypocrisy or ostentation, I may lay claim to that charity, which "rejoiceth not in iniquity," but rejoiceth in the truth; and though I cannot conform to the church, I feel that it would be no inconsistency to say that I should at all times feel willing to join in efforts to reform it. The writers from whose works I am about to make copious extracts are not the enemies but the children of the church of England, children who have long borne with its corruptions, but who have at length come forth, saying, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Jer. xx. 9. Their pages breathe the tenderness of filial piety, which blends words of



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faithful warning, with the tears of wounded affection. Happy will it be for the church of England, if these tears fall not, this mourning voice sounds not, in vain. If my love of dissent glowed stronger in my bosom than my love of pure and undefiled Christianity, I should say, let her alone; let her wounds go on to fester, and her diseases to increase in strength, till her case is hopeless, and her dissolution certain: but no; I join the modern reformers in my devout wishes for her improvement, and although she never can be, what in my opinion, a pure church of Christ should be, yet should I rejoice to see her far more pure than she is at present; and possibly I may be doing something to bring on this consummation so devoutly to be wished, by laying before my readers the following extracts from a work of the Rev. John Acaster, Vicar of St Helen's, York, entitled "The Church of England in danger from itself:" and another entitled "A solemn Appeal on behalf of the Church of England," by the Rev. D. Nihill, A.M.

I shall classify the evils which are admitted by these writers to exist, under the following heads.

I. General admissions of the existence of evils.

The title of Mr. Acaster's book is a most comprehensive admission, "The church of England in danger from itself;" i. e. such evils exist as place her altogether in imminent peril. "A multitude of blemishes there certainly are in her system, which excite the regret and alarm of her best friends, and if such be the manner in which her friends regard them; what a handle do they afford to her adversaries. Many individuals who once adorned the church by their blameless lives and fervent piety, having long deplored in vain the scandals by which she is disgraced, have at length walked over silently to some rival denomination. The loss sustained by the desertion of such persons is incalculable. They are the strength and ornament of whatever society they belong to: and their example inflicts the most fatal wound on the cause which they abandon." Nihill. p. 17.

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“The church of England has probably retained too much of this leaven, (the popish elevation of the clergy to the depression of the laity) under her reformed system.” Nihill, p. 19.

“Well would it have been for this country, if it had never been united with Eome; and still better for our holy religion, had every vestige of popery been extirpated, at the reformation of religion in this land; unhappily, however, this was not the case.” Acaster, p. 113. The author, as is evident by the context, means, that there are vestiges of popery in the church of England.

2. There is something wrong in the exercise of the supreme power, which is lodged with the King, as the Head of the church.

“Our system is disjointed and out of course, and though we have a number of spiritual functionaries, whose offices impose upon them important branches of regimen; yet, for want of due administration of that supreme and presiding power which is lodged in the crown, they are all in a most languid condition: of late years, no attempt has been made by the advisers of the crown, to give activity to this branch of the prerogative. In truth, so completely has it retired from public view, that the mass of the community are strangers to its existence, and would start with fearful amazement to see its corrective authority wielded with practical effect.” Nihill, p. 26.

3. The legislative power, by which the affairs of the church of England are regulated, is admitted to be quite unfit for and incompetent to its task.

“The church of England is cast upon Parliament alone for protection. But our senators were not men who had religion at heart, and the genuine principles of the church of England had no root in their counsels,” (i. e. on the discussion of last year, on the subject of Catholic emancipation.) Parliament is composed “of a vast number of men of the world, whose very method of procuring seats in the legislature, demonstrates the absence of all sound principle, and all pure religion.” Nihill, p. 3.

4. Evils in the qualifications and conduct of the Archbishops and Bishops.

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(1.) The mode and ends of their appointment to office.

“The patronage is exercised by the prime minister for the time being: that is to say, by a succession of men, whose habits and pursuits disqualify them, in general, for the discharge of so sacred a trust. Devoted to politics, their minds circumscribed by mere worldly maxims, they seldom rise to that grand comprehensive view of what is really the best national as well as the best ecclesiastical policy, to uphold the state by strengthening the pillars of morality and religion: and to that end, to seek out the purest, the most pious, the most disinterested men, to fill the offices of the church. A system directly opposite has long prevailed. The royal patronage has been reduced to an engine of state, and used merely in subserviency to party and political objects. How little are the qualifications which St. Paul requires in a bishop, in the thoughts of the Premier, when he is about to fill a vacant see! His reference is not to the voice of inspiration, or to the lofty dictates of christian policy, but to the list in which he registers the claims and importunities of his parliamentary adherents.” Nihill, p. 27.

“The appointment to a bishopric, in this country, (Ireland) is generally from political motives. The minister of the day has his projects to be supported, and, looking round him, he selects the man possessed of the greatest portion of parliamentary interest, to whom he says, Do you support me with your parliamentary interest, in the House of Commons, and I will give you the investment of the next vacant bishoprick. The bargain is struck, and a man possessed of a little talent as piety, and less of morals, is selected as the bishop.” Lord Mount Cashel.

(2.) The spiritual character of the Bishops.

“Oh! was our church adorned by prelates whose lives and labours were thus interwoven with her existence; men of God, whose paternal voice was heard and recognized throughout her folds, what a glorious church would she appear.” “The majority of the clergy seldom see the face of their diocesan, except at a triennial visitation; their intercourse with him by letter is limited to a few dry points of form. And with regard to the people, what is there to attach them to these high dignitaries? The fact is, that except in the immediate vicinity of an episcopal residence, the people behold a bishop about as often as they behold a comet, and have as much notion of any benefit derived by the church from the one as from the other.” “Our dioceses are

much too large; our bishops are often far advanced in years at the time of their appointment." "They are encumbered with a variety of routine business, which, in conjunction with their parliamentary attendance, occupies a considerable portion of their time." "The number of the bishops has been kept stationary, so as to render it impossible that the design of the office should be adequately fulfilled." "Episcopacy appears to be attached to our system rather for ornament than for use." Nihill, pp. 30-33.

##### 5. Deans, Prebendaries, and Canons.

"Burnet, in his history of the Reformation, observes, that the design of these institutions was to form nurseries for the sees in which they were respectively situated, and that it was an object with the venerable Cranmer, to restore them to their proper use." "If the revenues belonging to the Cathedrals were appropriated to such uses, they might be highly conducive to the increase of theological learning, and the general advantage and credit of the establishment. The purposes to which they are applied, are, however, purely political, and the general consequence is precisely what might be anticipated: not to raise modest merit out of obscurity: not to mitigate the infirmities of the superannuated labourer; not to train up a fresh generation of able theologians; but, *proh pudor!* to aggrandize the pride, and pamper the luxury of the richest and best provided members of the profession. Any comment upon a perversion of church property so gross, is perfectly unnecessary." Nihill, 42, 43.

Of the Prebends, Mr Acaster says, "To be hold as sinecures, by persons living out of the diocese, and doing no clerical duty whatever, was certainly not the intention of the founders." "To claim and receive tithes, &c. (connected with the prebend) thus dedicated without performing personally the duties required, will be found, I fear, on due consideration, little less than sacrilege; nor can any man innocently give, or any man innocently hold, in such a case, that which belongs to God alone." Is it not robbing God, for a man to take and appropriate to his own use, that which was solemnly given and dedicated to God for ever, without performing the duties required? Will it not be as criminal now as in the days of that prophet whom God inspired to denounce his displeasure against such speculators amongst the Jews? Should this be the case, it will then be found, notwithstanding the protection afforded by the law, a most 'fearful thing to fall into the the hands of the living God.'" Acaster, pp. 131, 132.

## 6. The Archdeacons.

“Any Archdeacon who should attempt to revive the full powers with which he is theoretically armed, would, I am persuaded, only expose himself, and the church to derision. I would not be understood to speak in disparagement of those pious and excellent discourses, which in the form of charges we sometimes hear from our Archdeacons. Considered as general sermons upon the objects of the christian ministry, they may be highly praiseworthy; but |in regard to official utility they fall far short of their proper object. One never hears of their leading to any practical correction of ecclesiastical disorders. In truth, I believe for reasons above stated, they seldom aim at it.” Nihill, p. 43.

## 7. The subordinate clergy.

(1.) The want of all proper care in the examination of their qualifications for the office of ministers of religion.

“It is notorious that improper persons are frequently admitted into holy orders, and that they find the path to ordination as open and facile to them as to others.” “With regard to piety, how can it be imagined, where testimonials, the chief and almost the sole security for that qualification, are treated as mere forms, and where secular motives are so prevalent in raising up candidates for the ministry, how can it be imagined, I say, that warm personal piety should be to any great extent the attributes of the clerical profession?” Nihill, p. 34, 36. “On certificates of this description generally, it is on all hands confessed that very little confidence can be placed,” “It is painful in the extreme to place the bishops in such a situation as that they must often either betray their sacred trust, or shew by their honest enquiry or faithful reproof, that they can have little or no confidence in the testimony of many of those who from their situation and calling ought to be men of honest simplicity and godly sincerity.” Acaster, 39. “Which of the bishops, or which of the examining chaplains, conducts his examination according to the directions here contained, (in the canon): I do most solemnly declare that I was never asked one single question about the thirty-nine articles. I have questioned others at different times and from different dioceses, and they have distinctly stated the same, excepting in one or two instances, some ensnaring questions about the 17th article.” Acaster, p. 43.

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(2.) Their incompetency.

“With regard to learning, a very slender portion of divinity, engrafted on what may be termed a liberal education, will suffice for admission into holy orders. Indeed the modicum of theology is so slight, that a very short interval after a young gentleman has graduated at the university, is found sufficient for its attainment.” “The great majority of English clergymen do, in reality, never submit to so much literary labour as is necessary to the composition of their own sermons; and if another test were wanting to prove the small degree of learning required, it might be found in the notorious fact, that where persons are somewhat below par in point of intellect or exertion, it is frequently considered by their parents a reason for assigning them to the church.” Nihill, 33.

“Generally, I may say almost universally, the special gifts and ability of the candidate to be a preacher, is never once enquired into, but is entirely taken upon trust.” Acaster, 46.

(3.) Their worldly mindedness.

“The clergy in general are too griping and covetous; many of them devote tenfold more time to temporal than to spiritual concerns; this love of money begets an indifference to their religious duties. Will such a flimsy pretence blind the people to the covetousness and wickedness of those who seize and grasp two or three of the best and richest preferments which the church affords.” Lord Mount Cashel.

(4.) Their immorality.

“In many instances the clergy of the established church lead improper, immoral and dissolute lives, so that besides pocketing the money of the people, they want by their own bad example to make them worse than they were before.” Lord Mount Cashel.

“The bishops, I really think, would be more in character, if they were 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.” Acaster, 87.

(5.) General view of the clergy.

“They may be divided into three classes. 1. Those whose bosoms glow with sublime devotion to the supreme Being, and who may in truth be said habitually to walk with God. This

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portion is I believe comparatively very small. 2. Ministers of an opposite description. The difficulty in the present day of finding situations in other walks of genteel life, occasions an unusual press of persons, actuated by low and selfish motives, into the church: and this, added to the facility of admission, renders this class much more numerous than the *one* with which we have contrasted it. 3. Between the two, we may place an intermediate set of men, consisting of those whose demeanour bespeaks a respect for their sacred duties, and a kind of general reverence for religion. Yet of these it may be said, that their devotional habits hardly rise to that degree of spirituality, which is necessary to the existence of genuine and decided piety." Nihill, 36.

(6.) Unequal division of property in the church, and the state of the curates.

"Here I may mention the practice of pluralities. In Ireland to their shame be it spoken, it is no uncommon case to see four, six, and seven parishes in the hands of one rector. Why? Because some bishop, unmindful of his ill-paid clergy, has a son, and he considers that two or three parishes would not do for the young gentleman. No, he must have half a dozen of them." Lord Mount Cashel.

"Dispensations and licences granted to the clergy for holding a plurality of benefices, with the care of souls, have in them the nature of absolving the clergy from the solemn oaths made to God. No reasoning or Act of Parliament can set aside this; and how the archbishops and bishops can stand up in their places in the House of Lords, and reject the popish question, because of the dispensing power of the pope, while they themselves are exercising the same power, and in the most fearful way, is to me a matter so inexplicable, that I really cannot understand it; nor is it possible, till it can be clearly proved that that which is generally considered most highly heinous, dangerous, and criminal, in the conduct of the pope, becomes honest, inoffensive, and innocent in the sight of God, when exercised by the protestant bishops of these realms." Acaster, 117.

"In regard to pluralities, is it not notorious to every man who has given his attention to the subject, that the bishops in bestowing their preferments, make as many pluralists, and of the richest kind, as any other patrons whatever? A prelate in his visitation last year, and one from whom the best things were expected, I have been informed, both preached against, and hi his charge condemned, the

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practice both of non-residence and pluralities. But how did this prelate's practice correspond with his preaching and his charge? Before the sound of his voice had well ceased in the ears of his auditors, he made one of his hearers a pluralist; and almost against his will. The people were astonished, as well they might. The person on whom he conferred the living, though a most respectable man, had already one of six or seven hundred pounds a year. The inconsistency of the bishop was so glaring, as to excite the contempt of his hearers; since he must have determined, while in the act of delivering his charge, to adopt the next moment the very practice he condemned." Acaster, p. 133.

"And all this while the great body of curates, amounting to many thousands, are half starved, unable to support their families in common decency. In hundreds of instances they are much worse off than the rectors' common servants; nor are the instances few, in which they would be glad to accept an old coat with which to replace their threadbare garment, which the pampered menial would dash from him in his upstart pride." Lord Mount Cashel.

#### (7.) Non-residence.

"The founders of the church required of all those who should be made ministers, vows and promises at the sacred altar of the Lord, which, as they are demanded in the name of God and his church, have upon them the nature of the most solemn oaths, binding as far as any thing can bind, their personal and constant labour among those who are or ever shall be committed to their care. If this be correct, what a mass of perjury is connected with non-residence. To what extent this prevails we learn from the following statement. The bishop of Winchester tells us, in his late charge at Llandaff, that out of two hundred and thirty-four incumbencies, into which the diocese is divided, only 'ninety-seven parishes enjoy the advantage of clergy, incumbents and curates, actually resident.' Taking the curates to amount to one half of the whole, which will be found I believe to be generally correct, then only about forty-eight of the two hundred and thirty-four incumbents are actually resident in their parishes. Conceiving this to be a fair specimen of the state of every diocese in the kingdom, what an alarming reflection is it calculated to excite! Nearly four-fifths of the parishes throughout the whole kingdom have no resident incumbent; consequently nearly four-fifths of the people are left, as it respects their paid and legal pastor, as sheep without a shepherd." "Their legal, paid, rightful, and most solemnly avowed instructors are fled. Some they never see or hear, for five,



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ten, fifteen, twenty, and even thirty years together. I speak of numerous facts in all the above instances within my own knowledge, and of several incumbents whose churches and parishes I can see from the place hi which I sit and write." Acaster, p. 104.

#### 8. The oath taken by church-wardens.

"To vindicate the holiness of our communion from the periodical perjury of church-wardens." Nihill, p. 72.

"The church-wardens are not unfrequently insulted and brow-beaten for things they could not legally attend to. They are obliged to take oaths, which if they literally fulfil, will subject them to the penalty of the civil law, and if they do not fulfil, to little less I fear than deliberate perjury: such generally is the state of visitations. No wonder then that they are esteemed loathsome, or to be any thing but what they ought to be. As they exist, almost every church-warden must commit an act bordering on wilful perjury. So little attention is paid to this crying sin, and the conscientious scruples of honest men, that I have known some threatened with excommunication when they have dared to refuse such horrible profanity. As things are, nothing can be either honestly and safely done, or honestly left undone. This double stab at the conscience, must, when considered, appear most criminal and horrible. It tends more than any thing else, and in the most sacred place, to remove all regard to the sacred character of an oath, and to bring into much contempt both the civil constitution and the religious establishment of the land." Acaster, 158.

#### 9. Hindrances to usefulness, thrown in the way of laborious and useful ministers.

"I think it important to remark, with respect even to that portion who are truly pious, that the present state of our ecclesiastical system is calculated, not to call forth their zeal, but to repress it. Take the case of a faithful minister, in a parish where religion is treated as a form by one part of the inhabitants, and regarded with indifference or contempt by the rest. 'His spirit is stirred within him,' and he earnestly casts about for some means of effecting a change. Is it not enough that he preach from the pulpit with all the energy and affection of his soul. He finds that the service of the sanctuary avails but little, either for formalists or absentees; and that it is necessary to follow up the duty of the Sunday by the pastoral labours of the week. But here he is forsaken by the ecclesiastical

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system to which he belongs. If he would make an impression, it must be, as most others have done it, by irregularities, by breach of the canons, and a deviation from the understood will of his diocesan."

"Few modern clergymen, have, I believe, been so successful as the late Rev. Legh Richmond, in awakening his parishioners. It appears from his Life, that he instituted a variety of pastoral plans: but I think it would be difficult to reconcile many of them to the canons of our church, or to the received notions on the subject of canonical zeal." "I am satisfied that there are many clergymen who are reduced to this distressing predicament: they are restrained by conscientious feelings from adopting extra ecclesiastical methods of awakening and organizing their flocks; and they have no vent for their zeal in the discipline of their church." Nihill, pp. 37, 33.

10. The present state of the church as to discipline.

(1.) It has not the power to exercise it.

"Much of the power supposed to be vested in our spiritual rulers, being either suspended or restrained by bad laws enacted in bad times, and I fear also for bad ends, I conceive it to be very difficult to accomplish, in every instance, either their own intentions for the general good of the church, or the purposes which her founders originally designed." Acaster, p. 30.

(2.) The state of its discipline as it respects the clergy.

"There has been in every age, a great and fearful laxity in this respect. Had not this been the case, the church would never have groaned under such a swarm of insufficient and worthless creatures, as Hooker quaintly observes; and who besides endangering the souls of millions, have brought the priestly office into much contempt, and tended, more than any thing else, to alienate the minds of men from the ecclesiastical establishment of the land." Acaster, p. 31.

Observe the state of discipline among the members of the church,

"It is impossible to vindicate our church from the charge of unrepented scandal in the lives of many of the clergy: the consequences to the religious interests of the people are most appalling.

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Multitudes are left to perish in dead formality, multitudes in neglected profligacy, and unless a great amendment be speedily enforced, we may justly anticipate same angry visitation of Providence." Nihill, p. 39.

"The main system, the internal economy of the church, though most strictly evangelical, is in a state of lifeless inactivity." "The habit of regarding the boasted improvement (in the evangelical tone of sentiment among the clergy) as connected with or traceable to, our proper discipline, is moreover strengthened by the observation of those causes to which it is commonly ascribed. The extra ecclesiastical societies and proceedings which furnish so much popular excitement are honoured as the chief means of raising the tone of our doctrine, and the zeal of our ministry; and it is impossible they should be so considered, without drawing away the eyes of the people from the church." Nihill, p. 40.

"The body of the people present a picture of unrestrained demoralization. 'Every man doeth that which is right in his own eyes.' Fornication, adultery, perjury, theft, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, and other offences, however atrocious in the sight of God, however scandalous to the church, may, so far as her discipline is concerned, be committed with perfect impunity. If you desire any practical exhibition of the communion of saints, you must seek it elsewhere than in the congregation of the establishment." "I know not how others may feel this neglect of discipline, but I confess I never read the "warnings addressed to the seven churches of Asia, by 'Him who hath the two-edged sword,' without trembling for our own candlestick." Nihill, pp. 58, 60.

### (3.) Difference of religious opinion among the clergy and the errors that are held by them.

"To this (the neglect of a proper examination of the candidates for the ministry,) more than to any other thing must be ascribed that great difference of opinion which exists among her ministers, on some of the most important doctrines of religion, dangerous to the souls of men, and inimical to the peace and stability of the church." Acaster, p. 44.

"I am aware that there are at this present moment two parties within the church, who maintain and inculcate doctrines, on many important and essential points, the very opposite to each other." Acaster, p. 61.\*

\* No one can for a moment doubt that the church of England

## II. The schisms that exist in the church.

“That men of sound religious views, correct conduct, active zeal, and fervent piety, are rapidly on the increase, is not to be disputed. This, while it is matter of much rejoicing to the real friends of Christ and his church, is no small cause of alarm to the opposite party. They are, therefore, constantly on the alert, to thwart their views, and to arrest their progress. If they would confine themselves to legitimate measures to effect their design, none would complain. But while bishops can mistake, and clergymen can deliberately urge and goad them on, by the most direct and wicked slanders, to use all the influence with which their high stations invest them, all the learning with which they are endowed, all the reasoning and eloquence of which they are masters, and all the power they can claim, to crush them; or if this cannot be done, to take care, by every measure they can possibly devise, to prevent ‘the creeping in unawares, into the church, of another individual of such a noxious and dangerous tribe:’ I say, while that can be done in the face of day, and against the evidence of facts constantly staring them in the face; and while Reviewers, Christian Remembrancers, and caterers for Gentleman’s Magazines, can approve of such conduct, and call on men of wealth and influence to lend their helping hand, to join in the impious

comprehends within her pale persons holding the widest possible variety of religious opinions: Socinians, Arians; Arminians, from Pelagianism to the modified Arminianism of Tillotson; Baxterians; Calvinists of all grades, from the supra-lapsarianism of Dr. Hawker to the more moderate views of Davenant and South; Hutchinsonians; advocates of Baptismal Regeneration and their opponents; Swedenborgians; the followers of Joanna Southcote; Modern Millenarians; believers in the unconsciousness of the soul from death till the resurrection; followers of Mr Irving, on the subject of the peccability of Christ’s human nature, &c, &c. Now certainly the Reviewer should have remembered this when he headed a class of evils among the Dissenters with the title, “False doctrines of dissenting churches.” And especially when it is known as an undoubted fact, that the error which has the widest circulation, and has done the greatest mischief in our communities, has been principally cherished by the works of Dr. Crisp and of Dr. Hawker; both of them divines of the Church of England. Dr. Hawker’s books and converts have infected some of our churches as with a kind of pestilence, and are perverting the minds of multitudes within the pale of the establishment.

outcry against them, and to put them down, they cannot but see and deplore the spirit that is still abroad, and actuating their enemies; while, at the same time, they may set at defiance, in the name of the Lord, all the weapons that are formed against them." Acaster, p. 65. "Who, except the arch-enemy himself, would be anxious, at the day of judgment, to have effected such a dreadful work as this?" "The truth is, it is the superior holiness which the evangelical party contend for, that their opposers so thoroughly hate." "But should it happen that the adjoining parish, (to that of one of the anti-evangelical clergy,) is put into the hands of one of those zealous and truly devoted men, who entering into the service of the church in the spirit and from the motives she demands, consider not their life dear to them, so that they may fulfil the ministry intrusted to them, and should the report of this new coiner excite his parishioners to hear for themselves and they steal away one after another till he finds himself nearly deserted; all is over at once, cunning and contrivance scrape up some malignant report; the esquire joins the priests, away fly letters to the bishop, help is instantly craved, and this is the reason 'For they that turn the world upside down are come hither also.'" Acaster, pp. 67, 69, 73.

After much more of the same kind, our Author concludes this part of his work with the petition of the Liturgy.

"That it may please thee, O Lord, to forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts." Acaster, p. 79.

Whatever practical evils I have observed among dissenters, I have never witnessed any thing comparable to this.

12. Evils arising from the system of tithes.

To quote concessions on this subject would be an endless task. "Writers of all views in church politics, both clergy and laity, have confessed the evil: petitions to parliament, legislative acts, episcopal charges, have admitted it. The system has degraded the whole clerical order, involved the establishment in a dark deep shade of reproach, has originated the most diabolical

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conspiracies, been the occasion of the foulest murders, has in various instances produced "hatred, variance, strife, envyings, and the like." The schisms and divisions that exist among dissenting congregations, from all causes put together, are as nothing compared with those that are originated in the church of England, by the present legal support of the clergy.

13. The neglect in the church of England of the spiritual wants of the people.

I pass over the want of places of worship, which is universally admitted, and come to the admissions which are made in reference to those which already exist.

"Taking this, (the Bishop of Winchester's statement) as our guide, we shall find that the inhabitants of something more than seven-eighths of the parishes throughout the kingdom, have no more than one weekly opportunity afforded of assembling together in the church for religious instruction and worship; consequently more than seven-eighths of the parochial clergy of the Establishment do not afford to their parishioners those religious benefits which the constitution of the church, their own solemn engagements, and the law of the realm demand. But how is this aggravated where there is only service once a fortnight or three weeks, and in some cases only once a month? Shocking as these last instances may appear, they are not so rare as it may be generally supposed. One of the best livings in York, whose church at least is not more than one hundred and fifty yards from its walls, though comprising a population of more I believe than five or six hundred persons, has to this very day service only once a fortnight. The question then is, are these persons to live and die without the means of grace; or must they resort to places of dissent to obtain that of which they are deprived in the national church? I think there can be only one answer to this question; and who can blame them in a case of such great and infinite concern." Acaster, pp. 13, 29.

11. The present state of public feeling with regard to the church.

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As to the Parliament, it is asserted that last year when the Act of Catholic emancipation was passed,

“Our senators were not men who had religion at heart, and because the genuine principles of the church of England had no root in their counsels. Her authority was gone: her voice once potent in that assembly had become enfeebled by age, and was drowned in the clamour of spurious liberality. It is impossible to reflect upon the tone of the recent parliamentary discussions without a painful conviction that most of the arguments which were cheered, adopted, and reduced to practice, would have applied with equal force had the question been, what unless we exert ourselves it must soon become, the question of a free trade in religion, and the expediency of promoting that object by despoiling our church of her revenues, and dissevering her from the state.” Nihill, p. 2.

“The political danger arising from the character of parliament would be less, if the country at large were pervaded by a strong feeling of attachment to the national communion. But it is a lamentable fact, that the affection of the people for the establishment has gradually declined, and is at present deplorably lukewarm.” Nihill, p. 4. “The mass of the population are attached rather by their habits than by their convictions to the national communion, and he must be a stranger in England who does not perceive that those habits are daily losing ground.” Nihill, p. 9. “We see zeal for religion unconnected with the national establishment; and we see jealousy for the establishment too often unconnected with religion.” Nihill, p. 103. “Full half the population of the country it is calculated, have already left the church and joined the ranks of dissent. Of the principles, conduct, and character of more than half the remainder, it is not required to give an opinion: but this I will say, that should they dissent in the same proportion as the rest have done, within the last thirty years, it requires no superior foresight to predict, without pretending to be a prophet, that thirty years from hence the religious establishment of the country will be totally forsaken, if not completely overthrown.” Acaster, p. 24. “I fear the fact is beyond dispute, that amongst the most intelligent of the lower and middle classes, the cause of dissent is rapidly advancing.” Nihill, p. 23. “On all sides, the church is exposed to contempt, reproach, and danger. She has lost the respect, esteem, and confidence of millions, who, had things been otherwise, would never have left her pale. The consequence is, she is so rapidly on the decline,

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that without a speedy, I had almost said an unlooked for change for the better, she will certainly fall." Acaster, p. 138.

### 15. Patronage.

"Since it has become the practice to look to the revenues of the church, principally with a view to the provision which they furnish to the friends and dependents of the great, the system has become pregnant with incalculable mischief." "The existence of private patronage has become a crying evil. It produces a world of unprofitable drones; hinders the advancement of able and efficient ministers; 'diffuses over the church a painful spirit of secularity; and raises up more barriers to her improvement, than perhaps any other single cause whatever.'"\* Acaster, p. 49-51. Mr Richardson, an excellent clergyman of the church of England, says, "That the sort of merit which ought to recommend to preferment, is totally inconsistent with the qualities and modes of living which procure a man the favour of the great, nay it must infallibly ruin his prospects of rising, in the world, and fix him in one of the lowest stations, whatever might once have been his hope from learning or connection, for the moment he becomes serious in religion, and exemplary as a parish priest, he is by the courtesy of England styled a methodist; and this name will make him obnoxious to all who have preferments to bestow. Should he happen to succeed to a benefice, it is considered a portentous circumstance, and an act of ecclesiastical suicide in those who presented him." Riland, p. 50.

The following extract is from the works of a dignitary of the church of England.

"Some sell the next advowson, which I know is said to be legal, though the incumbent lies at the point of death; others do not stick to buy and sell benefices, when open and vacant, though this is declared to be sinning by law, parents often buy them for their children, and reckon that it is their portion: often the ecclesiastics themselves buy the next advowson, and lodge it with trustees for their own advantage; where nothing of this traffic intervenes, patrons bestow benefices on their children or friends, without considering either their abilities or their merit; favour or kindred being the only

\* From a tabular view given in the Supplement of the Congregational Magazine for 1829, it appears that upwards of 5000 livings are in the patronage of the nobility and gentry, and upwards of 1000 in the gift of Government.



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thing that weighs with them. When all this is laid together, how great a part of the benefices of England are disposed of, if not simoniacally, yet at least unworthily, without regard to so sacred a trust as the care of souls?

“I do not enter into the scandalous practices of non-residences and pluralities, which are sheltered by so many volumes of law among us; whereas the church of Rome, whence we had these and many other abuses, has freed herself from this, under which we still labour, to our great and just reproach; this is so shameful a profanation of holy things, that it ought to be treated with detestation and horror: how long, how long shall this be the disgrace of our church, which for ought I know, is the only church in the world that tolerates it.” Bishop Burnet.

“Apologists for these things make their own cause more desperate, by pleading for the retention of sinecures and pluralities, as so many prizes held out for clerical competitors. Are such defenders conscious of the degradation to which they reduce the church, making it a bubble company, and inviting men to take shares in it, as they might do in a canal or railway? In each case the motive is precisely the same, money; and the arrangements are managed in a manner worthy of a principle so stimulating. Shares are at a premium or otherwise as the share-holders’ party may possess or lose influence.” Riland, p. 92.

To these testimonies furnished by men who cannot be supposed to have any inclination to bear false witness against their mother church, I shall add another extract from Mr Riland, which will prove that there has never been an age, since the reformation, in which the English establishment has not contained a party alive to its manifold imperfections, and anxious for their removal, and thus furnishing by their own concessions ample ground for the justification of dissent. Mr Riland, with a candour, impartiality, and boldness which do him great honour, quotes Dr. M’Crie, the well known historian of John Knox, to prove what were the opinions of the founders, fathers, and martyrs of the Anglican church, on the subject of its constitution, ritual, and liturgy; and clearly demonstrates that

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scarcely any of the more illustrious of those renowned men were satisfied with things as they were: and in which state they now are.

“Hooker, in a letter dated February 8, 1560, informs Bullinger that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Rochester, Ely, St. David’s, Lincoln, and Bath, were sincerely bent on advancing the purity of doctrine, agreeing in all things with the Helvetic churches, [which were presbyterian in their form of government.] This was the earnest wish of his majesty Edward VI, and of the English protestant reformers, including the protestant bishops, who if they had not been held back, and retarded by a large mass of popishly affected clergy in the reign of Edward, nor restrained by the supreme civil authority on the accession of Elizabeth, would have brought the government and worship of the church of England nearly to the pattern of other reformed churches. Cranmcr [as I shall afterwards shew] admitted that bishops and presbyters were but one order, as did most of the heads of the church in his day; in fact, the title of bishop was very generally disused in common speech during the reign of Edward, and that of superintendent substituted in its place. Cranmer ardently wished the suppression of prebendaries, ‘an estate,’ he said, ‘which St. Paul reckoning up the degrees and estates allowed in his time could not find in the church of Christ.’ With his colleagues, he was far from being satisfied with the purity of the last Common Prayer Book of Edward, and he had drawn up one which is said to have been ‘a hundred times more perfect.’\* In conjunction with Ridley he intended to procure an act for abolishing the sacerdotal habits. Grindal, bishop of London, Parkhurst, of Norwich, Pilkington, of Durham, Sands, of Worcester, also endeavoured to procure their abrogation. In 1562 the abrogation of the most offensive ceremonies was after long reasoning put to the vote in the convocation and carried by a majority of those present; but when the proxies were included, there was found a majority of one for retaining them. The arguments used by archbishop Parker’s chaplains to prevail upon the house to agree to this, derived their chief force from their being understood to be the sentiments of the Queen.”

Mr Riland having gone through M’Crie’s testimonies

\* What then would he have said of Queen Elizabeth’s, so much altered for the worse from Edward’s, in fact of the one now in use?

from the fathers and founders of the church, adds those of more modern primates and prelates.

“Are we aware,” says he, “that in advancing objections against our ecclesiastical polity, its opponents have directed their missiles under the shadow of our own prelacy? Many of our most learned and holy bishops and divines have in later days, not barely owned the imperfections of their mother, but have formally proposed reforms both of the liturgy and of various other branches of our ecclesiastical system. Archbishop Usher not only urged a reduction of diocesan episcopacy;\* but concurred with archbishop Williams, bishops Morton and Holdsworth, and many others in the Westminster Committee, (1641) in their concessions on the doctrine, discipline, and ritual of the church. In 1689 a special commission also under the great seal, empowered ten bishops and twenty divines to meet and prepare alterations in the liturgy and canons, to be laid before the convocation. Among the commissioners on this occasion, were Tillotson, Burnet, Kidder, Patrick and Stillingfleet, men who were not sciolists and innovators upon the usages of antiquity, but the giants of those days. In times subsequent to those of Burnet we have had the example of one prelate (bishop Clayton) arguing in his place in the Irish House of Peers, for the omission of the Athanasian and Nicene creeds, and he afterwards published his speech. The speculations of bishop Watson considerably tended to disorganise the frame of the establishment. Edmund Law, bishop of Carlisle, wrote a pamphlet against subscription, and when his attack was repulsed by Dr Randolph, he was succoured by the talents of Paley. Bishop Hoadly convulsed the church by sentiments hostile to its authority and alliance with the state; and occasioned the Bangorian controversy. Dr. Marsh, now bishop of Peterborough, influenced by the ill genius of German theology, brought into question the genuineness of the book of Revelation. A few years afterwards another prelate produced his refutation of Calvinism, and was speedily answered by one of his own clergy. It is notorious indeed, that the subjects involved in the last mentioned disputation, are matter of perennial debate among the divines of the United Church. Neither has diversity of opinion been confined to the sacerdotal order. A predecessor of Lords Eldon and Lyndhurst† published a work intended to subvert the distinction be-

\* Mr Nihill recommends an adoption of his plan now.

† Lord King.

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tween presbyter and bishop. The last chancellor of the University of Cambridge, the Duke of Grafton, advocated the cause of socinianism. But it would be endless to enumerate similar examples both among the clergy and laity; I can only refer to such as immediately occur. They who have read both sides, will judge whether I am correct in stating, that there is scarcely any objection against the doctrine, ritual, and discipline of the establishment advanced by dissenters, but what may be found in the writings of our own prelates and divines; let the sceptic on this point bury himself, for one short month, in an extensive library, with a mind disposed to do justice to all parties, and then report the result." Riland, chapters 17, 18, and 19.

Such is the picture of the church of England as it now exists, drawn by the faithful pens of some of her own clergy; for who else could or would have drawn it so accurately? They surpass all that has ever proceeded from the dissenters, and more than justify our secession. Deeply must it be deplored by every friend of pure and undefiled religion, (whatever be his denomination,) that so much evil should be allowed to exist under the sanction of the christian name. Recoiling with disgust and horror as dissenters do from all association with infidels in their attacks upon the institutions of the country, whether civil or sacred, and refusing the most distant help from such auxiliaries, in their contest with the church, they cannot but bewail the occasion of boasting, which these things afford to their common enemy. Yet what an inference in their own favour may dissenters draw from such statements and confessions?

If there be vestiges of Popery\* in the church of

\* For saying that the church of England retains many of the corruptions of Popery, I am accused of bearing false witness against my neighbour. How much greater is the crime of Mr Acaster, in bearing false (if it be false) witness against his mother, for he too admits that all vestiges of Popery are not removed from the church of England. Acaster, 113.

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England; if there be a want of due administration of the supreme presiding power; if the legislative jurisdiction be exercised by men, whose want of reflection renders them incompetent for the task; if the appointment of the bishops be generally a matter of mere secular policy, and cabinet influence, without regard to spiritual qualifications; if the revenues of the cathedrals be lavished to aggrandize the pride and pamper the luxury of the richest and best provided members of the clerical profession; if the archdeacons cannot discharge their duties without exposing themselves to derision; if the greater portion of the clergy are ignorant, or worldly-minded, or profligate, or incompetent, and this be the result of the easy access to holy orders; if pluralities and non-residence be so common that a large portion of the clergy perform their duties by proxy, and thus occasion a mass of perjury to be committed; if church-wardens also are continually guilty of this awful crime; if there be this malignant and rancorous hostility carried on against the evangelical portion of the clergy, and such hindrances thrown in the way of their usefulness; if the system of tithes be productive of so much altercation; if the patronage of the church be so incurably corrupt; if the creeds, catechisms, and articles be all declared defective, and in some things obscure, and seemingly contradictory; if the apocrypha be read as the lessons of the church, and "nauseous gabble" be substituted for holy Scripture; if the absolution in the visitation of the sick have fallen in many cases into desuetude, because it claims a power which the clergy tremble to use; if the office for the burial of the dead is a burden to the conscience of a great portion of the clergy; if the rubrics are

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vague, defective, and contradictory; if the arts of evasion and sophistry have never been more notoriously developed, than in attempts to explain away the strictness of subscription to the articles, liturgy, and homilies; and if there be no hope of such evils being removed; and if these evils and the hopelessness of any remedy being applied to remove them, be acknowledged by the clergy and laity of the church of England themselves, then let them not wonder that there are men whose minds are too enlightened and their consciences too tender, to subscribe, (as every beneficed clergyman must, and every unbeficed one does in effect), in the face of such things, their unfeigned assent and consent to every thing contained in the book of common prayer; nor let them wonder that such men should secede from a communion in which the members and friends of it themselves profess to see so many corruptions; and especially let them abstain from reproaching them as restless, discontented, and factious schismatics, who have neither ground nor defence for their separation. We find many of our reasons for dissent stated in the works from which I have made such large extracts; and we find them stated there with a force and boldness of language, which we ourselves should certainly have scrupled to employ. We measure not other men's judgments and consciences by our own, but we certainly cannot be condemned as remarkably squeamish or fastidious, merely because we cannot be reconciled to a system, which some of its most pious supporters confess is disfigured by so many blemishes, and tainted with so much corruption. But even were these blemishes removed, and this inherent corruption expurgated, (which we have the authority of episcopalian writers for believing never will be done,)

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were the church of England as much reformed as its most holy and zealous friends could wish; were its liturgy revised, and the defects of its creeds and catechism supplied, and all that is objectionable in its offices taken away; still the intelligent and consistent dissenter could not be conciliated and drawn back to its communion; for his objection lies not merely against the contents of its Prayer Book, but against its very constitution as a church established by law, allied to and supported by the secular power. Of union there is therefore no hope. The church must alter its form as well as its formularies, or we must abandon our convictions. One party must yield not merely its prejudices but its principles, before a coalition can be formed: this is not to be looked for, and therefore instead of seeking after uniformity, which neither legal restraint nor angry controversies can ever be expected to produce, let us now endeavour to obtain that unity of spirit which is a thousand times more to be coveted than a mere outward and heartless agreement, and which will throw a brighter lustre over the christian cause, by the very consideration that it has force enough to resist the damping influence of different sentiments and separate communions.

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**CHAPTER VI.****THE RESPECTIVE DEFECTS OF THE ESTABLISHED AND  
DISSENTING CHURCHES CONTRASTED.**

I. The evils which I have confessed are to be found in dissenting churches are exceptions from the rule by which their general state is to be judged of, and not the rule itself.

Instances are to be found and, taking them in the aggregate, not a few, which answer to the portraiture in my volume; but no one acquainted with our condition will believe that this is the usual posture of our affairs, or the general aspect of nonconformity. To select from my book every thing that was said in the frankness of candour, to tear such passages from their context, to detach them from their scope and design, and then to hold up such a collection of facts as a fair specimen of the general state of the body to which they refer, is as unfair in the way of argument, as it is discrediting to the Reviewer's charity. Would it be fair to estimate the moral character of Ireland by the scenes of St. Giles's in our Metropolis; or that of England by the assize calendar and the state of our prisons; or the morals of our nobility or gentry by the instances of profligacy which are admitted to exist, and that not



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unfrequently, in the higher circles; or the state of health in our towns, by the casualties and diseases which are to be found in our hospitals? Yet this may be done as fairly as to represent the practical abuses of dissenting principles as the usual condition of non-conformity. Perhaps we could not find half a dozen congregations of my own denomination in the three midland counties at this moment, which are not in a state of profound tranquillity; the ministers living in harmony with their flocks, and their flocks living in harmony among themselves. Yet if half a dozen could be found, these would constitute a number sufficiently large to justify the use of the language of lamentation, rebuke, and strong representation on the part of a writer who was laying the sins and duties of church members before them.

Can this be said of the evils admitted to exist in the church of England; those for example, of patronage, pluralities, and non-residence; the secular influence of the crown or cabinet in the appointment of the prelates; or the spiritual qualifications of the clergy? I ask, if according to the statements of episcopalian writers evil is not the rule, and good the exception? I appeal to the pages of the authors whose language I have quoted for an answer to this question. What can be meant by such an ominous title as "The Church of England in danger from itself," but an admission that the practical abuses predominate above the practical benefits? And is not the title borne out by the allegations of the volume? Will the Reviewer deny that there is a much smaller number of bishops elevated to the bench for their spiritual fitness and truly apostolical qualifications, than by mere cabinet or aristocratic influence, without any

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regard to distinguished personal holiness or even literature? And as to the inferior clergy, is it the rule or the exception that they are led by religious motives to select their profession? Is eminent piety as the ground of presentation to a benefice and the means of preferment, the rule or the exception? Are pluralities, for the higher classes of the clergy, the rule or the exception? The church writers alluded to so frequently boldly admit that evil is in these things the usual practice and good a deviation from it. And, as to the Prayer Book itself, it would be almost difficult to decide, Mr Riland himself being judge, whether its excellences or its blemishes predominate.

II. The evils which I have admitted as existing amongst dissenters, are in ourselves and not in our ecclesiastical opinions; while the evils existing in the church of England are inherent in the system.

So variously constituted are men's mental optics, and in such different lights do they contemplate the same objects, that my opponent contends for the very opposite of this proposition, and says, that the evils of our system are inherent, while those of his own church are extraneous to it. Let us examine this point. One class of evils which he charges upon us or, to put it with all possible fairness, which he says I admit, is composed of those ordinary frailties of our nature, and defects in human conduct, which are utterly irrespective of all systems of church government whatever; such for instance, as pride, irascibility, tattling, backbiting, mischief making, violations of the sabbath by travelling, feasting, vain conversation, &c. &c. That such things really do exist among us it were idle and untrue to deny; for in what community do they not exist? And to rebuke them

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was very proper in one who like myself was pointing out the duties, and exposing the misconduct of professing Christians. But what will be said of the candour of a writer, who would glean all such passages, put them together and hold them up as a part of a picture of dissent, as in fact its personification? Did he not blush over his own sentences, or write them with a faltering hand? Such efforts may serve the purposes of a party, but not the cause of truth. As to the evils which more immediately connect themselves with the operations of dissenting principles, we may affirm, that they are more, far more, in ourselves, than in our system. What are those evils? Collision of opinion on important matters, and that conflict of feeling which is its too frequent and its somewhat natural result; a desire after pre-eminence; a love of dictation; a want of just subordination; these, the common operations of the depravity of our nature are the causes which agitate our churches and bring in divisions amongst us; while our principles and practices as dissenters are but the occasions of such abuses. The same evils exist in every human association for counsel, energy, and operation. They are to be seen in every society, in every committee of a civil and secular nature. It is in human nature to be proud, selfish, domineering; and as the members of a christian church are still imperfect, it is not to be wondered at, that these signs and operations of imperfection, should be exhibited by them in their ecclesiastical capacity and their relation to each other. But it would be as fair to trace up the bribery and corruption practised at our elections to the representative system; or all the jobs, and tricks, and unconstitutional influence sometimes practised by a corrupt administration

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to the system of monarchy and royal prerogative; as the evils of dissenters to nonconformist principles. That our principles give occasion to such things, in consequence of our imperfect nature, is very true. But they are not the cause of them. The gospel itself is exposed in all its great doctrines to a similar abuse. It is especially worthy of remark, as strikingly confirmatory of the scriptural support of our system, that the churches planted by the apostles, and addressed by them in their inspired letters, were supposed to be saints, men acknowledging the authority of Christ, and professedly governed by his laws; men with whom humility, love, and meekness, were cardinal virtues; for such men, the system of union upon the ground of voluntary consent seems eminently adapted; it gives an opportunity for the operation and exhibition of their appropriate graces, and under the influence of those graces, would be productive of nothing but good. The election of our pastors and deacons by the church, and the admission of the members by each other, seem to be things so rational in themselves, and so easily managed upon the acknowledged principles of the christian character, that they are not to be surrendered because of the abuses to which they are incident by the imperfection of our nature. And as the evil is in us, but not in our system, our great business is to improve our own hearts; which, were it done more perfectly than it is in the management of our church affairs, would immediately deprive dissent of that which invests it with so much deformity in the eyes of its enemies. We do not pretend that our system is absolutely perfect, but we contend that most of the obloquy with which it has been loaded belongs to

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human nature, and is to be added to the melancholy proofs of human depravity.

Examine now the evils of the church of England. And what by the confession of its candid, pious, and enlightened friends are these evils? Patronage is admitted by them all to be the great corruption: that which extends its polluting influence from the head to the remotest extremity; which corrupts it in mass and in detail. It produces the *caput mortuum* of the ecclesiastical body into which all subsides. But will any one contend that this is extraneous? I ask if a state church can ever be separate and secure from state influence? Supported by the power and fostered by the bounties of the state, it will ever and naturally enough, both from principles of policy and feelings of gratitude, yield itself more or less to that which creates and sustains it. As long as the king is the head of the church, and this he must be as long as the church alliance remains, the whole hierarchy must be a "compact and united form, composing a chain of various links, which hang suspended from the throne." How much then in this view of the case depends upon the moral and spiritual qualities of that royal mind with which rests the appointment of the primate and all the prelates? But in fact, it does not depend on him; for the mainspring of the English church is in the cabinet, and the disposal of the higher offices is as much, and as certainly, the result of cabinet discussion, or the effect of ministerial influence, as the disposal of offices in the army and navy. If half the bench were to be desolated by death next year, who would deny that the hero of Waterloo, were he still premier, would have the destinies, for the time being,

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of the church of England in his hand? Nothing less than a divorce of the church from the state could alter this state of things, or prevent the ecclesiastical system from being an engine of the secular power. The weaker party must ever be subservient to the stronger. The church has lost the only shadow of independence it ever had by the reduction of its convocation to a mere name and a mockery. And then to go to the inferior clergy. Is not the patronage of almost all the livings in the kingdom, in hands which nothing less than a miracle can render fit to employ it with spiritual advantage to the church. About five thousand of these, as I have already remarked, that is about half, are in the gift of the nobility and gentry of the country, who of course look to them as a means of providing for their younger sons, rewarding their friends and favourites, or improving their own means by the sale of presentations. Thus full half of the livings of the church are at this moment interwoven with the private property, of the country; and together with the congregations and cure of souls, with which they are connected, may be put at any time to auction, and sold, with the immortal interests involved in them, to the highest bidder.\* Is this, or is it not an

\* "The commerce in the souls of men," says Mr Scott in his notes on Revelation xviii, 11, 20, "is the most infamous of all trafficks that the demon of avarice ever devised, but by no means uncommon. The sale of indulgences, dispensations, absolutions, masses and bulls hath greatly enriched the clergy and their dependents. Nor has the management of church preferments, and many other things, been any better than trafficking in souls; and it would be gratifying if we could say that this merchandize had been peculiar to the Roman antichrist." In his reflections upon the same portion of Scripture, Mr Scott remarks, after alluding to the slave trade, "yet even this, cruel unrighteous and hateful as it is, roust not be considered as the worst traffick, even of this our land; for the souls of men are traded

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evil? If so, is it inherent or extraneous? It is so inherent, I will affirm, that by nothing short of a revo-

for by those who take the care of them for the sake of the emolument and the abundance of the delicacies obtained by it; and then either leave them to perish in ignorance or poison them by heresy, or lead them on the road to hell by a profligate example. How fervently should we then pray that God would raise up reformers, who may contend as firmly, perseveringly, and successfully against this vile merchandize, as some honourable and philanthropical persons have against the accursed slave trade! For when Christ shall again come to drive the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he will have much to do in other places besides Rome, many of these spiritual wickednesses and this merchandize of souls by feigned words, equivocating subscriptions and declarations, nay, worshipping God in expressions which are avowedly deemed false by those who use them, and all this for filthy lucre's sake, will be found under different forms, even in the protestant churches; and perhaps no denomination is quite free from the guilt of rendering religious profession arid sacred functions subservient to worldly interests, credit, ease, and indulgence. These are the remains of the anti-christianity derived from Rome, which most need protesting against and removing; in these things we ought to come out and separate from Babylon, if we would not partake of her plagues."

Let any man who has common sense determine if any thing can be more revolting to the feelings of unsophisticated piety, more opposed to the word of God, or more insulting to the human understanding than this traffick in church patronage. Mr Scott very properly remarks, "that commerce in the souls of men is more cruel and unrighteous than even the accursed slave trade is; the most infamous of all trafficks ever devised by the spirit of avarice." Mark that, reader! and yet this is an inseparable part of the system of the church of England as it is, and as it ever must be as long as that church remains incorporated with the state. How shocking is it to see the care of souls advertised with other merchandize to be sold at the auction mart; and as is sometimes the case puffed by the notice of the living being well situated for hunting, shooting, and fishing. Can any thing be more offensive in the eyes of God than such a practice? And how self-degrading to the inhabitants of a parish to read an advertisement in a newspaper, or on a placard at the corners of their own streets, hi which their spiritual interests are thus made matter of pecuniary speculation to any man, either for his own advantage by

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lution, which no churchman could contemplate without horror, could it be removed. It will not do to say, in reply to all this, that the church could exist, even if these things were altered, for I am not now speaking of such a church establishment as we could frame for Utopia, but of such an one as does now exist in this country; and I am speaking of that as it is, with all the abuses which its best friends must know to be remediless. Its alliance with the state is the great evil, and the prolific source of many others, and as long as it remains, as a system of religious instruction, must inevitably corrupt it, and render it to a considerable extent an engine of secular policy. In spite of all these evils so justly complained of, its pious clergy, holier and more efficient than their system, may do immense good, as is eminently the case in the present day; but the evils themselves must remain, for they are inherent and inseparable; they are a disease in the ecclesiastical body which no medicaments can reach, no skill can eradicate; which must continue to fester and burn in the frame, impairing its health, and enervating its strength; and, in reference to which its more enlightened and candid friends must admit that the only hope they have is, that the stimulus supplied by the present accession of evangelical ministers, will invigorate its constitution, form a moral antiseptic to resist the progress of decay, and still enable it to continue a little longer a blessing to the land. But in

selling again, just as if it were a share in a railroad or other joint stock company, or for his son whom he wishes to provide for as a gentleman. Traffic in church livings, is sometimes made a matter of speculation as certainly as jobbing in the funds. This is an adjunct of patronage, and patronage is a necessary adjunct of the church of England. Appendix, Note B.



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the meantime let them turn their attention to the diseased system they are prolonging, the immense good they are preventing, and the boundless evils which they are upholding and promoting.

III. While the evils connected with dissent are extraneous, and its benefits are inherent, the very opposite is the case in the church of England, as admitted by her own writers.

The evangelical ministry, and all those energies by which the diffusion of true piety is carried on among us, are sustained by the very principles of our denomination. The mode of introducing candidates for the ministry into their office; their education; their election to the pastoral office by the people; the manner of their ordination; their dependence for their support on the free-will offerings of the flock; all, so far as the pastorate is concerned, is adapted to keep up the tone and vigour of piety among us. As long as the great body of the people are sound in the faith, and alive to the interests of piety, our ministry must be so too. All that is good among us is the result of our system, as the means of it; while all that is evil is the result of our own personal imperfections as the cause. But let me now consider what is the state of things, according to the admissions of its own writers, in the church of England.

As to the causes of the evils, they are confessed to be in the church itself: else why cannot it remove them, and why is it in "danger from itself?" And no less frankly is it admitted, that the practical good is from without, and not from within. Mr Acaster says, and says truly, that it was by the Wesleys and the Whitfields that the revival of piety in the establishment was commenced; but that these holy able and devoted men

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were immediately cast out; "That the church drove them and their adherents away, as intolerable and incorrigible; and that then they formed a rival party, which, in number of devoted worshippers, may perhaps more than equal the religious establishment of the land."

"Their opponents were blind, worse than blind, nay, I will go further," says Mr Acaster, "I will challenge the contrary to be proved, whether in any one instance, for more than an hundred years, the rulers of the church, or even the state, have ever adopted any measure for her good, which was not forced upon them by the rapid and formidabla advances of her dissenting rivals, and then, perhaps, too late." Acaster, 60.

The testimony of Mr Nihill is equally in point, and still stronger.

"It is however frequently said, and with an air of considerable triumph, that the gospel is preached much more generally in our pulpits than it was some twenty or thirty years back. But what if it turn out upon a more discriminating glance, that the supposed improvement in the preaching of the clergy is attended with a diminution of influence on the part of their church? Now I think it evident that the cause of dissent has progressed with the increase of evangelical religion among the established clergy. Those who are the most attentive hearers of the most popular preachers among us, are ready to transfer their attention, and their support, and their adherence, to any popular minister among the dissenters. One might at first sight be induced to account for this effect by supposing, that the character and economy of the church are adverse to the assertion of gospel principles, while those of the dissenters are favourable to it. But this is far from being the true reason. It is because the main system, the internal economy of the church, though most strictly evangelical, is in a state of lifeless inactivity, and is consequently in no wise the spring of the alleged improvement. For want of some manifest connexion between the government of our church, and the zealous preaching of her popular ministers, their doctrine and labours come to be looked on as distinct from our ecclesiastical system. Those who are edified and enlightened, do not feel a whit more attached to the national communion on account of these advantages. The habit of regarding the boasted improvement as not connected with, or traceable to our proper discipline, is moreover strengthened by the obser-

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vation of those causes to which it is commonly ascribed. The extra-ecclesiastical societies and proceedings which furnish so much popular excitement, are honoured as the chief means of raising the tone of our doctrine and the zeal of our ministry; and it is impossible they should be so considered without drawing away the eyes of the people from the church. From these reflections it is plain that if we admit, to the fullest extent in which it can reasonably be alleged, that the clergy have exhibited improvement, it by no means follows that the establishment can rely upon the fact as a source of confidence in her own stability. In considering her dangers from an angry Providence, it is of the utmost importance to distinguish whether the advantages which she boasts arise from the faithful exercise of her proper functions, or from any foreign cause. If they are to be traced to the latter; if her own discipline, instead of producing them, has been dead and unfruitful, even these advantages may cause her to tremble. And this inference appears the more palpable when we see that it does not rest in mere theory, but that in point of fact, the very circumstance alleged in favour of the establishment is accompanied by a growing spirit of separation." Nihill, p. 39.

And, to prove that the best portion of the establishment, both as to men and principles, is at the present time considered by the other and larger portion rather as an excrescence and a deformity, than as either an ornament or an integral part of it, I may refer to the writings of the high church party, who are continually denouncing their brethren as a band of aliens, that have intruded themselves into the church, and are preaching doctrines foreign to the legitimate construction of her articles and formularies. They are regarded as dissenters in the church, though not from it; not less erroneous, but far less honest, than those who come out from its communion: and their doctrine is branded as a species of heresy, at once fanatical and most mischievous. Hence the assumption by their opponents of the name of orthodox churchmen.

"As an orthodox member of the church of England," says one of these opponents, "I do not hesitate to say that the principles of the

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Evangelical, or as they are more properly called, of the Calvinian, methodistical preachers of the present day, are as incompatible with the sound apostolic doctrine of the established church as the corruptions of popery. With respect to regeneration and election, on which point our evangelical praters think proper to be dissentient from our venerable church, I shall only remark, that by doing so they hold out even encouragement to the ravings of fanatics about the pangs of the new birth, as well as to their sudden impulses, illuminations, assurances and convictions." A reply to Dr Milner's "End of Religious Controversy," by the Rev. E. Grier, A.M. Vicar of Tcmplebodane, in the Diocese of Cloyne.

Volumes of similar extracts might be quoted to prove that the best, though much the smallest portion of the church of England, is considered by the other and larger part, as a base scion from a foreign stock, grafted upon the venerable tree, merely to corrupt it, and cause it to yield not only wild but poisonous fruit.\*

In judging of the power of the church to reform itself, and in determining the question, whether the present good which is going on within it, is fairly to be traced up to its own inherent energies, or to some foreign and extra-ecclesiastical causes, we must not only look into its formularies, to ascertain their sentiments and spirit, but we must also look at the whole system; for however scriptural may be the articles and creeds, yet if there are circumstances which limit, impede, and nullify their operation and influence, it may fairly be said to possess no self-renovating power, no available and adequate vis medicatrix for its own relief. Now the writers whom I have so largely quoted, (and they speak the sentiments of a host of others, who though they remain silent are

\* I once heard a clergyman say at a public meeting, in allusion to a pious bishop, whose name had been introduced as an example of liberal feeling, "All are not of the church of England that are in it." This gentleman has since effectually proved himself to be of the church in his own view of the hierarchy.

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very ill at ease,) agree that what is called the evangelical system is the only means of accomplishing the great ends of the gospel ministry, and indeed the great end of the christian revelation. If then, from the beginning of the present revived state of piety in the church, the evangelical system has been resisted, loaded with obloquy, and persecuted by the rulers of the church; if as Mr Richardson, quoted by Mr Riland, says, “evangelical sentiments will close the door of preferment against the man who holds them, and infallibly ruin his prospects of rising in the world; or if the presentation of such a person should be regarded as a portentous circumstance, an act of ecclesiastical suicide;” I do not see how it can be said that such a church has any adequate actual source of spiritual good in itself. The very continuance of evangelical preaching within it is in opposition to a determined confederacy for its repulsion. It is not by formularies, either dissenting or established, but by the preaching of God’s holy gospel that piety is diffused and sustained; and that church, which, as to its rulers, is declared by its own champions to be in opposition to this, cannot be fairly said, whatever may be its creeds and articles, to be the instrument of its own revival: this is confessed to have been wholly from without.

IV. It is worthy of remark, that the abuses of dissent are strikingly analogous to the irregularities and disorders which existed in the apostolical churches, and which are mentioned so frequently, and with such minuteness of detail, in the epistles of St. Paul.

I believe that a very great mistake is made by many persons as to the condition of the primitive churches. They seem to imagine, that those communities were far

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more tranquil, harmonious, and affectionate, than really was the case. Misled by associating with those days the oft-repeated testimony, "see how these Christians love one another," and by the supposition that the church reposed in quiet submission under the mild sway of apostolic authority, they look back with fond and yearning desire upon that supposed state of ecclesiastical quiet union and affection, which they long to realise in our times. That in every thing which constitutes the heroism of Christianity, I mean the spirit of martyrdom and of proselytism, the first Christians exceeded most that have followed them I admit, but that their churches were distinguished for union, peace, and harmony, for the absence of strife, divisions, and every thing that even distantly approached to anarchy, I deny. Many of the apostolical epistles, though intended for general usefulness and containing every thing necessary for that purpose, and written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were occasioned by the prevalence of evils which they were designed to remove. If any one should be inclined to doubt this, he is requested to read those divinely inspired letters with close and critical attention. Let him peruse the epistles to the Corinthian church, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Thessalonians: and also, the second general epistle of Peter, the second and third of John, and the short epistle of Jude. In all these he will find indubitable proofs that the primitive communities of believers were far remote from a state of internal tranquillity. Christianity, in consequence of the imperfection of human nature, has been a militant system from the beginning, and that not merely from the violence of external assaults, but the agitation produced by internal commotion. It continued

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to gain victories over its foes, and to make accessions of new territories, but there were at the same time divisions in its own camp. Some of the churches were split into factions, each of which attached itself to some favourite leader, 1 Cor. iii.; almost all of them were torn and divided on the subject of conformity to the ceremonial law of Moses, Acts xv. Gal.; the same spirit of imposing things indifferent which has divided the church in subsequent ages disturbed some of those early societies, Rom. xiv.; lust of power, contests for pre-eminence, were often carried to a great length, 3 John 9; rebellion against apostolical authority was fomented by the artifice of aspirants after influence, 2 Cor. x. xi.; an avaricious disposition led some to withhold from ministers their due claims for pecuniary support, 1 Cor. ix; and a busy, meddling, tattling disposition led others to disturb the repose of their neighbours, 2 Thes. iii.; strifes, envies, animosities, evil speakings, and vain gloryings were lamentably common, 1 Cor. xii. xiii. Gal. v. 15. Ephes. v. Philip, ii.; fickleness in their attachment to faithful ministers was not uncommon, Gal. iii. If we pass on from the members to the ministers of the churches, we shall see many things to convince us that there was no perfection even in those days; some preached Christ out of envy and strife, Philip, i.; others gloried in the number of their converts, Gal. vi, 12; others corrupted the communion of the church by the addition of improper members, to increase their party, 1 Cor. iii.; even the apostles and evangelists disagreed, and received the rebukes of each other, Acts xv. 36; Gal. ii. I give this description of the state of the first churches, not to prove that ecclesiastical disorder in any christian community, or in any age, is a slight evil, or stands excused

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by the agitations and schisms which prevailed in the days of the apostles, but to shew that evils existed at that time, precisely similar to those which now too frequently prevail in the churches of dissent. This striking resemblance of feature between the first christian communities and ours, I would especially point out; not certainly as justifying our conduct in cases of strife and division, but as furnishing a strong presumption that our system of government is the same, in its essential features, as that which was set up by the apostles. But in vain shall we search the inspired epistles for any thing analogous to those abuses which are acknowledged by Messrs. Riland, Acaster, and Nihill, to exist in the church of England. St Paul utters no complaint about patronage, secular influence, and cabinet meddling with the affairs of the church; nothing about pluralities and non-residence; nothing about the luxury, pride, and pomp of any ecclesiastical dignitaries; no, these things belong to another system than that which he lays down; they are the invention of after times; the appendages of a state of affairs when the cross was used as an ornament to the imperial purple, and the crown of gold was set above the crown of thorns. The very evils and abuses then which attend our mode of church government are the very same in kind as those which are condemned in the apostolic letters, and while like those holy men we deprecate these evils, we nevertheless adhere to the system as they did. The identity of the evils identifies the systems. We are therefore prepared to vindicate the system, and at the same time are anxious to suppress its abuses. Till our opponents can shew that the opposite system has higher authority, and fewer



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evils, we shall be justified in following the apostles, and sharing their trials.

V. The abuses connected with the principles and practice of nonconformity admit of easy correction, reformation, and removal; not so the abuses of the church of England.

As our evils are manifestly rather those of human nature, than of our system, we have only to begin a work of personal reformation, which is always within our reach, and by the aid of divine grace is always attainable by our efforts. We need tarry for no decrees of ecclesiastical courts, for no acts of parliament, for no orders of the King in council. The gospel method and ours is a self-adjusting apparatus, easily repaired, because so simple; fitted to all circumstances, all times, and all places. It never becomes absolute or powerless. We have in the New Testament an infallible rule, very near at hand, by which to conduct the business of improvement; and in the authority of Jesus Christ we have a tribunal which is final and decisive. Here is balm for our wounded churches, and a physician to apply it. We need no foreign power, which in all cases is itself tardy, fallible, and corrupt: we have only to ask, "What saith the Lord?" and then, after receiving the response of the oracle, to apply the remedy. Our system may not be absolutely perfect, but the fault lies more in the irregular action or flaws of particular parts, than in any derangement or bad construction of the machine. When evils do arise and operate for a while, they are generally removed in the end. In most instances, as is well known to those who are at all conversant with dissenting affairs, the causes which for

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a season have interrupted the harmony of particular churches, and produced collision of feeling, have given way to the influence of time and christian charity, and weeks or months of agitation and discord have been succeeded by many years of the most delightful tranquillity and prosperity. Christian principle has recovered its elasticity; the depressing and resisting force has been removed, and the church, taught by sad and humiliating experience to be cautious, has remained both harmonious and happy.

But are the abuses connected with the establishment thus easily removed? The clergymen who admit their existence, are calling loudly for their removal. Eeform in the church has become a topic of discussion, if not as extensive, yet as earnest, in the circle in which it is mooted, as reform in parliament; and that circle is of course within the church itself. It is from within the establishment, that these ominous sounds are heard, not from without. The books on church reform have been published by clergymen; who, while they admit the existence of evils so numerous and so flagrant, look round after all, with a kind of hopeless though imploring cry for help: they know not to whom to apply for assistance, or in what way it is to be granted. Various remedies are suggested, and different plans of healing laid down: but their adoption is utterly hopeless; and if not, they would not meet the case. That there is no probability of their being applied, will appear from the following considerations:★ 1. They come from a party in the church, which though in-

\* See some able papers on this subject in a Review of Mr Riland's book in the Congregational Magazine, for July, September, October, 1830.

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creasing, is yet a minority, and withal is so disliked by the majority, that the latter would, as Mr Riland confesses, rather increase than diminish what is objectionable, in order to lead to another ejection of the Puritan part of the church. 2. The great body of the influential clergy see nothing that wants alteration, and are opposed to the principle of reform, and the attempt at reformation. 3. An overwhelming majority of the two houses of parliament are decidedly inimical to what is usually denominated evangelical religion; and would reject with disdain, any proposal, which, in their estimation, tended to the revival of puritanism. 4. Even among those who deplore the evil, and desire its removal, there is no agreement of plan or principle. And lastly, the extraordinary silence which was maintained in the house of peers last session, when Lord Mount Cashel introduced his two petitions for church reform, one of which was signed by three thousand bona fide members of the church of England, including sixty county magistrates; which lie accompanied by a long speech, pointing out the existence of many abuses; and on which he founded a motion, to pray his Majesty to appoint a commission, to enquire whether any, or what abuses existed in the established church; on that memorable occasion, not even a seconder was found for the motion. It fell dead from his lordship's lips. No voice of either supporter or objector was heard. The note of church reform was struck by his lordship, but it awakened no echo from a single peer, produced no vibration in the soul of a single prelate. Not a bishop was heard either to deny the allegations of his lordship as to the existence of abuses, or to ask for their removal. The days of Warburton and Horsley are gone by, and

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their mighty forms have passed from the scene, or what thunders would have rolled from their indignant tongues, what lightnings would have flashed from their eyes, against the unconsecrated man who had dared to assail the church in the very citadel of her strength, and in the midst of her mitred champions. Those mitred champions however were all mute, and thus by their silence seemed at once to confess the existence of the evils, and tacitly to make known their determination to let them alone. The friends of church reform after this must be hopeless, and hang their harps upon the willows, while they weep at the remembrance of their Zion. Who will next attempt to build her waste places? Who can now stay her tottering walls?

The evils against which the Reformers protest, are not mere casualties that have arisen out of the posture of the times; nor are they the production of strange and unusual coincidences, which happen only once in a hundred years, as if to disturb the regular succession of events, and confound the calculations of human foresight. They are not only of long standing, but are the natural effects of causes which are inherent in the system, and which have been in operation for more than a century and a half. The modern Reformers are but the revival of a party that long since "prophesied in sackcloth," with this difference however, that the complaints now uttered by unbeneficed clergymen are but the faint and distant echoes of those which then issued from the lips of distinguished prelates; the Acasters, and Rilands, and Nihills of our time, have taken up the cause in which Usher, Burnet, and Stillingfleet laboured in vain. The modern protesters with their remonstrances and schemes of improvement

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will follow their predecessors to the tomb of all the Capulets; and, should the system with which they are connected last so long, the evils themselves will descend to generations yet unborn. Reform is delayed and will be delayed till the Greek Calends. If however there are any who do not think so; if they are so blinded by affection as to imagine that by diffusing knowledge, and uttering complaint, they can by the blessing of God, produce virtue enough within the pale of the establishment to relieve it from the corruptions with which it is disfigured and diseased; if they think they can yet move the episcopal bench, and bring the prelates to their aid; if they have yet a gleam of hope that they can make their voice to be heard and their power to be felt in the cabinet and the senate; if they can so far impose upon themselves as to expect that our legislature has piety enough to remove abuses, the evil of which they neither admit nor discover, and which if they did, their worldly interest must lead them to support; if they really suppose that such a reform as they covet is not impracticable, then let them go on with their efforts to obtain it; it is their duty to try what they may consider their last energy, that when they shall be at length compelled to retire, they may at least have the consolation that they never quitted the sinking vessel till they were convinced they could not remain longer without making shipwreck of a good conscience.

But even were the reform solicited by these excellent clergymen granted it would not meet the case. It would at best only purify the stream, and leave the fountain still polluted. The alliance of the church with the state is the mighty mischief. No provisions however wisely ordered, nor precautions however judiciously

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framed, can guard against the corruptions which must inevitably result to the church from an establishment. As long as this remains the church cannot preserve its purity. Secular influence must come from a secular head.

“Turn a christian society,” says Mr Hall, “into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm which is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of Christianity with civil power it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and the progress of religious opinions, which left to itself had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.”\*

VI. Notwithstanding the occurrence of such abuses of their principles as are to be found among dissenters, notwithstanding they have been candidly admitted by ourselves, and triumphantly exposed by our opponents; notwithstanding the eye of public attention has been directed to them by episcopal and archidiaconal charges, by magazines and reviews, by newspapers, by colloquies between the Poet Laureate and the shade of Sir Thomas More, and by every other means which the vigilant friends of the establishment could command and employ, till their notoriety is as great as the existence of the system with which they are associated; yet is the cause of dissent, if we may credit the declaration of its enemies, so steadily advancing as to put in imminent peril the very continuance of the estab-

\* “An Apology for the Freedom of the Press,” by Robert Hall, A.M. Section V. This section contains the most eloquent defence of dissenters which can be found in the English language in the same compass.

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lished church. Nothing seems able to arrest its progress; onward it moves triumphing alike over the opposition of its foes and the divisions of its friends; as little retarded by the errors, weaknesses, and infirmities of the latter, as it is by the ingenuity, malice, and numbers of the former: while on the other hand, the same voices which from within the pale of the establishment proclaim the triumphs of dissent, predict in strong and confident language the approaching downfall of the church. To the affrighted eye of those friends of the establishment omens of portentous character arising from the regions of dissent are seen hovering in the ecclesiastical atmosphere over the turrets of the cathedrals, while sounds of woe, woe, woe, are heard to denounce the approach of the great catastrophe. Now though I do not believe that dissent is so rapidly advancing, nor that the church of England is in such imminent peril, as those persons would lead us to conclude, yet it is impossible for me to doubt that the cause of dissent has increased, is increasing, and will increase. And how can this be accounted for? Must there not be in it something which commends it to the judgment and the heart of a growingly enlightened population, as that which is accordant with the principles of revealed truth, and the rational interpretation of those principles? Must not a cause which not only keeps its ground, but advances against such strong opposition; against the wealth, the magnificence, the authority of a great national institute; against the strong tide of national customs and example; against arguments directed to avarice and ambition; against the united influence of the crown, the coronet, and the mitre; against the power of custom and the aspersions

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of calumny; must not a cause which can break through such an array, be sustained and impelled by some mighty force of reason, or revelation, or of both? To exist at all with, so much supposed internal evil, and so much external opposition, proves no little innate health and vigour in it; but its rapid progression not only stultifies all the allegations made against the soundness of its constitution, but demonstrates its heavenly origin, and prognosticates its eventual and universal triumph.

Let any candid enquirer mark the evidence in favour of voluntary unestablished churches which is involved in the increase and present state of the dissenting body. If we add to the regular nonconformists, the Wesleyan Methodists, Lady Huntingdon's connexion, the Calvinistic Methodists, and the Scotch Seceders, all of which, though not nominally, are actually dissenters; there are probably in England, Scotland and Ireland, besides the Roman Catholics, not less than eight thousand congregations, which build their own places of worship; which sustain their own ministers; which support their own colleges to the number of nearly twenty; which conduct the tuition of perhaps seven thousand Sunday schools; which expend nearly a hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year in the support of foreign missions, the success of which, both as to translations of the Scriptures, and the conversion of idolaters, is amongst the most remarkable facts of ecclesiastical history; and which join in all the other great institutions of the day, the Bible Society, the Tract Society, the British and Foreign School Society. Admitting that there are some practical abuses of our system, is the cause of dissent all evil, nothing but evil, and that continually? Is the picture so dark as our enemies would



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draw it? Are there no bright shades? Look at our theological writers; is not our divinity as pure as that of the church of England? Inspect our morals; are not they as unblemished as those of the members of the church of England? We do not retire from society into monastic institutions, but dwell amongst our neighbours to whom we are known; and can they say aught against us? Are we unknown in the committee-rooms of charitable institutions; are our names never seen on the sacred lists of mercy? Are we behind others in the social virtues and the charities of life? If then, notwithstanding the evils which occasionally attend our system, and, indeed, too frequently attend it, but of which such an unfair representation has been given; there be in it still all this mighty energy for increase and for good, is it not a proof that the system of voluntary churches is sufficient for all the purposes of piety, morality, and charity? I may look at it with the ardent admiration of a partizan, but to my eye, it presents a close resemblance to the apostolic scheme; like that, it is without power, without arms, without patronage; like that, it is neither emblazoned by worldly titles, nor much enriched by worldly affluence; like that, it leans not upon the secular arm for support, nor courts the smile of the multitude by flattering their vices; like that, it is treated with pharisaic contempt by many a proud ecclesiastic, and with philosophic scorn by many a haughty poet, scholar, and philosopher; like that, it is often rent by intestine commotion, but still like that, it lives, and triumphs, and blesses mankind.

But after all, and notwithstanding the foregoing comparison of defects, which I think leaves the balance incalculably in favour of dissent, it is not by this means

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that the question must be decided. It may be in some cases, though not in this, a difficult matter to ascertain where the preponderance of practical evil lies. Here the award will be easily made by any candid mind. But I could almost consent, if not to surrender my advantage as a dissenter in this respect, yet to appraise the victory at a much lower rate, than that which non-conformity gains by a direct appeal to the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony," this is our demand. A mere calculation of acknowledged evils connected with any set of principles, even in cases where the perversions can be proved to be inherent in the system, opposed to the Scripture, and confessedly incurable, is a much more circuitous and less conclusive method of proof, than the subjection of the principles themselves to the test of some standard, on which both parties shall agree. If I have adopted the former plan, it has been in imitation of my antagonist, and to show how completely he may be foiled at his own favourite weapon; and to demonstrate, that if dissent has been wounded in the house of its friends, the church of England is, by the confession of its advocates, bleeding almost to death, from similar injuries, which it is utterly unable to cure itself, and for which it is almost hopeless of obtaining relief from any other quarter. Yet let it be once shewn from the word of God, that the constitution of the episcopal establishment of this country is apostolical, and that there is nothing unscriptural in the book of Common Prayer, and dissenters are prepared, notwithstanding the evils that exist, to return to the bosom of the church, and to join the reforming party in their endeavours to bring about a purer state of things. Let us only be convinced that its alliance with the state is by the autho-

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rity of Christ, the only king in Zion; that diocesan episcopacy is of apostolical appointment, and that its formularies are such as we can conscientiously subscribe without infringing scriptural truth, and then, notwithstanding there is distraction in its counsels, division in its camp, desertion from its ranks, and numerous other evils in its policy and its tactics, we will even now return, and join our efforts with those of its best friends, in the work of pacification and reformation. We know that the best of causes is open, through the avenues of our depraved nature, to the entrance of abuses, and therefore it is that we say to the friends of the establishment, prove to us from the New Testament that your cause is Scriptural, and we will espouse it at once, notwithstanding the corruptions with which it abounds.

If, without being accused of presumption and arrogance, I may, in conclusion, offer a few words of advice to the two great contending parties, which are divided on the subject of this pamphlet, I would first say to the Dissenters;\* study your principles, and make yourselves accurately acquainted with the grounds and sentiments of nonconformity. These are not times to repose in careless security, or sink to ignoble rest on the lap of ignorance. We live in an inquisitive and spirit stirring

\* The words "dissenters," and "nonconformists," are of such wide comprehension, and include so many and such various denominations, that I think it necessary to state, that those sections of the dissenting body, for which I almost exclusively intended "The Church Member's Guide;" and who, in that volume, as well as in this pamphlet, are principally alluded to and addressed, are the Baptists and Independents. Those two numerous communities more nearly resemble each other in their ecclesiastical practices than any of the rest; among them the evils complained of in my work chiefly exist; and to them I would be considered as addressing the few hints which form the conclusion of this reply.

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age. The great question, "What is truth?" seems to have been proposed afresh to the civilized and listening world; the human mind is starting with new eagerness in the career of discovery; the magic influence of authority has sunk to rise no more; evidence alone will in future be accepted as proof; all systems will be examined; all creeds will be tried; all churches will be weighed in the balances of revelation; all opinions will be sifted; and by the various and conflicting winds of doctrine that are rising and murmuring along the horizon, all the chaff of error, all the withered leaves of human opinion, and all the hay, straw, and stubble of men's devices, collected by an ignorant zeal around the temple of the Lord, will be scattered, and every tree will be uprooted which our heavenly Father has not planted. One auspicious sign of the times is apparent, which as dissenters we hail with a fearless and delighted mind, the Bible, amid all the stir and the strife, is seen ascending to a higher altitude, above the clouds and the currents of hostile opinions. Christians are coming to an agreement upon the arbiter of their differences: and we, above all men, are bound by our profession to compare our principles with this infallible standard. Be able then when you are reproached for your separation from the national church to give a reason for your conduct. If you cannot justify yourselves, you deserve all the condemnation that others unsparingly heap upon you. The doctrines of the gospel, and the holy life and heavenly mind, which they produced when really believed, should be, I admit, the first objects of your solicitude in matters of religion; but they are not everything: the order and discipline of Christ's church are also matters of great importance. For these your great ancestors endured

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the sufferings and won the glory of martyrdom. *Two* thousand of the holiest ministers whom any church could boast of, or who ever shed the light of truth upon a dark world, from regard to these same principles, threw up their livings, and cast themselves, their families, and their flocks, upon the providence of God. With their history, trials, and principles, you ought to be intimately acquainted. You inherit their name, may you inherit their virtues and their zeal; and be worthy of your descent.

But while you value your principles as dissenters, view them as connected with the doctrines and duties of Christianity, from which they derive their highest worth, and for the support and application of which, they are chiefly important. It is a calumny, which some wilfully circulate, and which others ignorantly believe, that our nonconformity has scarcely any thing to do with religion, and consists of little else than mere secular politics, hypocritically disguised by the garb of piety, and profanely carried into the church of God. Of such libellers, we need only say, "Father! forgive them, for they know not what they say." Notwithstanding their reproaches we may hope to advance and prosper, for we believe the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our reward. Let us not however give the remotest countenance to these aspersions, but make it apparent that the word of God is our rule, conscience our guide, and religion our aim. Let us so act as to convince others that separate from the more perfect enjoyment and extension of what we believe to be religion, and our own greater improvement in it, we have no object and can have no interest in leaving the pale of the national establishment. While, as citizens, we hold our opinions

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on the theory and the practice of civil government, and upon suitable occasions express them, let us take care to make it appear that, as dissenters, we wish to be considered as sustaining a certain relation to the church of Christ, and not any particular connection with the policy of this world. For this reason it is well to avoid, as we ever have done, all separate confederation, as nonconformists, for political purposes. In religion, we have only one master, which is Christ; and, in party politics, we have none. The attachment of dissenters to the house of Brunswick and to the civil part of our constitution is upon record; we appeal from unfounded prejudice to authentic history. If tried by facts, we shall come from the ordeal not only without imputation but clothed with honour. It will be found that loyalty to the Hanoverian succession is with us an heir-loom; and as such we will hand it down to posterity, and leave the whole tribe of malicious whisperers to peep and mutter from the dust, and the defamatory slanderers to proclaim their libels to those who invert the order of charity, and rejoice in iniquity, but not in the truth. We will be among the first to yield unto Caesar the things that be Caesar's, although to Caesar we can never render the things that be God's.

It is, as I have already remarked, one of the evils attending national establishments of religion, that they tend to affix a stigma upon those who conscientiously dissent from them, as in consequence of the church being so interwoven with the state, it is a ready sophism, an easy delusion, with which to practise upon the credulity of the indiscriminating multitude, that those who are disaffected to the former must of necessity be hostile to the latter. How contrary this is to truth let

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facts prove. If when branded with the mark set upon them by the Corporation and Test Acts, and thus held up to general contempt and odium as a suspected body whom it was necessary for the public safety to exclude from places of trust, they resisted the united tendency of insult and oppression to weaken in the smallest degree their attachment to the British constitution, and their allegiance to the reigning house; if parts of their history, even while that history presented them as excluded from the full benefits of citizenship, can be referred to, so radiant with devotedness to the throne, as to throw into shadow the loyalty of the high church party; surely their loyalty ought now to be unsuspected, when the legislature by an act of justice, performed at length with a willingness and courtesy which seemed intended to atone for its long delay, has restored them, by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, to their just standing in the state. The loyalty which lived and nourished in the chilling shade of injustice and oppression may not be expected to wither, but to bear still more abundantly the peaceable fruits of righteousness, when fostered by the warm sunshine of equal liberty. The loyalty of dissenters has always displayed that quality, not undeserving of notice, which gives to love its chief value, it is unbought. On them descends no share of the seven millions of church income. They cannot therefore be suspected of being attached to the civil half of the constitution for the sake of its ecclesiastical moiety. And the very power which compels them to dissent from the church, I mean conscience, would be sufficient, were there no other, to compel them also to be the warm and zealous supporters of a government which is founded upon the principles of liberty and jus-

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tice. The charge of disaffection to the state, so often brought against dissenters by the friends of the establishment, reflects no credit on its authors; for, besides its falsehood, it looks as if some churchmen had no notion of any other loyalty than that which was bought and maintained by pecuniary considerations. With us the benefits of our noble, and I hope imperishable, constitution, are, without any thing else, sufficient to secure for it our invincible attachment.

In our conduct towards the establishment from which we separate let us cherish the influence and display the fruits of christian charity. Let us not look at it with the jaundiced eye of prejudice, and profess to find in it nothing but one great mass of unmixed and unchecked corruption, which during the progress of its decay is filling the atmosphere of religion with pestilential exhalations. That its constitution is unscriptural we believe, or why are we dissenters? But with much to condemn in this view of it, we may in others find something to admire. Although its basis is unsound, its superstructure is magnificent. Its scriptural doctrines are the themes with which Luther and Calvin, Cranmer and Knox, assailed the Papacy and effected the reformation; its divines have covered its altars with works more precious than the finest gold of the antient sanctuary of Israel; its literature is the boast and glory of the civilized world; its armoury is filled with weapons of ethereal temper which its hosts have wielded, and with the spoils they have won in the conflict with infidelity, popery and heresy; its martyrology is emblazoned with names dear and sacred to every protestant; and at the present moment there are to be heard from many hundreds of its pulpits truths at the



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sound of which, accompanied as they are by the life-giving power of the quickening Spirit, the dead in trespasses and sins are starting into life, and exhibiting a people made willing in the day of His power, which shall be as the dew of the morning. All this, I for one most willingly concede, and only regret that so much excellence should be united with what I must be allowed to call, and churchmen themselves have taught us to call, so much corruption. And should the church be destined to fall, may its humiliation not be effected by the rude hands of the sons of anarchy, or by the violence of political convulsion, or by the confederacies of scheming speculators; but by the diffusion of those mild and holy principles of christian truth, meekness and love, which shall conduct its members back to the simplicity of the first Pentecost, when believers were united upon the ground of voluntary consent, and were of one mind and one heart: and may its requiem be sung, not by the voices and amidst the orgies of wide spread and triumphant infidelity, but by a christian nation, enlightened to perceive by correct reasoning, and so far sanctified as to feel by satisfactory experience, that the Bible, and the Bible alone, without the aid of the civil magistrate or the support of the secular arm, is sufficient to sustain the church of Christ amidst all its difficulties, and to conduct it to a final victory over all its foes. As dissenters, we must be candid as well as conscientious. Let us avoid in ourselves that bigotry which we condemn in others; especially let us delight and bless God for the increasing piety of the church of England, and feel it our duty as well as our happiness to enter into all those religious associations which afford us opportunities for co-operation with them in the

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matters of supreme importance in which we all agree. Let us dissent only where we must, and unite where we can. Let us recognise piety wherever we find it, nor allow our principles as dissenters to chill the ardour of our emotions as Christians. If we cannot have uniformity of order, let us have unity of spirit: and recollect that it is better to be of one heart than even to be of one mind in all things.

It is of great importance that as dissenters we should do everything we can to put away and keep from us the evils which disfigure our principles. The spirit of division is often our disgrace and our injury. If I may apply the term to a collective body it is our easily besetting sin; that to which the nature of our church order peculiarly exposes us. Essentially popular, (though not purely democratic,) our churches, it must be confessed are in danger of being agitated by conflicting feelings. Knowing our danger, let us guard against it. As we steer along the rocky coast, let us watch the friendly beacon that warns us of the place of shipwreck. In all our church affairs let us consider the unnecessary disturbance of harmony as a high crime and misdemeanour, and sacrifice every thing but conscience and honor to preserve the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Union is strength. We know that our principles are scriptural, and we see that they are popular. Nothing but our own abuse of them can stop their progress: and even this, powerful as in some cases the obstacle has been, has not been able to paralyse and arrest them. "What would be their triumphs, if factions were never seen and discords never heard! A peaceable and harmonious dissenting community, (and many, very many such we have,)

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where the pastor, chosen by the suffrages and supported by the free-will offerings of the people, lives in their affections, and they are united to each other upon the ground of that mutual esteem and love which are the result of reciprocal knowledge, and the allowance of each other's possession of the religious character, is the fullest exemplification and most beautiful exhibition of Christianity to be found on earth. In such a society there is no influence but that of principle, no force but that of truth, no cement but that of love. Human legislation has had nothing to do in such a community; the busy meddling of secular interference has had no place there; patrons whether ecclesiastics or laics, have had no share in that scene: it is pure Christianity, that is faith working by love, leading men to give themselves first to the Lord, and then to each other. Why are not all our churches thus? An answer, and a sufficient one is at hand, because human nature counteracts the beneficent tendency of the divine institution. The best things are liable to the worst abuses. Infidelity in its conflict with religion, is never successful, except when it employs as its weapons the inconsistencies of professed believers. Episcopalians, as my Reviewer has shewn, know how to avail themselves of this same kind of warfare. To borrow a well known simile, I would say, that if the cause of dissent should ever die, it will fall pierced by an arrow plumed with a feather supplied from its own wing.

And what shall I say to episcopalians? Perhaps it will be thought insufferable presumption in me to say anything: if so, I will not trespass long. As it respects your own system, listen to the advice of your best friends, and take the counsel offered by your Acasters, your Nihilis, your Coxes, and your Rilands. Put away the corruptions

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which they have so faithfully exposed. Do not despise or persecute your reformers. They love your establishment, or they would not thus have encountered the ill-will of many of their brethren, by pointing out evils which a less pure and less beneficial affection would have concealed and left to fester. They will have small thanks from many: it matters not to them, they have the testimony of their own conscience; and in addition "their witness is in heaven, and their record is on high." But if their counsels and warnings have too much of the odour of the evangelical party to be agreeable, listen to the advice of those friends of your establishment, who are above this suspicion. Turn from the "Record" newspaper to the "Times;" from the "Christian Observer" to "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine:" these are witnesses to the existence of abuses, whose testimony cannot be disputed, and whose declaration of the necessity of reform, ought not to be disregarded. In the present number of the last mentioned periodical, a periodical devoted to civil and ecclesiastical torism, is a most astounding article "On Church Property and Government," which combines with a most determined advocacy of the claims of the establishment, a most appalling exposure of its corruptions and abuses. It declares, "that the church is sunk so low in public estimation, that to defend it is to provoke popular derision and enmity;" that "churchmen have sunk into a despised minority;" that "the dissenters have gained the first place in popular favour and support;" that "the church has been divorced from the state, and made its political menial;" and "that if any thing on earth be certain, this must be so, if she continue to decline as she has long done, her fall cannot be far distant." After

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these somewhat exaggerated statements of the present condition of the establishment, follows a representation of the employment of patronage, which is enough I will not say to make any pious episcopalian blush for his church, but every sincere Christian blush that so much evil should in any system exist under the sanction of Christianity; and every dissenter rejoice that he has no participation even by connivance in such enormities. Is the following statement founded on facts, or is it a calumny? If the latter, let the slanderer be confuted, and the author of it held up to the merited indignation of society; but if it be the language of truth, then let any one who has a spark of pure affection for the church as a religious institute, or what is more, the least concern for the honour of our common Christianity, join his efforts with others, to terminate this execrable system of patronage, this infamous, and as it is called by the writer of the following remarks, this sacrilegious treatment of the establishment.

“The trusts of the church are admitted to be, and to be used as patronage in the most vulgar and corrupt sense of the term; and the minister of state who bestows them regularly, does it to enrich his connexions, reward his adherents, or bribe his opponents. Why is this man made a bishop? He has been tutor in one noble family, or is connected by blood with another, or he enjoys the patronage of some polluted female favourite of Royalty, or he is the near relative of a Minister, or at the nod of the Premier, or he has been a traitor to the church in a matter affecting her existence. Why is this man made a dean? He has married a relative of the Home Secretary, or he is a turncoat who has joined the enemies of the church in the destruction of her securities, or it is necessary to preserve some powerful family from going into opposition. Why is this stripling invested with an important dignity in the church? He is an illegitimate son of a member of the Royal Family, or he is the same to some nobleman, or he belongs to a family which in consideration of it, will give the ministry a certain number of votes in Parliament. And why is this man endowed with a

valuable benefice? He has potent interest, or it will prevent him from giving farther opposition to measures for injuring the church, or he has voted at an election for a ministerial candidate, or his connexions have much electioneering influence, or he is a political tool of the ministry. At the contest for the University of Oxford, which expelled Sir Robert Peel, it was generally asserted, that certain members of the ministry, used every effort to gain votes for him by offers of church preferment; or in other words, they used the property of the church as bribes to induce the clergy to support the assailant of her securities against the defender of them. After the carrying of the Catholic question, the preferments which fell on certain of the apostate bishops or their connexions, proved that these men had been bought with her own property, to turn their sacrilegious hands upon her. The disposal of what is called church patronage in this manner, is not the exception but the rule; it is not a matter of secrecy, or one that escapes public observation, it is looked, on as a thing of course; and so far has this monstrous abuse been sanctified by custom, that, while no one expects to see a vacancy in the church filled according to its merit, the filling of it in the most profligate way scarcely provokes reprobation.

“Let us now look at those appointments in the church which are not in the hands of government. A great number of livings are private property. On what principle are they disposed of? The owners fill them without the least regard for qualifications; they practically give them to their relations while yet in the womb or the cradle; and these relatives enter into orders from no other reason than to enjoy them as private fortunes; or clergymen and others buy such livings solely for private benefit. In the appointment of curates, those are chosen who are cheapest, the least formidable as rivals, and in consequence the most disqualified; care for the interests of the church is out of the question.

“Thus in the general appointment of the functionaries of the church, whether it rest with the government or individuals, qualification’s disregarded. These are some of the inevitable consequences.

1. The office of clergyman is sought by the very last people who ought to receive it. However brainless or profligate a youth may be, he still must enter into holy orders, because his friends have property or interest in the church; perhaps they select him for it, in preference to his brothers, because he happens to be the dunce of the family.
2. The system directly operates, not only to keep ability and piety at the lowest point amidst the clergy, but to render that portion of them which may be forced into orders useless to the church.
3. The clergy

and laity are separated from, and arrayed against each other. The minister has no interest in conciliating, preserving, and increasing his flock; its favour cannot benefit, and its hostility cannot injure him. To give all this the most comprehensive powers of mischief, almost any man may, so far as concerns ability and character, gain admission into holy orders. A clergyman may be destitute of religious feeling, he may be grossly immoral, he may discharge his duties in the most incompetent manner, and lose his flock; he may do almost any thing short of legal crime, and still he will neither forfeit his living, nor draw on himself any punishment." Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, November, 1830.

I again ask is this true? If so, as friends to your church as well as to religion, it is obviously your duty to seek after Reform. This is a topic, not to be found merely upon the lips of demagogues, or in the pages of infidels, or the speeches of political speculators; it is taken up in quarters where no such odium or suspicion can attach to it, and which certainly give it weight and respectability, and ought to secure for it immediate attention. If it be your desire to win back the dissenters to your communion, it is of course your wisdom to narrow as much as possible the grounds of nonconformity, and at any rate to remove objections which are spreading discontent within the church, as well as strengthening dissent out of it. You have already an ecclesia in ecclesiâ; but this expanding nucleus of piety is rapidly associating with itself disaffection with things as they are, and unless its growth should be so quick, as soon to become the stronger of the two great parties that are struggling for mastery, and thus have the whole power of reform at its command, it will either come out or be cast out, to form an unestablished episcopacy, analogous to the episcopal church in Scotland and in America. The unbeneficed clergy by far the most numerous, and as it respects the great mass of the

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people, perhaps the most influential, have little to fear from such a secession, but their loss to the church of England would be irreparable.

As it respects the conduct of episcopalians towards dissenters, we ask nothing but candour and good will. We have suffered contumely, hatred, and misrepresentation enough to provoke any degree of hostility, and exhaust any measure of charity, and that not unfrequently from individuals in whom such conduct was most unseemly, and least to have been expected. If we are occasionally betrayed into expressions of warmth and irritation, which will hardly bear the test of the high toned morality of a religion that requires us to bless those that curse us, perhaps our excuse, (if any thing can excuse the least violation of christian meekness,) may easily be found in the pages of many writers, both clergymen and laymen, in poetry and in prose, who seem to regard it a proof of good churchmanship to insult and abuse the dissenters. We sometimes smile at the harmless fulminations of *ex cathedra* or *ex rostris* scorn and displeasure with which we are assailed; but they do not hurt us: amidst all we go on, and go on rejoicing. Our numbers ought to be sufficient to protect us from contempt; and though excluded from the universities, and denied access to the national fountains of literature, by a bigoted and narrow minded policy, and thus left to provide as we can for the education of our own ministry, we have among us some, who in the departments of biblical criticism, the Greek and Hebrew languages, systematic theology, and English literature, would be referred to as splendid ornaments of any church. At any rate there is one thing which entitles us to the gratitude and respect of all who prefer constitutional



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freedom to despotic authority: for David Hume himself, “a competent witness, if there ever was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to dissenters, candidly confesses”, that to them we are indebted for the preservation of liberty.”

Desirous of living in the good will of our neighbours, we ask for just so much esteem as our conduct entitles us to, and no more: and as to our principles, they are matters between God and our souls, which we have placed in the sanctuary of our heart, under the guardianship of our conscience, and allow no man to meddle with; which we love and value, notwithstanding the incidental evils with which it is our unhappiness to see them sometimes associated; which inspire us with no ill-will to those who differ from us, and disqualify us for none of the duties of social life, none of the operations that are carried on for the temporal or eternal welfare of mankind; which we publicly profess, and unblushingly avow, amidst the wonder of the ignorant, the suspicion of the credulous, and the sneer of the scornful; which we have inherited from martyrs, and for which, should God call us to the trial, we hope we should find grace to accept and wear the crown of martyrdom ourselves; but which we are ready, notwithstanding our present convictions and attachment, to surrender to any one who will prove them to be contrary to the word of God. In ceasing to be dissenters we should have no sacrifices to make, no persecution to endure, no cross to take up; these things lie all on the other side. Dissent, if it be a sin, is neither a courtly nor a gainful one. So far its motives are beyond suspicion. Our principles cost us much money and much respect, which we should save by entering within the

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pale of the establishment: and at the same time we should lose the ungracious character of separatists, and get rid of the unmerited name of schismatics. We should, at any rate, try our fortune in the "lottery of ecclesiastical prizes," and the career of church preferment. We are neither stoics nor ascetics; we do not profess to be in love with poverty and reproach, though quite willing to endure both for conscience sake. We are open to conviction, and will hearken to reason: but are never likely to be converted by the hectoring and contempt, the dogmatism and arrogance of either the evangelical or anti-evangelical members of any hierarchy upon earth. Although we contend for dissent, our desire is to be vanquished by the truth; and if these two can be shewn to be at variance, we are quite prepared to surrender the former. But the man who would lead us back to the church of England, must not meet us with the works of Hooker, but with the New Testament; he must not confide in that measure of dialectic skill or critical refinement, which may suffice to convict of many errors in style and logic so humble an advocate of nonconformity as myself, but let him direct the weight of his artillery against our great position, that the word of God is the sole and sufficient authority in matters of religion; let him impeach our argument, and not our style of writing, lest we should ask the question, so little to the credit of episcopalian charity, who is it that excludes us from the seats of learning, and then mocks our ignorance; and lest the world should shrewdly infer that our adversaries find our rhetoric more vulnerable than our logic; he must not only prove, if prove he could from my concessions, that dissenters are guilty of many things inconsistent with

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their own principles, but he must demonstrate, and nothing less than this will give him the victory, that an alliance of the church of Christ with the secular power is sanctioned by the authority, and accords with the genius of Christianity; that diocesan episcopacy, founded on the superiority of bishops to elders, is of apostolic origin and appointment; and that the Book of Common Prayer contains nothing contrary to the word of God. Until this is proved, nothing is done, and when this is demonstrated, the grounds of dissent are taken away, and dissent itself will, in all probability, be abolished for ever.

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**APPENDIX.**

## NOTE A, PAGE 86.

It is a matter of just surprise and deep regret that there should exist, even among the spiritual part of the clergy, considerable diversity of opinion as to the propriety of this practice. It is a point of casuistry which of course occurs to them, and on which they are called upon to decide very frequently, "Whether it is right for the members of the establishment to leave the ministry of an ignorant and erroneous clergyman, and go to a dissenting place of worship, in order to hear the truth preached in simplicity." Some, with an honourable inconsistency, sacrifice their churchmanship to their still stronger love of the gospel, and reply without hesitation, "If you cannot hear the doctrines of the New Testament preached at church, go to the dissenting or methodist chapel." There are others who endeavour to evade the question; their principles as Christians make them afraid to advise the enquirers to turn their backs upon the truth as it is in Jesus; and their predilections as churchmen make them no less afraid to advise even a partial secession from the establishment; and to avoid as they suppose, any compromise at all, they contrive to blink the question with unsatisfactory ambiguities. Alas! that good men, men that love the truth, as well as know it, should hesitate for a moment, on such a subject! There is a third class, however who in fact feel no hesitation at all. Their answer is prompt and decisive; "Leave not your church for the meeting house; no, not even if the clergyman be ignorant, erroneous, or a man of the world, and there be an eminently holy and well instructed dissenting minister in the town; for you have the gospel in the Prayer Book and in the Scriptures. Keep to your church, and wait God's time for sending you a faithful shepherd to feed you in your own pastures." Do such minis-

ters of religion really consider what they say, and what responsibility they incur? Is such advice in accordance with the injunction of our Lord: "Take heed what ye hear;" or with the spirit of the apostle's language, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" or with the admonition of another inspired writer, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds?" How will such men harmonise their counsels and the commands of Scripture? Their church as to its form of government is but a human expedient, as they themselves must confess; but the preaching of the gospel is a divine institute. Will the Lord Jesus commend them for sending immortal souls to hear that preaching on which, as well as on the preacher, he has pronounced a curse? Is this their love of the truth, to exalt the church above the gospel? Is this their love of immortal souls? What, to advise them to hear erroneous doctrine? Solomon said, "Cease my son to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge:" but these spiritual advisers counsel men to hear such instruction, and thus to go in the way of error. What edification and holy delight can there be, when the desk and the pulpit are thus in opposition to each other? Do not all those who go to hear error thus give a testimony of approbation to it? Ought not they who profess to have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, to come out and be separate, and thus give public warning against the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge? By continuing under such preaching they are accessory in a measure to the ruin of the souls that are led astray by it? Let such persons consider also the danger to which they are exposing their children. The influence of pulpit instruction and ministerial character in aid of a religious education is very great. Are young people likely to profit by the sermons of a preacher whom they know to be a man of the world? In such cases, the parent has to contradict ministerial instruction, and to resist pastoral influence. He has often to say to his children, "you must neither believe what the clergyman says, nor do as he does." How would such a father feel, if, in after days, when he reproved a profligate child, the son should say, "How could I be persuaded that there was any importance in sound doctrine, or holy conduct; in either justification by faith, or regeneration by the Spirit; or that there was any reality in personal experimental religion, when you constantly took me to hear a minister by whom all this was represented as fanaticism. You

taught me that he was my spiritual instructor appointed by law, and if I imbibed his opinions, and copied his actions more than yours, can you wonder, or ought you to reproach me." Will any christian minister advise religious parents to put themselves in the way of bringing such fearful reproaches upon themselves as these? Evangelical dissenters give better proof than this of their love to the gospel. They are not often accused by their opponents of want of regard for their principles, but I believe there is not one minister of their whole body that would venture upon such fearful counsel as to say to any of their hearers, who were going to leave them and live in another place, "Do not quit the meeting house for the church of England, under any circumstances; for if the dissenting minister does not preach the gospel, and the clergyman does, yet you have the truth in the scriptures that are read, and the hymns that are sung." No, to a man they would say, "Follow the gospel; and if you can only have it at the parish church, by all means go there for it."

NOTE B, PAGE 148.

To prove that I have not brought a false accusation against the church of England by the alleged extent to which the traffic in livings is carried on, I publish the following scale of charges, put forth by an agent who keeps an office for the transaction of clerical business. I suppress nothing contained in the printed copy, except the name and residence of this professional gentleman.

Mr — submits to the notice of the clergy, a scale of charges for business intrusted to his care; he also takes this opportunity to express his acknowledgments for the very extensive patronage he has had during the last ten years, and to assure the clergy that every commission confided to his care will continue to be executed with fidelity and promptitude.

TERMS:

INTRODUCTORY FEE, ONE GUINEA.

To be considered as part payment of the first commission exceeding that amount.

For the sale of an advowson	}	If the purchase money does not exceed £4000, 2½ per cent.
For the purchase of an advowson		
For the sale of the next presentation to a living		If the purchase money is above £4000, & under £7000, 2½ per cent.
For the purchase of the next presentation to a living		If the purchase money is above £7000, & under £10,000, 2 per cent.
For the sale of a chapel		If the purchase money is above £10,000, 1¼ per cent.

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For the purchase of a chapel	}	5 per cent. on the amount of one year's emoluments
For procuring a foreign chaplaincy		
For procuring a lectureship		
For procuring for a client in orders a curacy		
For procuring an exchange of a living or curacy		

Every description of clerical business transacted; livings valued, &c-

FOR EVERY LETTER WRITTEN, 3S. 6D.

Mr — begs very respectfully to inform clergymen who may, on account of absence or indisposition, desire to have their professional duty performed for them, that he has always the names of several highly respectable clergymen on his books, ready to take occasional duty; and that at two or three days' notice, he can undertake to provide for any duty that may be required, either in or out of town.

Mr — is also happy to add, that from his extensive connexion with the clergy, he has not unfrequently (on being satisfied that the applicants are truly respectable, and likely to pass an examination) been enabled to obtain for a client a title for holy orders, with a curacy where required. Fees in this case regulated according to circumstances.

Mr — has generally on his books, an extensive list of livings for sale, curacies vacant, and also livings, chaplaincies, and curacies for exchange.

An inspection of the letters of orders, and testimonials of clergymen, is always requested, previously to recommendation to any curacy or duty.

Mr — begs to state that all instructions received and information given by him, relating to clerical affairs, are to be considered as strictly confidential.

Mr — has respectfully to request that, after the first communication of particulars, all letters which he may be required to write may be considered as subject to the above charge, excepting when a sale of property is ultimately effected, in which case, the charge for correspondence is included in the commission, and to give time for negotiation, no application is made during the first six months for any letters written.

Mr. — begs farther to state, that after the payment of his introductory fee, the party having done so will be entitled to confidential information for twelve months, respecting all or any of the livings, curacies, &c. on his books, for disposal or otherwise. The letters only containing the leading particulars being charged on the

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terms stated above. But in all cases where a purchase or exchange is effected, the commission only, as per above scale, is charged, and from such amount the introductory fee is deducted.

When Mr. — is requested to leave town for the purpose of valuing, or to inspect any church property for sale or otherwise, a written agreement is always entered into respecting the charges for so doing, and generally those costs are included in his commission.

To persons connected with the clerical or scholastic profession who may have occasion to advertise, but are averse to the personal publicity which it involves, as well as the inconvenience of answering applications, Mr. — offers his services on the following terms: viz. For preparing an advertisement, causing the same to be inserted in a London or Country newspaper, and receiving the personal or written answers at his offices, 5s. for each advertisement, in addition to the newspaper charge.

#### PUPILS.

For procuring a private pupil; if by an advertisement referring to Mr. — for particulars, 5 per cent, on the amount of the terms for one year.

If without any advertisement, and through Mr. — own interest, 10 per cent, on the amount of the terms for one year.

Accounts invariably to be considered as duo, and to be paid, on delivery.

#### ALL LETTERS MUST BE FREE OF POSTAGE.

Mr — begs to state that for the first eight or nine years of the period during which he has had the honor of being concerned for the clergy, no introductory fee was ever charged, but in consequence of the great number of clergymen for whom he has been engaged (upwards of 5000), a large portion of his time has been occupied, and he has been put to much trouble and expense, from motives of mere curiosity; therefore, in justice to himself, he has been compelled to adopt such a course, and he trusts, when gentlemen perceive it is not either intended or wished to make a charge, without affording an opportunity of receiving an equivalent for the said fee, that his plan of conducting clerical business will meet with general, as it has already met with very extensive approbation; for it is an admitted fact, with those who are conversant in such matters, that they ought not to be conducted as common business usually is, and also that no arrangement relating to church property can be satisfactorily entered into unless the parties concerned have confidence in each other.

Let the pious members of the church of England



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read this extraordinary, and I must add, this humiliating document, that they may be acquainted with the enormous evil that is continually going on within the establishment in open day, and without the probability of its being removed or diminished. Let them compare the system of which this, as things now exist, is an integral portion, with the New Testament, and in what part of it will they find any thing analogous, except in the delineation which is given of antichrist, in the book of the Apocalypse? On the hearing of the memorable case in the House of Peers on the validity of general bonds of resignation, it was indignantly remarked by the then Bishop of Bangor, "That it had been common of late years to advertise in the public prints the sale of livings with immediate resignation; but if the judgment (of the courts of law confirming the validity of general bonds) should have the sanction of the House, these advertisers would wax bolder, and in a short time inform us of public offices being opened for negotiating this kind of traffic."\* That time has arrived, the advertisers have attained, by the growth of corruption, to the predicted

\* See Burn's Ecclesiastical Law on Simony, last edition. The whole debate above alluded to contains a most awful exhibition of the odious spirit and atrocious practices connected with the system of patronage. The speeches of the Bishops of Salisbury and Llandaff on that occasion, prove to what an extent simony, and of course perjury, had prevailed in the church. [It should be noticed that so completely had this simoniacal system of general bonds for resignations (that is, bonds to resign on request), become established in the church of England that all the judges held them valid, and when they were set aside through the influence of the bishops (all the lords voted then on appeals and writs of error), an Act was passed to legalise special bonds of resignation, that is, bonds to enforce resignation in favor of a person named in the bond, if within a prescribed degree of relationship to the patron: so completely is church patronage made the means of family settlement and provision.]

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boldness, and offices are opened for the traffic if not through these bonds, yet in every kind of saleable commodity connected with the cure of souls, which may be brought into the market, without transgressing the law of simony. And does any man of common sense believe that the merchandise of souls in its vast extent is so carried on as not to violate, in innumerable instances, this salutary law? The very first clause of the canon against simony appears to me to brand the whole system as wicked. It runs thus: "To avoid the detestable sin of simony, because buying and selling of spiritual and ecclesiastical functions, offices, promotions, dignities, and livings, is execrable before God, &c. &c." Admitting however that the meaning of this is to be limited to pecuniary or other benefits given to the patron by the clerk who is to be instituted, and that the sale of advowsons or presentations does not come under this denomination, yet who will undertake to deny that in so wide a system of traffic, and where the temptation in some instances is so great, the sin is not committed, and frequently committed? The Bishops of Salisbury and Llandaff admitted the extensive existence of the evil in former times; and if the secrets of the offices of professional men were disclosed, we should perhaps be surprised and shocked to find how widely it prevails in our own day. But putting the crime of simony, and the perjury which always accompanies it out of the question, and supposing the patrons and clergy to be more pure from this flagrant sin than their own prelates and records allow them to be, still the traffic in advowsons, presentations, chaplaincies, lectureships, curacies, titles for holy orders, temporary appointments of preachers, &c. as advertised in the foregoing scale of charges, is so truly revolting to every

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dictate of reason, every feeling of piety, and every principle of revelation, that it does seem astonishing that any men, and especially that good men, should give it the most indirect sanction, much more that they should give it the direct support of their example. Yet is there not an evangelical association both in England and in Scotland for buying up the small livings that are upon sale? Well might Mr Scott have raised his indignant protest against this practice, and invite the friends of religion to unite in prayer for the spirit of reformation to descend upon some "who may contend firmly, perseveringly, and successfully against this vile merchandize." But while the only body of men, I mean the spiritual part of the clergy, from whom any attempts at reformation can be rationally looked for, are themselves engaged in this "most infamous of all traffics that the demon of avarice ever devised,"\* it is vain to expect the extinction of this great enormity. As long as patronage continues, so long must this traffic last, and patronage must remain as long as the present constitution of the church of England shall endure.

\* Mr. Scott.

[The editor supplied the author with the card reprinted in this note, and knew the person who issued it, having come into connexion with him on the sale of an advowson. The man had a very large business until it came out on a civil trial that he was a returned convict.]

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**PREFACE TO THE NINTH AND ENLARGED  
EDITION OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP,  
OR THE CHURCH MEMBER'S GUIDE.**

WHOEVER reads with any attention the epistles of Paul, and the other apostles, will perceive two things; a full persuasion of the divine authority of the doctrines and principles laid down; and a candid statement of the practical evils with which, through the infirmities of human nature, they were associated in the conduct of the primitive churches even during the lives of the apostles. There was no attempt on the part of the sacred writers to conceal the evils which attended the working of the christian polity, lest the system itself should be brought into disrepute: but a bold and open exposure and rebuke of them, with a view to the rectification of the abuses, which had crept into the first communities of professing Christians; and many and great abuses there were, as will be presently shewn. They left it to the candour and good sense of their readers, to judge whether the evils arose out of the principles themselves, or out of the imperfections of those by whom they were embraced. This mode of procedure manifested a just confidence in the truth of their system, and in its power, under the divine blessing, to vanquish not only the hostile opposition of

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its foes, but also the seeming advantages which they derived from the misconduct of its friends. The apostles could not be so ignorant of the malignity of human nature, or of the arts of controversy, as not to apprehend, that the exposure before the world of the fermenting evils of the societies which they had formed would be noticed by their pagan opponents; yet with this foresight, they scrupled not to lay open what was wrong, assured that the truth would prevail over the objection which they appeared to give to its enemies, by thus acknowledging the contests and divisions of its friends. In the same confidence in the truth of our system, though of course not supported by the consciousness of inspiration, I did not scruple in writing the following volume, to state the practical evils, with which, through the sinfulness of human nature, the working of nonconformist principles has been associated in our churches. Episcopalians were not slow to avail themselves of an opportunity so favourable, as they supposed, for exposing the evils of dissent. From the eagerness with which my work was seized, mangled, mutilated, cut up, and distributed in fragments, over reviews, essays, sermons, charges, and pamphlets, of every description, it would seem as if instead of being an individual who makes small pretensions to distinction, I had been really, what the Bishop of London has done me the honour to call me in one of his productions, "one of the chief Muftis of the sect." I think I have just reason to complain of the manner in which the work has been treated. Passages have been torn from their context, and strung together, to produce by juxtaposition a deeper and more unfavourable impression against dissenting principles; my own individual opinion has been regarded as the

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confession of the body; my personal observation, perhaps sometimes mistaken, has been expanded into the experience of the denomination; cases which I have given, as occasional or even frequent occurrences, have been generalised into fixed and invariable practice; and then by an easy step in the climax, the evils of the persons, by whom the principles are held, have been fastened upon, or rather supposed to be necessarily deduced from the principles themselves. A triumph has thus been supposed to be gained.

But by this mode of testing truth, what system can stand? Suppose the Epistles to the Corinthians to fall into the hands of a clever pagan, and all the texts which speak of the evils which existed in that once flourishing church, and existed at the very time of its prosperity, to be carefully selected, and dexterously put in juxtaposition, what an argument could he not have constructed against Christianity; how he could have dilated on the factions, the envies and jealousies, the love of domination, the opposition to apostolic authority, the proneness to follow new leaders and new opinions, the practical irregularities, and the law suits which prevailed amongst its members; and have said, "See this is Christianity!" There were not wanting pagans who did this. Celsus, one of the bitterest, craftiest, and ablest, of the early assailants of Christianity, remarks, "the Christians having increased and spread abroad, divided again and again, and every one would have a party of his own, which is what they were disposed to of old," referring probably to the divisions of the Corinthian church. In reply to which, Origen, his great antagonist, says, "Very well, there never was anything useful or considerable, about which men have not differed. In

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medicine, in philosophy, among Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians, there are different sects and opinions.” What is the taunt of infidels at the present day, and in every age? “Can that system be divine,” they ask, “the supporters of which are split into so many divisions, are so vindictive in their spirit and conduct towards each other, and act so far below, and so much in opposition to their professions?” And could not this taunt be sustained by volumes of extracts, taken from the writings of christian authors, and Christianity, if judged by the conduct of its friends, be made to appear odious, by the admissions of its own advocates? What is the *ad captandum* argument of the Roman catholics, in their controversy with protestants, but the multiplied and endless divisions of the latter and the enmity and ill will which these divisions produce, all tending to prove the evil of private judgment, in matters of religion, and the necessity of a supreme, living, infallible, and authoritative tribunal, for the settlement of points of faith, and the decision of religious controversy? How continually are the writings of protestants, in which they lament the divisions of the church and the immorality of the nation, brought forward as a proof of the little good effected by the reformation, and the evils attendant upon a departure. from the one only true and catholic church?

To come to a case more in point, can the church of England abide this mode of trying a system, by the evils of its professed supporters? Some few years ago there seemed to be a rising spirit of enquiry into the existing abuses to be found in that communion, and the necessity of a second Reformation. Many clergymen distinguished equally for their talents and piety, sent

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forth books and pamphlets calling for reform; and others, despairing of obtaining the relief which their consciences desired, seceded from the Establishment, and published the reasons of their separation. Among the former, were the Rev. Messrs. Riland, Nihill, Acaster, and Cox, whose works, together with some church periodicals, that joined them in their desire for an alteration, contained an appalling and lengthened list of abuses, which many a churchman blushed and trembled to read. Evils affecting every department of the church, were fully and fearlessly exposed, till the whisper of reform was beginning to be heard in both houses of the British parliament. All is now quiet again; the pamphlets are upon the shelf; the spirit of enquiry is lulled to its former slumber, or, terrified by the aspect of the times, is reserving its scrutiny and demands for a fitter season. Still the exposure has been made, and its truth can neither be denied nor forgotten. The appellants for church reform complained of almost everything but the doctrines of the church, and one of them scarcely left these unassailed, at least the articles which embodied and expressed them. The supreme legislative authority of the church, the mode of appointment, character and conduct of its dignitaries, the cathedral corporations, the insufficient qualifications, incompetency, worldly-mindedness, and immorality of the subordinate clergy, the shameful traffic in the cure of souls as an article of merchandise, and an investment for property, the unequal division of church property, the prevalence of pluralists and non-residents among the clergy, the hindrances thrown in the way of the usefulness of the pious and working clergy, by their ecclesiastical superiors, the present state or rather want of discipline, both as regards the clergy



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and the laity, the schisms and differences of theological opinion that exist among the clergy, the endless quarrels originated and sustained by the system of tithes and other compulsory exactions, the defective nature of some of the offices, and the delusive character of others, the arts of evasion and sophistry practised in the act of subscription, all these and other things, were complained of with grief and bitterness of spirit, as existing within the bosom of the establishment, and as requiring immediate attention and reform. Apply then the test of trying a system by the evils which attend it, to the church of England, and how will it come off? These evils cannot be doubted. They are proclaimed and published by the members and ministers of the church. There they are, as notorious as the existence of the church itself, and the greater part of them untouched to the present day.

[Here follows a reprint of the paragraphs forming the fourth division of the sixth chapter of "Dissent and the church of England," supra p. 153.]

Still however it should be recollected after all. that the two systems of established and voluntary churches are not to be tried by endeavouring to strike the balance either of good or evil, of which they are respectively productive, (a question which it may not be easy to settle,) but by the great Protestant principle of an appeal to the Scriptures, as the exclusive authority in matters of religious faith and practice; nor is there I lament to think any near prospect of perfect union even by the aid of this reconciling medium. Political events have widened the breach between them, and made their separation more unfriendly than ever. To the contro-

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versy is now added a feud. A spirit of bitter, determined and relentless hostility has been awakened against the dissenters, which, founded on a mistake, not altogether an involuntary one, of their designs, and aided by a misrepresentation of their operations, has raised against them a deadly prejudice, and actually roused the alarms of some weak-minded people for the security of their churches and the safety of their persons.\* Whether in all things some dissenters have been judicious in their movements, or entirely moderate in their language I will not take upon myself to determine, for who can be always wise and cool under insult and calumny? But that as a body they have deserved, by any part of their conduct, the tide of obloquy and hatred which is now flowing in upon them, I am bold to deny. They have declared publicly and fearlessly their conviction of the unscriptural nature of the alliance between the church and the state, and expressed a wish,

\* A few days since a female servant came to me for instruction, in a state of religious concern; speaking of one of her late places of service, she informed me that the lady who hired her promised her leave to attend upon my ministry. After the first Sunday, she called her into the drawing-room, and endeavoured to dissuade her from going among the dissenters, telling her that she little knew what wicked and dangerous people they were; that they wished and intended to pull down the churches, and kill those who attended them. The young woman in reply assured the lady that she had attended my ministry for a year, and was quite sure that the account could not be true. However, in despite of her own word, this veracious and covenant-keeping lady told the servant she should go no more to my chapel. She was, doubtless, guilty of a violation of her word, but perhaps the guilt of her slanders upon the dissenters must be laid at the door of others, who by their sermons and writings had filled her imagination with the horrible images of insurrection and massacre, not indeed by asserting that such was our intention, but by representing our principles and actions in such a light as that a weak-minded woman might infer all this. And is this a rare case?

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that by the progress of enlightened opinion in the nation a separation might take place between them. Is this anything new in the principles or wishes of modern non-conformists? Has it not been openly avowed by them for nearly a century; and held by a great portion of them from the time of the puritans? And is there not a growing conviction among a large party in the church of England itself at this day that the separation is desirable, and would be for the real interests of the church? Would not nearly the whole body of the Oxford Tract men hail it with delight, if they could have the tithes, the buildings, the convocation, and all the rights, privileges, and immunities of the church? Have we not heard of demands of justice for the church, put forth in widely circulating publications from its own orthodox and determined supporters; meaning by this justice, its liberation from the yoke of the state? Have not complaints, loud and deep, been heard of the present way of nominating the bishops, and a desire expressed for the separation of church and state, at least so far as to take that exercise of patronage from the crown, and give it to the hierarchy, or to an ecclesiastical commission? And why then must the dissenters be so vehemently reviled for expressing the same sentiments? What is the precise object of their wishes? The injury of the state? No. They avow and boast their loyalty. The downfall of the church? No. They equally avow and boast their charity. It is the establishment and not the church that is the object of their hostility. They believe the state would be rendered stronger and the church purer by their separation than they are by their union. They would not touch a pinnacle of one of its churches, or destroy a prayer book, or insult a prelate,

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or silence a single clergyman, or appropriate to themselves a fraction of the tithes, but they simply wish that religion as a subject of secular politics may be removed from the cabinet, and as a matter of civil legislation from the senate; and the church of England support itself by the wisdom, piety, and property of its members as other denominations do. I ask whether this would not be an emancipation of the church from an inglorious servitude, and the enfranchisement of it with a spiritual liberty which it does not at present possess? And this is what we mean, and all we mean, by the separation of church and state.

Dissenters have excited great hostility by their wishes and attempts to procure the abolition of church rates, and to prevent their imposition. But is ill-will on such grounds reasonable? Do not multitudes of churchmen not only admit the injustice of compelling others to pay for the support of a system of religious instruction from which they derive no direct advantage, but also join, and even lead, the opposition to the obnoxious impost? High authority might be quoted from episcopalian writers which declare the rate to be unjust, as levied from dissenters. As to their association in this matter, with papists, radicals, and infidels, admitting that it is true, it is purely accidental, involuntary, and refers only to a civil grievance, of which they all in common complain. I cannot help thinking that this opposition to church rates ought to have been rendered unnecessary by the act of the church itself in moving for its repeal. The great apostle of the gentiles, rather than allow his ministry to be rendered less successful by his insisting on his just dues, chose to work with his own hands. That the

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contest has limited the usefulness of the clergy cannot be questioned, for it has raised a prejudice against them in many of their own parishioners and congregations; and ought they not therefore to have been the first to get rid of the contest, by removing the claim? All good men must be anxious for the settlement of the question, in a manner as satisfactory as possible to both parties. Till that is done, there is little hope of a better state of feeling between them.

If, without presumption, I may offer a few hints of advice, to the members of our churches, suitable to the present times, I would say.

1. While you rejoice and give God thanks, as you should, and I believe do, for the increase of truly evangelical and pious ministers, in the church of England; for the multiplication of places of worship, built for them by voluntary contributions; and for the consequent increase of true piety, as the result of their devoted and successful labours; you are still to remember, that this, in no sense, affects the question, concerning the propriety of religious establishments. There is an increase of both preachers and chapels in other denominations, and if this be a test of truth, all of them can appeal to it. It is common I believe with many dissenting ministers, I am sure it is with myself, publicly and privately to bless God for that truly delightful revival of genuine piety which has taken place in the church of England. We exult in it as an omen for good to our country, and as a special and gracious interposition of God for its spiritual welfare, by providing a vast body of holy and devoted men, who, whatever changes may happen, either in the state or the church, will still continue to preach the glorious gospel

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of the blessed God. But still, there is nothing in all this which affects the question as to the scriptural authority of state churches. It is in itself, and ought to be felt, as a motive for charity, hut not as a reason for conformity. The evils connected with the establishment still remain, the grounds of separation still continue. This state of things may render the strong attachment of churchmen to their system, more intelligible to us, but it ought not to loosen our attachment to the scriptural principles of nonconformity.

2. Let us ever bear in recollection, that the question at issue between the church of England and dissenters, is mainly a religious and not a political one, and should be discussed by us, in a religious, rather than in a political spirit. It is a question concerning the nature and government of the church of Christ, considered, not as a subject of civil legislation, but of divine authority; and tested, not by secular expediency, but by the word of God. From the very nature of our position, which separates us from a civil establishment of religion, at any rate from an establishment set up by secular means if not for secular purposes, and maintaining its rights and privileges by the wisdom of the world, much of the conduct of dissenters, in their endeavours to obtain a redress of grievances, must necessarily appear political also, and a most unfair and dishonourable advantage has been taken of this circumstance, to brand nearly the whole body as a mere political faction. The country has rung with the cry of "the political dissenters;" a charge that comes with an ill grace from the members of a church, the very constitution of which, considered as established by law, is essentially political; whose prelates, by being peers of the realm, are all official poli-

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ticians; a large proportion of whose clergy are not wanting in political feeling or action, and whose members are generally as busy in political matters, as party zeal can make them.

“Be it so” says Dr. Wardlaw, in his admirable discourse on the Importance of the Church Controversy, “that some of the means used by dissenters are political; are not our political relations, as well as any other, relations in which we are placed by Providence? Are they not relations with which, in this free country, providence has associated the enjoyments of certain rights and privileges? Nay, more, are they not relations with which the word of God itself has associated certain duties? We do not, when we become Christians, cease to be citizens. Our subjection to the sceptre of the King of Zion, does not cancel our franchise, as subjects of the King of Britain. Nay, if we neglect our duties in this latter relation, we neglect a portion of our duties in the former; our obligations as citizens forming a distinct class of our duties as Christians. If we fail to use any privilege, or to assert any right belonging to us as subjects of the British Throne, when by the legitimate use or assertion of it, we have it in our power to affect any end connected with the glory of God, or the good of men, we fail in our allegiance to the King of Kings.”

This is strictly true. But while I disclaim, as inapplicable and ridiculous, and in the meaning and intent with which it is applied unjust, the reproach made against dissenters of being political, and maintain their right, and occasionally, on some points, their duty to be political; yet I would, at the same time remind them, of their still more solemn duty, to do all in the spirit of piety. What are called their politics, should be carried on in “a spirit of faith.” All should be done ultimately, as for religion and with it. We are allowed to seek for the removal of civil grievances as citizens, but our principles as dissenters are religious ones, and should be upheld mainly by religious means, always in a religious temper, and with a view to religious ends and objects. The politician must be guided, sanctified.

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sustained, by the Christian, and not the Christian lost in the politician.

3. We should study the subject of ecclesiastical polity, with its collateral topics, afresh. Its interest and importance, instead of diminishing, are yearly increasing. The spirit and views of the Oxford Tracts,\* furnish new

\* Having alluded so frequently to the Oxford Tracts, it may not be amiss to give in a note, a little information of the origin, nature, and design of these publications. Some two or three years ago, a few members of the University of Oxford, among whom was Dr Pusey, professor of Hebrew, being of opinion that both church and state were in danger, not only from the system and movements of the dissenters, but from the views of church forms and rights and the theological sentiments held by the evangelical party within the church itself, confederated for the purpose of checking both those parties, by a series of tracts, which should convey by a wide circulation through the kingdom, more correct opinions, and a more elevated view of the church. They are addressed to the universities, the clergy, and the people. The following may be considered a summary of their leading principles.

1. There is no true church of Christ, where there are not the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons.

2. The church is not simply a means of religious instruction, established by the state, but a spiritual incorporation, set up by Christ himself, and endowed with a certain mysterious undefined and undefinable power over the minds and consciences of its members.

3. The validity of the christian ministry, or a right to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, depends on ordination by a diocesan bishop, who can trace his descent from the apostles, by an unbroken line of suopession. So that all who preach without this are unauthorised intruders into the ministry; thieves and robbers, who have not entered by the door, but have climbed over the wall.

4. Grace always accompanies the right administration of the sacraments. All children are of course regenerated by or in baptism.

5. Tradition, or the opinions of the early writers on Christianity called fathers, if not of equal authority with the word of God, are of some authority, and are the only key to unlock the meaning of the sacred scriptures.

6. The reformers went a great deal too far in their contest with



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reasons for this. The foundations and first principles of protestant nonconformity are attacked with new ardor, and assailed with a subtlety borrowed from Rome, combined with all the audacity and insolence which the highest church-of-Englandism can supply. The validity of our ministry and the authority of our churches, are struck at with fanatical and furious blows. We are called upon as dissenters to contend for existence: and we must do it with an increase of intelligence, zeal, and courage. Works on dissent, especially modern ones, on the exclusive authority of Scripture, the nature and extent of the power of the church, and the dogma of apostolical succession, must be taken up with avidity,

Rome, and carried the people to too great a distance from the opinions and practices of the Roman Catholic church.

7. The clergy ought to be more reserved in preaching the gospel, more diligent in preaching the sacraments.

These are some of their prevailing opinions, which are evidently a kind of half-way system between popery and protestantism. They are called even by the clergy who oppose them, the popery in the church of England, and as such they are denounced, and are feared, as leading off the people to popery itself. The extent to which these sentiments prevail is so great, as to be in the view of many quite appalling. Some of the evangelical clergy have embraced the system, while others are making a noble stand against it. It is an undoubted fact, that its prevalence is regarded at Rome with great satisfaction and triumph, and hopes are entertained of the re-conversion of protestant England to the Catholic church. The spirit of the whole system is priestly domination, and its object to bring the country into slavish subjection to the hierarchy. Its ultimate aim, like that of Rome, is not so much a secular authority, as a spiritual one; or rather a supreme command of the former with a view to the latter; a kind of spiritual rebellion to throw off the yoke of the state from the neck of the church, and to put the yoke of the church upon the neck of the state. If it could gain its object, not only would the theology of the country be corrupted, but its very liberties would be endangered; and we are bound not merely as dissenters, but as Christians, and as Englishmen, to watch its movements, and resist its progress.

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and studied with attention. We should all become conversant with the controversy, and be prepared for the mighty conflict of opinion, which is but beginning. Every man must put on his armour, and be skilful in the use both of sword and shield. It must not be left to the officers alone to fight the battles of truth, the soldiers must be brave, skilful, and ready for action. It will not do in this day, to say "Doctrine is every thing." It is not every thing, though it is the first thing. Church government is become the prevailing religious controversy of the day, and we must all enter into it, religiously, prayerfully, scripturally, and also studiously and diligently, as a matter of deep and personal concern.\*

4. Continue to maintain and cultivate a spirit of charity towards those from whom you conscientiously separate, and by whom you are so virulently reviled, and so shamefully misrepresented. You live in an age when to be a dissenter is to be considered, or rather to be slanderously reported, as little otherwise or better than to be a confederate with infidels, radicals, and papists. There are some so ignorant of us as really to believe this. Knowing nothing of us but what they gather from some high church periodicals, both newspapers and magazines, they really suppose that we are all that these defaming publications say we are. How would it astonish some of these deluded persons to spend years in our public assemblies, our private church

\* I cannot recommend too strongly Mr Ely's admirable pamphlet on Apostolical Succession, the Sacraments, and Union of Church and State, being a compendium of the arguments against the sentiments of the Oxford Tracts; the masterly work of Mr Powell on Apostolical Succession; Dr. Bennett's acute sermon on the same subject; and a Tract reprinted from the Congregational Magazine.

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meetings, and our social prayer meetings, and behold us intent only upon worshipping God in the spirit; busy in nothing but the salvation of souls, and mutual edification in our holy faith; referring to the church of England only or chiefly to pray for a blessing on its evangelical ministers: and but occasionally, and that very rarely, even stating in our defence the points of our difference with the establishment! How would it astonish them, and (if they could allow their love to Christ and souls to take precedence of their love to the church) how would it delight them, to see the numbers who from time to time come forward, in the simplicity of faith, the ardour of love, and the beauty of holiness, to join themselves to the fellowship of the faithful! And how would they be ashamed to find that they had misrepresented dissenters as engaged in little else than plotting with infidels, radicals, and papists for the downfall of the church! One of the darkest features of the times, and one of the most odious and astonishing effects of party feeling, even in some who profess to be under the influence of evangelical sentiments, is the spirit of untruthfulness and slander in which many indulge when speaking and writing of their opponents. Not a few protestants of the present day seem to be thoroughly imbued with this the worst sentiment and most dangerous dogma of Jesuitism, that any means are sacred, and any weapons lawful, when they are used for the good of the church. This however, one would hope, is confined pretty much to the editors of periodical journals, a class of men who appear to me, at least some of them, to have formed very low ideas of the sin of slander, and to have very light notions of moral responsibility. If for every idle word that men speak they

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must give account, what is the account such men must render for every calumnious word they write, who are weekly or monthly employed in bearing false witness against their neighbours, before God and their country? Instead of acting the part of the good angel, who troubled the waters for healing, they pollute and poison them by the evil qualities of their own bitter spirits, and thus spread widely through the land much mental disease, and render even the piety of many leprous and deformed.

Let us however, though it be sometimes difficult, call into exercise the spirit of christian charity. While we secede from the establishment, let us not overlook the good that is in the church. Her noble army of martyrs, her illustrious reformers, her renowned scholars, her immortal authors, her scriptural theology, apart from her views of the sacraments, her vast and increasing number of truly evangelical and devoted clergy, her augmenting piety from the peer to the pauper, her multiplying places of worship built upon the voluntary principle, her foreign missions for spreading the gospel; these we ought not to forget, and do not; and they make us lament, not only that we are compelled to separate outwardly, though not in spirit, from so much good, but that so much good is united with so much evil. While we pity and condemn the evil, let us acknowledge with joy and gratitude the good; and as regards the bitter hostility with which we are treated, let us say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Let us please ourselves, with what we know to be true, that we do not deserve the ill-will which is arrayed against us; that we truly love all good men, even those whom we cannot induce to love us

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in return; that we deal in no personalities; doubt no man's piety merely on the ground of his churchmanship; that our opposition is to systems, not to persons; and that even this opposition is founded on the contrariety of the system to the word of God, rather than to our notions; and that in spite of the system, and the manner in which it is wielded against us, we can co-operate, as we can pray and associate in love, with those by whom it is supported. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, whether they be churchmen or dissenters.

5. Let us ever continue to show a disposition to co-operate with the pious part of the church of England in all matters which belong to our common protestantism and Christianity, and where union can be effected without compromise. It is evident that both these are likely to be vigorously assailed. Infidelity and popery are alive, awake, inventive, and active; and are assuming an aggressive form, which though it need not alarm us, ought to unite us. Let us ever be ready to confederate with the pious of all denominations against those insidious and restless foes of our common faith. Let no repellent force be felt by us to drive us from any portion of the christian and protestant body. Let us ever offer the right hand of fellowship and hold the olive branch of peace, to those from whom we find it necessary as regards our church polity to retire; and leave to others the refusal to co-operate. Both parties could perhaps strengthen each others' hands. Whatever low estimate may be formed by some bigotted churchmen of the influence of dissenters on the cause of evangelical theology and vital piety, their real position among the parties of the present day, and the im-

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portance of it too, are better understood by others of more candour and more intelligence. It is but too evident that a large portion of the church of England is becoming less protestant and losing its protestant character every day; and what with the popery that is rising up within it, and the popery that is attacking it from without, it may possibly find in the evangelical dissenters no weak, or hesitating, or timid ally against the common foe. There is no question as to which side they will take in the grand conflict which may be coming on; their opinions continue to be what Burke pronounced them in his day, "the very protestantism of the protestant religion." The ever shifting tide of human affairs may sometimes present them in an occasional association with Roman catholics, but it is, I repeat, a merely accidental one, purely of a civil nature, and extending no further than to the resistance of an occasional aggression and which they consider, in that particular, a common oppression. And however it may suit the purposes of party to take advantage of this, and represent the dissenters in alliance with papists, the history of the past has proved, and that of the future will prove, that dissent is one of the safeguards, and by no means the weakest, of the protestant faith. Our help may be securely relied upon, and will be always most cheerfully granted, whether it be against Romanism on the one side, or Anglo-Catholicism on the other; nor will it be found of less service in attacking "that hideous mass of unreclaimed popular ignorance and infidelity, which lies in front of us all, and which the socialists, and other propagandists of licentiousness, are attempting to organise, and to animate with an active spirit of evil."

6. We must endeavour to keep up the spirit of vital

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piety and attachment to scriptural sentiment. It is delightful to reflect how few incursions have been made upon our churches by the extravagant absurdities of many modern innovations upon received opinions. Dissent has supplied but little fuel to feed the flames of either enthusiasm or fanaticism. The doctrines of the reformation have been upheld by the evangelical nonconformists, in all their scriptural authority clearness and power, unassociated with the frenzy of Irvingism, or the tamer eccentricities of other sects. The clear, consistent, sound and practical theology of Thomas Scott, the commentator, is about the average divinity of our pulpits. To this let us hold, not only in its form of sound words, but in its warming influence on the heart, and its directive power over the conscience and the life. A cold and heartless orthodoxy is of little value. Let us watch against the deadening influence of trade, the distracting effect of politics, and the corrupting insidious power of fashion. Our piety is the lock of our strength. There was a time when the greater portion of religious affection, and true evangelical sentiment, was among the separatists from the church of England; and when those who within the church began to feel a hunger for spiritual piety, left the dry husks of mere moral preaching to be fed amongst us. It is not so now. A spirit of pure evangelical feeling, as well as doctrine, has sprung up in the church of England, which is rejoicing and glowing in all the ardour of first love, alloyed it is true on some questions with an admixture of much bigotry; but still fervent as well as sincere in its love to Christ. Let us borrow additional warmth from the piety, while we refuse to imitate the bigotry; and seek larger and larger communications of divine influence, that we may be still

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distinguished by the vitalising influence of heavenly truth. Important as are the principles of nonconformity, and important they are, what are they in comparison with the interests of experimental religion: indeed the importance they have is chiefly derived from their tendency to promote personal godliness. It is quite consistent with our duties as Christians, to seek to maintain and extend our rights as citizens, but let us be vigilant that in our zeal for the latter we do not neglect the former. Let us not contend for civil privileges in such a manner as shall flatten our enjoyment of such as are spiritual. It is a gratifying indication of our anxiety on this point that so many churches and their pastors are at this very time redoubling their efforts, resorting to new measures, and presenting more earnest prayers for obtaining a revival and increase of evangelical piety. Our body is giving proof, amidst all the public excitement in politics, of a deeper and deeper concern for the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. This every friend to dissent must feel anxious to foster and encourage. May fresh communications of celestial grace carry on the work!

7. With this healthful spirit of true piety we must unite an intelligent liberal ardent zeal for the extension of our denomination. Perhaps the Independents, of all the sections of the christian church, have the least admixture of sectarianism with their zeal. They have no denominational abstraction peculiar to themselves calculated to excite and feed their enthusiasm. Churchmen have the Church, Wesleyans have Methodism, Baptists have adult baptism: I do not for a moment mean or wish to insinuate that the efforts of these various bodies are originated and sustained, exclu-



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sively or even mainly, by a regard to their denominational and sectarian peculiarities; but no man can be so ignorant of human nature as not to believe that they have some influence in sharpening and stimulating that zeal which higher objects may awaken. We as Independents have nothing of the kind; no watch word of party, no symbol of sect, no war cry to inflame our courage and quicken our efforts. Dissent is a cognomen we hold in common with the Baptists and others. Is it our glory, or our misfortune, to be thus destitute of aids to our zeal? Perhaps in one sense it is both. Let us then for the pure love of extending the gospel seek to extend our denomination. Let us support with liberality all our institutions, our schools colleges and periodicals; and especially let us build more places of worship. It seems to be the present policy of the church of England, to build us down, and build us out. Its members suppose that our congregations continue with us, only because there are no episcopalian places to receive them; and acting upon this mistake, they are multiplying chapels and churches, many of which are erected in the immediate vicinity of ours, for the purpose of drawing into them the people we have gathered. To prevent this we must keep pace with them in this blessed spirit for building. Enlargements re-erectments and new erectments must go on amongst us, according to our ability, and with an energy in some measure resembling that of the church of England. Town Missions, Village Itinerancies, Home Missionary Societies, are all well in their place; but there wants something in addition to gather up consolidate and retain to ourselves the effects which these means produce: and that something is the erection of places of worship. We must catch the building

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spirit of the age. We must build, build, build. This should be our cry, more places of worship. It may be well enough to form protective societies for the defence of our civil rights, but our best defence, under God, is in our numbers. Numbers carry weight and influence. We cannot multiply our persons unless we multiply our places. We must not wait for congregations to be gathered before we build; we must build to gather them. Let us educate more ministers, and educate them well, carefully selecting only such as are likely to make popular pious devoted men, and with this build more places for them to occupy, and we may expect the blessing of God upon our labours.

For this, money, much money, far more money, will be wanted: and we must give it. The time is come when nonconformists must prove their love for their principles by sacrifices of property; and it is the only sacrifice they are now called to make for maintaining and extending them. There must be a liberality far above any thing we have yet witnessed. Nor must we allow our own denomination to be lost in the splendour and magnitude of foreign missions. I would not have a single shilling withdrawn from these to support dissent and multiply dissenting places of worship, but I would have dissenting places and congregations multiplied to increase the support of foreign missions. There is one source of supply I think which has never yet been opened for this purpose, I mean a church members' subscription towards a fund for extending their own denomination. What myriads of church members have we who never do any thing for the cause, who yet could, and if they were asked would, give their penny a week for such an

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object. The Methodist denomination, vast as it is, is supported by the class penny; why may we not have our class penny? Not indeed in the way of compulsion but of voluntary contribution; not as a term of communion but as a general custom. Our members, if the matter were properly laid before them by their pastors as a matter belonging to them, as a subject of their own, would willingly take it up and support it liberally. In my own church I have tried the plan for a town mission, and the members raise more than two hundred pounds a year for this purpose alone, and they do it willingly and easily too. But had I to begin again I should prefer raising a fund for building. What an aggregate would be raised if this plan were followed up through our whole denomination!

We must bestir ourselves and build more places, this I repeat and urge again and again. And to occupy them we must send off as a nucleus for the new congregations colonies from such as are already large and overflowing. There must be no grudging of our members for this purpose. Congregationalism tends if it be not watched to congregational selfishness. Ministers must be willing to part from their people, and the people from their ministers for this purpose. We must seek to increase; we have the means; there is room for us; and I believe God will bless the attempt.

And now in conclusion, I would again remind you, that whatever is great and good, charity is still greater and better. Whatever does not begin, continue, and end here, is alien from the letter and spirit of the word of God, does little to advance his cause, however it may promote a human system, will bring no glory to him,

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nor receive his smile and approbation, whomsoever it may please and elevate beside.

“It is the image of Christ, and not human forms of worship, or human constitutions, or human creeds, that must form the principle of a universal fellowship of the saints, and the glory of the millennial church. Blessed likeness! enchanting loveliness! Are the painted earth-made vizors, which conceal the human face divine, and substitute in its room their own deformed and forbidding visages, worth the price they have cost us; worth the conflicts, which have all the pains of military warfare without its recompence, and all the hardships of chivalry without its generosity; worth the broken unity, the blighted peace, the tarnished beauty, the prostrate energy, the humbled honours of the church of God? Ah no! our hearts feel that they are not. What then remains but to strike our hands in a covenant of love, a holy league offensive and defensive for our common Christianity; to present our consolidated front to the legions of error and death; and to march on under the command and conduct of the Captain of our salvation, till the nations mingle their shout in that thundering alleluia, “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”\*

1839.

J. A. J.

\* Dr. Redford’s Church of England Indefensible from the Holy Scriptures.

## **A PASTOR'S ADDRESS**

TO HIS PEOPLE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF DISSENT AND DUTIES  
OF DISSENTERS.

‘Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world.’

VOL. 14

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**PREFACE.**

THE following address, which makes no pretension to novelty of argument or elegance of composition, was originally designed for the instruction of my own people exclusively. And after the first half-sheet was printed, I abandoned my design of sending it forth from the press, because among other reasons it seemed to me so little worthy of attention compared with other and abler productions recently published. I then determined to deliver it in the form of a discourse on Christmas day, which by dissenters is considered as a leisure day but not a sacred one. And I have reason to believe that so much misconception of my design, and so much misrepresentation of my statements are in circulation, as to render it expedient that I should resume my purpose of printing the address: to this must be added, as another reason for its publication, the very urgent solicitation of the persons for whose instruction it was intended. I have expressed my honest convictions boldly, but I hope not offensively. My conscience testifies that I have not "set down aught in malice or uncharitableness;" if I am deceived I crave forgiveness; not indeed for stating my own opinions, but for misrepresenting, however uninten-

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tionally, the opinions of others. One thing must ever be borne in mind, that as dissent is founded on, or rather is a series of objections to the established church, its principles cannot be stated without impugning the system against which those objections lie: consequently a dissenter cannot defend his own conduct without seeming to act the part of an aggressor. The reasons of our separation are necessarily arguments against the church from which we secede. The question then arises, ought we to sit quietly down under the charge of restless discontent, factious turbulence, schismatical pride, and spiritual rebellion, without attempting to shew that at any rate we are not deserving of such epithets, and are perhaps entitled, in the judgment of charity, to the respect due to those who, in their own estimation at least, are guided in their conduct by revelation and conscience.

It will be remembered by those who heard the discourse from the pulpit, that many parts were then passed over, for want of time to deliver them.

J. A. J.

Edgbaston, January 7, 1834.



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TO THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION  
ASSEMBLING IN  
CARR'S LANE, BIRMINGHAM.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

“Grace, mercy, and peace be with you, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope.” I acknowledge with adoring gratitude the goodness of God our Saviour towards us as a christian church, in preserving our union, harmony, and brotherly love, through another year, and in giving us so large a sliare of every thing that constitutes the spiritual prosperity of a religious community. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth’s sake.” Our gratitude should be accompanied with the deepest humiliation, because amidst these’ abounding mercies we have not been more fruitful in “works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God;” and at the same time, this thankful, yet penitential, review of the past, should lead,us, at the commencement of another year, more unreservedly to yield ourselves unto God, that we may live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who has purchased us with his own blood.

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Some time ago, I addressed to you a Pastoral Letter on Revivals of Religion, and there expressed my intention of continuing to address you, varying the subject, at the commencement of future years. I now fulfil this purpose, and beg your attention to a statement of the principles which you profess to hold as Protestant Dissenters. My reasons for selecting such a topic are these:

1. It is confessedly a momentous one, involving the consideration of the nature of Christ's kingdom; a theme next in importance to the fundamental doctrines and moral duties of the gospel, and intimately connected with them both.

2. It is a subject with which you ought to be well acquainted. You are dissenters in practice, and should be well acquainted with the principles which you profess to have embraced. Even in these secondary matters you should be prepared to give a reason for your conduct, with meekness and fear. Religion is based on truth, and all its actions should be guided by knowledge.

3. It may be presumed, that many of you are, from obvious causes, not so well acquainted with this subject as you should be. A large proportion of you were educated amidst the forms of the established church, and, occupied since your secession with the doctrines of grace and the pursuit of salvation, you have been content to enjoy the practical benefits of our church order, without enquiring into its theoretic principles: thus you have been brought up in ignorance of these principles, and the defect has been but partially supplied by ministerial instruction. It is supposed by those who do not know what is really going on in dissenting congregations, and

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who form their opinions upon misrepresentations, that our ministers are ever inspiring a hatred of the established church, by the zealous diffusion of their nonconformist sentiments; but you know that the subject is rarely adverted to either in our sermons or in our more social religious exercises. It is considered by some persons as our just reproach, that we have too much, far too much, left the matter out of our instructions; and the consequence is, that though our people are instructed in the ground of their hopes as sinners, and the rule of their duty as Christians, they are ignorant of the reasons of their separation as dissenters.

4. The aspect of the times, (1834) and the approaching more general consideration of the question, render this a suitable season for calling your attention to it, and requesting you to investigate it with holy and prayerful seriousness. Never since the dark and awful day which protestants in this country, in imitation of the papists in France, made for ever memorable by the cruelties of persecution, and on which they laid the foundation of nonconformity in the expulsion of two thousand holy ministers from the church of England, has there been so much thought and said about the principles of dissent as there is at the present time. The subject is become one of universal interest to the nation, and must soon become one of grave deliberation to the legislature; and like every other cause, it will increase in interest as it approaches the hour of decision. The question is started, and it is repeated by millions of voices, "must not the church of England be reformed, and ought not the dissenters to be relieved?" The press teems with pamphlets on the subject; the religious, literary, and political periodicals have adopted

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it as a standing topic of discussion; it has given rise to new associations, both within and without the establishment; it is the theme of conversation in every social circle, and round every fire-side. The conflict of opinion is commenced; and where, how, and when it will terminate, is known only to Him who sees the end from the beginning. The strife of pens on the arena of controversy, will soon be followed by the strife of tongues, in the seat of legislation. The claims of dissenters for justice, and of churchmen for the preservation of their monopoly, will be urged, discussed, and adjusted during the next session of parliament. Nor will the minor points alone be brought into discussion, there is a searching spirit of enquiry abroad, which will go to the very root of the matter, and advance at once to the question, "Are religious establishments accordant with the word of God, creditable to the character of religion, or the best means of supplying instruction to the people?" At such time no pious or even patriotic man should think that he can be neutral; a judgment must be formed, a side taken, and every legitimate weapon appropriated and employed. Especially should every dissenter make himself thoroughly acquainted with the merits, arguments, and bearings of the question in dispute.

On these accounts then, I have determined to address you at the present season on the principles of nonconformity. I prefer the press to the pulpit, not because the subject of church government, abstractly considered, is inappropriate either to a sermon or a sabbath; but because, as a matter of controversy, it must embrace topics, and usually awakens emotions, not quite congenial with the spirit of devotion. In this pastoral address

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I shall assume as little as possible of the character of the polemic, and shall act aggressively no further than is necessary for the statement and explanation, the defence and recommendation, of my own principles. I have both a legal and a moral right to state my principles, and you have a right equally valid to expect that I should do so; in exercising this right, I trust I shall be kept from expressing my opinions in a spirit calculated to give pain to those from whom I differ.

If it should be thought by any of my readers, that I have only gone over the ground I occupied in a pamphlet published three years ago, I at once admit the fact, and wish this tract to be considered as an abridgment of the reasonings contained in that production, stripped in part of their controversial form, exhibited in their connexion with the interests of religion, accompanied by reflections suited to the circumstances of the times, and also sold at so low a price, as to be accessible to the poorest members of my flock.

I. For the information of those who, for reasons already stated, may know but little of nonconformity, I shall first give an outline of its principles. The whole fabric of dissent rests on the two following propositions.

The holy Scriptures are the sole authority and sufficient rule in matters of religion, whether relating to doctrine, duty, or church government. The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of dissenters. We own no other standard, we allow of no other, and resist all attempts to impose any other upon us. No plea of antiquity, of civil or ecclesiastical authority, of numbers of expediency, of taste, or of the importance of uniformity, has the smallest weight with us, since neither the writings of fathers, nor the decrees of councils, nor the

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acts of senates, nor the concurrent opinions of divines, and much less the bulls of popes, or the edicts of kings, can, separately or unitedly, frame one single article of faith, or decree one religious ceremony, which on their authority is binding upon the conscience of the most illiterate man in existence. To set up any other authority over conscience than the word of God, is treason against the throne of Christ, and those who submit to it are accomplices in the conspiracy.

The second proposition on which nonconformity rests is that it is every man's indefeasible right and incumbent duty to form and to follow his own opinion of the meaning of the word of God. He may consult the works of the living or the dead; he may listen with deference to the arguments of others, who have greater abilities, and better means of acquiring knowledge, than himself; but his ultimate reason for receiving any and every opinion, must be, not thus saith the church, but thus saith the Bible; not thus have my forefathers worshipped God, but thus am I directed by God himself to worship him. We must try creeds, catechisms, articles, and forms of government, by the Bible, and form our own conclusion of their accordance with that unerring standard. I do not say that we may do so, but that we must do so; this is not merely a privilege to be enjoyed, but a duty to be performed. The people as well as their teachers, are commanded "to search the Scriptures; to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." Our understanding is given to us for this purpose, and as we must stand or fall for eternity by our religious opinions and practice, we ought not to believe by proxy, since we cannot be saved by proxy. As no man, or body of men, has or can have the right, to set up any other

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standard of religious opinion than the Bible, so neither can they have any right to impose upon us their interpretation of it; for if they had, it would in fact be setting up another authority. The doctrines you believe, the duties you perform, the ceremonies you observe, the form of church government you adopt, must all be drawn pure from the Bible, and drawn thence by yourself; aided, it may be, by the wisdom, but not compelled by the authority, of others. The denomination in the religious world with which you connect yourself and the minister to whom you entrust the oversight of your soul's affairs are to be chosen by yourselves. No man has either a moral or legal right to claim to be your religious instructor without your own consent. In all matters which we have to learn, docility is our first duty and freedom of thought is the next; and if the most unbounded exercise of this freedom from human authority be once resigned, we are liable to become the slaves of those whose attempts at usurpation are the most subtle, however widely they may have departed from the word of God. Our reverence for the Scripture cannot be too profound, nor our submission to its authority too unresisting; nor on the other hand can we be too jealous and determined in our resistance to every other yoke. I call upon you, therefore, my dear friends, to make yourselves intimately acquainted with the word of God. Search the Bible, and determine to follow it as your guide wherever it may lead you. Do your uttermost to raise the cry, "to the Bible," till it becomes the universal demand, "to the Bible, to the Bible." I would not say, "down with creeds, catechisms, and articles," but I will say, "up with the Bible." The creed, the church, the articles, that cannot stand the most searching scru-

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tiny of this, are based on falsehood, and amidst the floods and tempests rising around will be swept away, and perish from the earth; and those only will remain that are founded, not upon the quicksand of human opinion, but upon the rock of Holy Scripture.

Taking the New Testament as our guide, we learn the following sentiments on the subject of ecclesiastical polity.

1. That in the language and intention of the New Testament, a visible and particular church (as distinguished from the whole aggregate of true believers, which we denominate the invisible and universal church), is a society composed of individuals, who make a serious and credible profession of faith in Christ and holy obedience to him, and who are joined together upon the principles of mutual recognition and voluntary association, for spiritual fellowship and social worship.

2. As the church is a purely spiritual community, and formed exclusively for religious objects, all its laws and regulations must be drawn from the New Testament, and must be administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme and only Head of his holy kingdom.

3. The only permanent officers of a christian church are pastors, who are called also elders, guides, rulers, teachers, and bishops or overseers, and deacons, whose name answers to minister or servant, and whose function is to render important and necessary service to the sacred community, in collecting and dispensing its contributions for the relief of its necessitous members, and in attending to other temporal matters.

4. We maintain that such societies or churches have the absolute and inalienable right of electing their officers, admitting and excluding their members, and conducting their whole system of government; and that



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no external influence or authority can lawfully interfere with the exercise of this right.

5. It is also our belief, that as a christian church is a voluntary society, claiming and exercising the right of private judgment in the adoption of its own opinions and form of government, subject only to the word of God, it is bound cheerfully and liberally to supply such pecuniary means as are necessary to carry on the worship of God amongst them.

Thus it appears from these principles, that in the view of protestant dissenters, a church of Christ is a spiritual, voluntary, and independent community, distinct in its nature from all secular associations of men, separated from them by the peculiarity of its object and its laws, and neither subject to their direction nor amenable to their authority. It is a kingdom in this world, but not of this world. Such are our principles viewed abstractly.

II. I shall consider the conclusions to which they lead us on the subject of establishments in general, and the church of England in particular. By the establishment of religion we mean the act of the supreme government of a country in fixing upon a religious creed and form of public worship to be taught to the people, paying a class of ministers to teach it, and drawing the funds necessary for its support from the resources of the country at large. This is the most simple notion of establishments, and the one adopted by Paley; but even in this view of them they appear to nonconformists to be objectionable.

Because they are Unscriptural. The word of God is the supreme test by which they are to be tried: if they cannot stand this, the most plausible reasonings

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that can be advanced for them on the ground of expediency are quite beside the mark, and utterly without weight. Our demand is, "To the law and to the testimony;" for by this alone will we consent that the question shall be decided. I affirm then, there is not a single passage of the christian scriptures, which fairly interpreted contains any command to civil governors to provide religious instruction for their subjects, or furnishes any rule by which such an important duty is to be performed. If there be, in what book is it to be found? Let it be quoted that we may consider it. As to the argument which is founded upon the constitution of the Jewish theocracy, we consider it so irrelevant and inapplicable, that the very attempt to bring it forward in support of a church establishment betrays at once the weakness of the cause. We view the theocracy as altogether a divine institute, which when it was set aside by the coming of Christ was never designed to be imitated, and is altogether incapable of imitation. And as to the allusions made in the prophecies to the subjection of kings to the church of Christ, they are so vague, and the description of the services to be rendered by these kings is so remote from the ideas of legislation and domination, that we cannot allow ourselves for a moment to imagine that they contain any proof in support of a state religion. If then we leave out these, the word of God is silent, at least as to any command, direction, or sanction. Not a syllable is found, even of an allusive import, touching this high function of providing a religious creed and worship for a nation. Directions, and those very minute, are given for every, even the lowest, office in the church, but not a syllable is said about the

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duties or even existence of this the highest. Nor is it enough to say that the rulers of that day were Jewish or Pagan, for on that account the more need was there to call upon them to embrace Christianity, and set it up among their subjects. Besides, had not our Lord the spirit of prophecy, and did he not foresee that kings would at length become Christians? And yet neither he nor his apostles left any directions for their legislative interference on behalf of religion. I think that in reference to such a subject silence is proof of no little strength against establishments. But the scripture is not silent as to language of condemnation, if it is in that of recommendation. The sublime and simple declaration of Christ before Pilate is decisive, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered up to the Jews." It is a kingdom set up not by human authority, but by that which is divine; composed not of worldly men, but spiritual ones; established not for temporal objects but eternal ones; sustained not by secular power, but by that which is from heaven. It is a community distinct from all earthly ones, and apart by itself; a cause that needs not, asks not, admits not, the coarse and rude instruments of secular power or policy for its establishment support and progress, but is entirely spiritual; not merely, not a kingdom for temporal purposes, but not set up or supported by worldly governments. The establishment of Christianity by law is a complete departure from the very spirit and genius of the New Testament.

It has been said by an able writer, "that in the writings and discourses of the first teachers of religion we find such absolute dis-

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interestedness, so little disposition to assume political superiority, that to have become members of an established church would have been certainly incongruous in them. It is indeed almost inconceivable that they could ever have desired the patronage of the state for themselves or for their converts. No man conceives that Paul or John could have participated in the exclusion of any portion of the christian church, from advantages which they themselves enjoyed: [or, I may add, have consented to occupy a seat in the legislature, to assist senators and peers in making laws for the regulation of the church.] Every man perceives that to have done this would have been to assume a new character, a character which they had never exhibited before, and which was incongruous with their former principles and motives of action. But why is this incongruous with the apostolic character, unless it is incongruous with Christianity? Upon this simple ground therefore there is reason for the sentiment of many well-informed persons that it seems extremely questionable whether the religion of Jesus Christ admits of any establishments at all. I lay stress upon these considerations. We all know that much may be learnt respecting human duty by a contemplation of the spirit and temper of Christianity as it was exhibited by its first teachers. When this spirit and temper is compared with the essential character of religious establishments, they are found to be incongruous, foreign to one another, having no natural relationship or similarity. I should regard such facts in reference to any question of rectitude, as of great importance; but upon a subject so intimately connected with religion itself, the importance is peculiarly great." Dymond's Principles of Morality, Vol. II, page 255.

Establishments not only change the scriptural method of propagating and supporting Christianity, from voluntary to compulsory payments, but they change the very nature of the church from a voluntary society, to a political and involuntary association. Compare the state-church of this kingdom, including its crowned head, its mitred prelates, its spiritual peers, its graduated hierarchy, its secular legislature, its spiritual courts, its lay chancellors, its gorgeous cathedrals and their splendid ritual, its tithes with soldiers to collect them, and its church rates with king's officers to enforce them; I say

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compare this system with the spiritual, simple, voluntary, mild, persuasive, benevolent, unsecular religion of the New Testament; the religion of Him, who though “he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;” and whose total disconnexion from secular authority, and entire destitution of worldly pomp and glory, seemed at once and for ever to teach that his religion being spiritual in its nature, was to derive neither glory nor support from the kings of the earth, but from the heavenly arm sustaining it. How dissimilar is the state religion in its forms and circumstances from that taught by the fishermen of Galilee; which was set up, not in the court of Augustus, at Rome, but in the upper room at Jerusalem; and which consists, not in meats and drinks; not in rites and ceremonies; but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Look at a voluntary church, associating together upon a mutual recognition of each other as fellow Christians, for the purpose of fellowship and worship; choosing their own minister to teach them, and their own deacons to look after the poor; freely agreeing to pay out of their own funds all the expenses which their mode of worship entails: admitting members who are deemed worthy, and by their own power excluding such as are unworthy; giving a portion of their property to sound out the word of God both into their own neighbourhood, and into the pagan countries of the world; I say, look at such a society (and such are dissenting churches,) and judge which is most like the apostolic communities of the New Testament, this or a state church, such as we see in this kingdom.

Religious establishments are Unjust, at least, in all

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those cases where the whole nation is compelled to support them, and where there happen to be any who dissent from them. To force dissenters to pay for a form of religion which they do not approve and never attend, is as manifest a piece of injustice as it would be to compel us by law to support a physician appointed by the state, whom we never consulted, and in whose skill or prescriptions we had little confidence. It is the law I allow, but it is a law founded on such manifest injustice, that the greater part of the nation already acknowledges its oppressive character, and the legislature, will in all probability soon release us from its extortions. It is said the establishment is beneficial to all, and therefore all ought to pay for it. If we admit the premises, we deny the conclusion; for by the confession of almost all church of England writers, dissenters have done good to the nation, and upon this ground the nation ought to be compelled to support them.

But the injustice of establishments as they now exist is so apparent, and is likely so soon to be done away, that I shall not longer dwell upon this topic, but go on to shew that they are, in many respects Injurious. They are injurious to the church which they take into alliance with the secular government, by destroying her independence and making her a vassal of the state. Instead of maintaining her purity dignity and liberty, she becomes a slave of the kings of the earth, who rule her with despotic power, making her subservient to their purposes, and respecting her no longer than she is the willing servant of their interests and their schemes. Is not the church of England, at this moment, in a degrading bondage to the state, unable if willing, to reform a single abuse, to

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excise a single evil, to effect a single improvement, and trembling from head to foot in apprehension dire for the announcement of the premier's plan of church reform? Is this how a church calling itself apostolic, should be situated? But the church is corrupted by its alliance with the state, by the introduction of great numbers of unsuitable ministers, who led on by ambition or the love of lucre, press to her altars, although totally unfit to edify her members. To what but this connexion can the pluralities and other abuses be traced? The state thus fills her with corruption and then deprives her of the power of purifying herself. Were I a churchman I should wish the dissolution of the alliance, and desire that the episcopacy might stand on its own legs; and it is an undoubted fact that this is the wish of a large body in the church: if I am not misinformed, the evangelical clergy of Ireland, despairing of any good from the present administration, are about to petition the legislature for the deliverance of the church from the domination of the state.

Establishments are injurious to the cause of religion. They injure its reputation, by exposing it to the suspicion and the charge of being a mere system of craft, by which the priest is bribed to help the king. The hypocrisy and ambition of many ecclesiastics; the subserviency of clerical appointments to party politics; the feuds, disgust, and evil passions excited by tithes and church rates; with all the workings of a state religion, in other matters, have had a most fatal tendency to produce impiety and infidelity in minds already prepared for such crimes. Religion also as well as the church is injured by the great number of unsuitable ministers which an establishment will always introduce to the

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ministry. Notwithstanding the great and delightful increase of truly pious and devoted men that are now labouring in the church of England, not more than one fourth of the clergy are supposed to be what is termed evangelical. I admit that many of those who are not considered evangelical are truly respectable and estimable men; but still how many are there who are known far better as sportsmen, men of fashion, pleasure, and conviviality, than as ministers of Jesus Christ, and who are thus upholding without design the slanderous aspersion, that religion is but a mere name, or a means of respectable livelihood for some of the gentry, or at best a source of power by which governments rule the people, by the aid of a well-paid clergy. Religion cannot be seen in its own pure, bright, -heavenly glory, when viewed through the distorting and discolouring medium of an establishment. What it gains in earthly splendour it loses in spiritual lustre; and the beauties of holiness, its own appropriate charms, are defaced by the meretricious ornaments of secular grandeur. Establishments are injurious to the ministers they employ, by luring them, as I have already considered, to the sacred office by worldly motives; by giving rise to frequent equivocation and hypocrisy, in the act of subscribing to articles which many never read before they sign, and do not believe after they have signed; and by inducing habits of negligence in making them independent of the people's remuneration. Of the last mentioned tendency of establishments the extent to which non-residence is carried is a convincing proof. I believe that it will be found that one third of the incumbents do not reside on their livings. Thus a very large proportion of the shepherds



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do not dwell with their flocks, but trust the sheep to hirelings, whom they engage at a rate which leaves the curates little above actual want, while they are at some place of fashionable resort, or living at some other benefice which the vile system of pluralities has put into their possession.

Establishments are injurious in some respects to the people at large. Not that I mean to say churches allied to the state have never done any good. Our own for instance has done immense service to the cause of religion both by its vast theological literature, and by its evangelical ministers; and never was it more useful in the latter respect than it is at this moment. You who dwell in this town have only to look to the multitudes that weekly crowd our churches, and to mention the justly venerated names of their ministers, to be convinced that the church is dispensing benefits which will make myriads through eternity both happy and grateful. But this be it recollected is the work of the church as a religious community, and cannot be fairly considered as the fruit of the establishment. It will not, for it cannot, be denied that precisely the same results, (I mean the conversion of sinners and the edification of believers,) as happily follow the labours of the pious clergy are produced by the ministry of dissenters; a circumstance which proves that the good done is effected not by the legal establishment of religion, but by the faithful preaching of its sublime doctrines, and by the observance of its holy ordinances. If then there are produced without an establishment results not different in kind, and greater in degree, than those seen to issue from the services of its most eminent ministers, it would be unfair to represent the good done in the

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church of England as the necessary consequence of its connexion with the state. Were the statutes establishing it to be repealed, the church would remain stronger, purer, and more efficient than it is now. Would a single church in this town be closed, or one of our clergymen be dismissed by their flocks? No. The church would still be useful though severed from the state, and the injurious effects of its establishment would be done away. What these are may be soon enumerated. They have been generally intolerant, being in their very nature incompatible with complete religious liberty; they have often presented obstacles to the advance of political improvement; they have always proved sources of ill-will, alienation, and division in the nations in which they have existed; but what is still, and far more mischievous, they have led to widely extended and fatal delusion, on the subject of personal religion. Dr. Wardlaw in his able sermon, entitled, "Civil establishments of Christianity tried by their only authoritative test, the word of God," makes the following just remarks.

"I have formerly said that the system of National Christianity necessarily involves corruption and precludes the possibility of purification. I do not now speak of what may be contained in a book as the articles of what is called the national creed. These may be correct and scriptural. I speak of the state and character of the church as composed of persons. In this respect it is impossible that what is national should ever be pure. When we speak of a Christian nation, and when a church in any considerable degree comes to be identified with the civil community the idea of purity is out of the question. But this is not the full amount of the evil. Its consequences are worse than itself. A most extensive and ruinous delusion comes thus to be practised upon the souls of men; that, namely, which arises from the spread and prevalence of nominal Christianity. Apart from the entire absence of scriptural authority in their support, and their contrariety to the fundamental principles of the "kingdom

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which is not of this world," this has ever appeared to my mind the grand practical mischief of religious establishments; a mischief such as no alleged benefit can go near to counterbalance. The idea of a nation of Christians, in the sense in which the phrase is now used, is one which has no exemplar in the New Testament; and it is one which deludes and ruins souls by thousands. My firm conviction is, (and I speak it not in the heat and haste of controversial discussion but with calm deliberation and intense regret,) that national Christianity consists of nothing but the name, and their accidental residence in a Christian land, is chargeable with a more extensive destruction of souls, than any other extraneous cause which it is possible to specify. When 'the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch,' the designation was one which marked a definite class of persons, who were separated from the world, and distinguished by a peculiar faith, and a peculiar character. They were the same as the disciples, the believers, the saints. But with us it is far otherwise—Christianity is now a geographical term. The mass of the community» living within certain bounding lines, are Christians, merely because they are not Mahometans, not Pagans. They would resent it as an insult, were the designation refused them; while yet the application to them of some others of the primitive appellations of the followers of Jesus, would be resented as a greater insult still, or perhaps would be stared and laughed at, as a thing utterly incongruous, and, by the very force of contrast, irresistibly ludicrous; a thing to which there was not in their minds even the remotest pretension! What thousands and tens of thousands there are, who, from courtesy to the religion of their country, sit down at the sacramental table, or kneel for the bread and wine at the episcopal altar, who have not one correct conception of the gospel, or one solitary feature of the spiritual character which the New Testament represents the faith of it as producing! I say again, I know not any one thing that in a country like ours operates with a greater 'latitude of ruin' than the prevalence of nominal Christianity; by means of which men are led away from the spirituality, and sacredness, and definite distinctiveness, of a Bible profession, and made to rest in the name without the thing, the form without the power, the outward observance without the inward grace. And the evil is inseparable from every national system. It is an evil which the power of custom may prevent many from duly considering; but which it is not possible that any spiritual mind can consider with lightness."

Establishments are Unnecessary, even if they could

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not be proved to be injurious. We think the ends which they are intended to accomplish, can be more effectually secured in another way. Their advocates when resting their claims on the grounds of utility affirm that they are of great service in forming, by their creeds and articles, a bulwark round the church against error and infidelity. This of course must depend upon their orthodoxy: for if they are unsound, as is the case of all Roman Catholic, Pagan, and Mahomedan countries, they fortify the nation against the true church. But even admitting that the formularies are sound in the faith, they cannot protect the nation from error as long as toleration is allowed; and as to the church itself, they have comparatively small efficacy in preserving its members from false opinions. Sir George Saville in a speech delivered in the House of Commons, in the year 1772, expressed himself on this point in the following striking language:

“Some gentlemen talk of ‘raising barriers about the church of God and protecting his honour:’ language that is astonishing, that is shocking, that almost approaches to blasphemy. What! man, a poor vile, contemptible reptile, talk of raising barriers about the church of God! He might as well talk of protecting Omnipotence, and raising barriers about his throne. Barriers about the church of God, Sir! about that church which, if there be any veracity in scripture, shall continue for ever, and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail! If I may be allowed on so serious occasion to recollect a fable, it puts me in mind of one which I met with, of a stately, magnificent, impregnable castle, built on a rock, the basis of which was the centre of the earth, the top of it pierced the clouds, and the thickness of the walls could not be measured by cubits. At the bottom of it a few moles were one day very busy in raising up a little quantity of earth, which when some mice saw, ‘What are you doing,’ said they, ‘to disturb the tranquillity of the lord of this earth?’ ‘We are not disturbing his tranquillity,’ replied the moles; ‘all blind as you are you may see that we are only throwing up a rampart to protect his castle.’ The church of God, Sir, can protect itself. Truth need not be afraid of not

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obtaining the victory on a fair trial. The lovers of truth will love all sincere enquirers after it, though they may differ from them in various religious sentiments; for it is to impartial and free enquiry only that error owes its ruin and truth its success. Those who are penetrated with the benevolent spirit of the gospel will not condemn as heretics, will not reject as unworthy of their affection, any who believe the Christian religion, who search and endeavour to understand the scriptures, though they may be unable to comply with creeds and articles."

But leaving allegory and coming to facts. Have state formularies been generally found successful in maintaining the orthodoxy of the nations that have adopted them? Quite the contrary. Has not Arianism triumphed over the Calvinistic creed of Geneva, and Rationalism over the Lutheran formularies of Germany? Had not Pelagianism at one time supplanted, in the opinions of the clergy and the people, the moderate Calvinism of the articles of the church of England? "Where can be found the state church which has abided by its own professed creed through all the periods of its history, and has not at one time, or at all times, contained a clergy of whom the greater part opposed or neglected the doctrines of its formularies? Of what efficacy are those doctrines in articles and creeds, if contradicted by the instructions of the pulpit? Generally speaking, they lie entombed asleep or dead in the Prayer Book, till they start into life at the voice of the faithful preacher, and go forth in his sermons to convert the sinner from the error of his ways.

But it is also alleged on behalf of the utility of a state church that it is necessary as a means of making adequate provision for the public religious instruction of the population of the land. This I believe is the ground most frequently taken by the defenders of establishments, and it is probably the strongest position that

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could be selected. The sagacious and candid mind of Paley saw and confessed the want of scriptural support, and rested their defence on his favourite maxim of expediency. But let us examine this position. It appears to me to be mere assumption from beginning to end.

(1.) It is assumed that they can make adequate provision for the religious instruction of the people. But is this true? They can set up a creed, and they can build places of worship, and they can hire men to preach, who indeed may have previously signed the articles of faith, but can they insure their efficient services? Let the extent of non-residence and the habits and occupation of the clergy answer this question. If diligence could be secured, is there or can there be any guarantee that this diligence shall be in full harmony with all the doctrines, both in letter and spirit, which are contained in the formularies? Will any man pretend that during the century that followed the Act of Uniformity, the doctrines of the reformation set forth in the articles of the church of England were fully and faithfully preached in one pulpit out of fifty in this land, as they are now preached by the spiritual clergy? And even now, gloriously revived as is a large portion of the national hierarchy, will any one profess his belief that one fifth or even one tenth of those who hold preferment are in the class usually styled evangelical? So utterly impossible is it for the civil power to provide adequate and appropriate religious instruction for the people, at least beyond the enactment of orthodox formularies.

(2.) The argument assumes not only that establishments can, but do provide for the people adequate and appropriate religious instruction. But do they? Exa-

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mine. In our town there is a population of nearly 140,000 souls, of which the churches will accommodate not more than 22,000, perhaps not so many. If we refer to the metropolis, we shall find about 1,700,000 within a circumference measuring eight miles from St. Paul's as a centre, and church room for about 300,000; leaving nearly a million and a half unprovided for. This is but an average of the state of the country generally. I am aware it is said in reply to this that such a statement proves nothing but the guilty remissness of the state, not its incapacity. That is all that is necessary for my present argument to prove. But I may go further, and contend that the legislature, constituted as it is and as it is likely to be, never can be expected even to make much addition to the present state provision for the national worship as it is called, much less provide an adequate supply. Is it probable another million will be obtained for building new churches from any house of commons that we are ever likely to have again? And yet ten millions would be insufficient to meet the case. If it be fair to say that governments are capable, if they were willing, I answer that the same argument will apply to the voluntary system; and the people also are capable if they were but willing to make provision for the whole nation. The simple question is, has the establishment provided the means of grace for the people, will it ever do it, can it ever be expected to do it? Facts and all just reasoning answer, no. The churchman says, the government ought to be appealed to, and roused from its guilty apathy, to build more churches; the dissenter says, sever the church from the state, make it a voluntary and independent society, and then appeal for the same object to the piety and benevolence of the

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whole community, and see whether the appellants will not sooner succeed in the latter case than in the former.

3. The argument assumes that if provision be not made by the government for the religious instruction of the people, it will be made in no other way. The voluntary principle it is contended never can be expected to make exertions adequate to a nation's wants. But has the government done so? No. Then we are but upon a level in this respect. But just see what it has done. For the thousandth time we refer to the primitive age of Christianity, and remind the advocates of establishments that Christianity established herself on the earth before a single monarch drew his sword or stretched forth his sceptre in her cause; and from the hour that it was decorated with the purple, and was enthroned upon the seat of the Caesars, it lost in purity what it gained in power; and in the new form which it had assumed hastened to develop in the See of Rome the mystery of iniquity which had been long working. I refer next to America; and the anxiety manifested to deprive us of the force of this proof of the power of the voluntary principle plainly shews the importance which is attached to it by our opponents. It is little more than half a century since that country declared her independence, and yet she has now thirteen thousand ministers of religion supported without a sixpence from the state. There are some men so wilfully ignorant as to pretend to believe that religion is really retrograding in the United States; and as they are determined to be convinced neither by arguments nor facts, I can only flatly contradict them, and then leave them to their own lamentable and incorrigible prejudice. That vast tracts of country and many myriads of people, and hundreds



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of congregations, are still unsupplied with the public means of grace is admitted. But let any man consider the flood-tide of emigration which is flowing into that astonishing land, and swelling the population above any and all means of meeting their spiritual wants, and he will not wonder that they are still in need of ministers and sermons. But let it be told what the voluntary principle is doing to overtake, as far as can be done, the unparalleled success of the people. The General Presbyterian Church alone, which forms but one denomination out of many, has at this moment nearly fifteen hundred theological students under a course of instruction for the ministry, whose education is supported by voluntary contribution; and in addition to these it has many hundreds more who are being educated at their own expence. After all that can be said of the destitution of America, is it greater than that of our own country, at least so far as respects the state provision for the instruction of the people? Is Popery increasing there? It is almost triumphant in Ireland and spreading in England. Is infidelity bold, audacious, and diffusive there? It is the same here. Yet here a protestant establishment has existed for three centuries, and there the voluntary principle has been in full operation scarcely twenty years.

Turn your attention now to your own island. The romantic vaillies of Wales have been peopled by the operation of the voluntary principle with a dissenting population who have retired from the humble churches of the principality to the still lowlier meeting houses. It has converted a moiety of the Kirk of Scotland to dissent; while of those who regularly attend the public ordinances of religion in England a majority it

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is believed will be found in the places of worship belonging to the different denominations of nonconformists. In the metropolis and its vicinity there are about 194 places in the establishment and 265 among the dissenters. In the town of Nottingham there are 5 churches containing about 5,800 sittings, and 20 dissenting places containing 12,000 sittings, and there are 330 communicants who join in the communion of the church of England, while there are 4,534 in full membership amongst the dissenters. In this town there are I believe 13 churches, and more than 30 dissenting places of different kinds; and I have been informed, and I think truly, that there are two dissenting communities here, which united, contain as many communicants as go to the sacrament in all the episcopal places in the town. The bishop of London, who is more enlightened on such matters than many, has stated several times in parliament, that the dissenters compose one-fourth of the people; and the expectation has been that the mind would pass to the conclusion, that the remaining three-fourths were churchmen. But such a conclusion is inadmissible. It appears by other evidence from the same quarter, that in the returns from one diocese, which may be taken as an average, that there were 110,000 persons composing the population, and that out of these only 19,069 were attendants at church, and only 4,134 attend at the communion. This gives only one seventh as going to church, and about one in 38 as taking the sacrament. This would give then for the nation at large scarcely 350,000 persons as in communion with the church of England; and taking the proportion of attendants at church not at one-seventh, but at one-sixth, it would give in a population of 12,000,000, only

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2,000,000; while by the bishop's own low estimate, (which we are far from allowing to be correct) the proportion of dissenters is 3,000,000. It must be recollected, that the dissenters' numbers are reckoned exclusively by those who attend public worship; and hence it will be seen that the voluntary principle brings, if this statement be correct, more to the house of God than are taken there by the power and influence of the state church. Take into account also the disadvantageous circumstances amidst, which dissent has had to work its way; the formidable obstacles it has had to encounter, in the power of law, the strength of prejudice, the seductive influence of fashion, the bribery of wealth, the interest of priests, the sneers of chartered pride, the injustice of magistrates, the brute force of the mob; for all these at different periods of its history have been arrayed against it, and yet it has gone on from conquering to conquer, till it is to be found in one form or another in every city and town, and almost every village and hamlet of the kingdom; it has drawn to itself the respect and rooted itself in the affections of the people; and if we may credit the testimony of its most virulent enemy, the Quarterly Review, has gained a predominant influence in the commons house of Parliament. Yet we are told the voluntary principle never could provide for the wants of the people! This is asserted but not proved. It never can in the present state of the national church; but if that church were to be separated from the state and to become an unestablished episcopacy supported by the contributions of its friends, it would be itself a voluntary society, and would be much increased in moral power and spiritual efficiency. To say that its clergy would abandon it, and cease to instruct

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their flocks, unless sanctioned and paid by the state, would be a libel upon them which my knowledge of many of them and my respect for their christian integrity would not, I repeat, allow me to publish. Let the prejudice generated by an establishment be done away, and the energies of the voluntary principle have free scope; let this superincumbent pressure be taken off from it, and its expansive force have no resistance offered to it, and then see what it would do in the way of meeting the wants of an ignorant population. Our county associations, our village itinerancies, our home missionary societies are all limited in their operations and paralysed in their energies by the counteracting influence of prejudice. We may put up chapels, but the people are dissuaded from attending them; we may send preachers, but because they are not of the established church they can in some instances get no congregation.

It has often been said that the people if left to themselves would not pay for the expenses of public worship. If this be really the case, then I would ask, what great good the establishment has done, if after existing for three centuries it has not taught the people so far to feel the worth of religion, as to be willing to pay the small expense which the voluntary support of it necessarily incurs? Can a stronger proof than this of its inefficiency be found or imagined? Do not its advocates by such a method of defence pronounce its condemnation? The people unwilling to pay the expenses of religion! Of course they will be so long as the state pays for them, and refuses them the right of choosing their own ministers. The operation of an establishment upon the religious benevolence of the

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population is much the same as that of the poor laws upon their humanity; as long as there is a public fund for charity there will be little spontaneous liberality; and as long as there is a public fund for religion, there will be little done for its support in the way of voluntary contribution. Is it or is it not a fact, that many wealthy persons are prevented from building and endowing churches by the obstacles thrown in their way by the rights of incumbents, and by the existing state of ecclesiastical law? If so, there is reason to believe that were religion left to God's grace moving the hearts of his people, there is piety enough, if we look both to the church of England and the dissenters, to make a far more adequate and at the same time more suitable provision for the spiritual wants of the people than ever will or ever can be made by the state.

It is contended in support of a state church that as a king is the father of his subjects, and it is a father's duty to provide religious instruction for his children, it is a monarch's duty to provide it for his people. In reply it may be said, that a king is not the father of his people except in a metaphorical sense, a sense which can imply no obligation of the kind in question. If by virtue of a supposed parental relationship it is his duty to provide religious instruction, it is equally his duty not to allow toleration; for what father would permit instruction to be given to his children contrary to his own opinions? If the obligation be transferred from the king to the legislature, and it is contended that they ought to provide the means of instruction, we ask where is the proof that any such function belongs to them? Are they competent to select a creed and its teachers, and can there be any obligation where there is no competency?

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Can it be imagined that our present parliament is competent, or that any we ever had has been, or any we can ever expect will be capable of deciding upon articles of faith? Admitting that they are competent, is not the exercise of such a power a bad precedent, and a sanction to popish monarchs in their own view of the case for establishing popery; to Mahommedan kings for maintaining Islamism; to pagan sovereigns for supporting heathenism? Are not establishments of this kind the greatest obstacles we have to contend with in spreading the gospel through the world? Does not our government give the mighty force of its example to that principle which helps to keep up the system of Popery, Paganism, and Mahommedanism in the world? What an effect would be produced upon heathen and Mahometan countries if all christian ones were to abolish establishments together, and upon popish ones if those that are protestant were to take the lead, and the whole world were left open to the power and cause of truth.

I now go on to shew you that besides these objections which we take to religious establishments in general, and which lie in full force against the church of England in particular, there are others affecting her own constitution and formularies.

(1.) We cannot admit the authority which she claims in her twentieth article, to decree rites and ceremonies, and to settle controversies of faith, because this seems to us to invade the prerogative of Christ as the alone king of his church, and to trench upon the exclusive authority of the Bible as the only standard of truth.

(2.) We object to the unscriptural multiplicity of orders and offices in the church of England. She insists on the three separate orders of bishops, priests,

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and deacons, as an apostolic institute; while we are of opinion that there are only two, bishops and deacons. In this opinion we are supported by the admissions of Cranmer and other founders of the English church, by the church of Scotland, most of the reformed churches on the continent of Europe, and by nearly all the churches in America. By the constitution of the church of England, the supreme magistrate, whether moral or immoral, king or queen, is its head. A female the head of the church! The apostle said he did "not suffer a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The graduated hierarchy of the national church, its archbishops, archdeacons, deans, rectors, vicars, with its lay officers of chancellors, &c, appear to us to be opposed to the simplicity and spirituality of the church of Christ; and together with the wealth and pomp by which these offices are sustained, make it too much resemble the kingdoms that are of this world.

(3.) Its system of patronage, with all its attendant and enormous evils, would be of itself enough to compel us to separate from its communion, and to justify us in such secession. The dignitaries of the church are appointed by the king nominally, in reality by the cabinet for the time being; and of course often for state purposes, or the sake of personal friendships. As to the livings, half of them are in the hands of the aristocracy of the country, and are considered as a provision for their younger sons, who are prevented by the pride of noble families from going into trade, and must therefore be brought up for the army, the bar, or the church. Of the remaining moiety a very large number are in the gift of the lord chancellor or prime minister, many at the disposal of the bishops, and others held in

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connection with the universities. Whoever therefore may choose the pastor, the flock do not; the taught have no voice nor influence in the selection of the teacher, but must have whomsoever the patron sends them, even though that patron be an infidel or profligate, and the man he appoints be far more of a sportsman than a divine. One half the livings are at this moment marketable property, and may be put up to auction any day. There are offices for the sale of livings, and brokers who buy and sell the cure of souls, as others buy and sell houses and lands; and there are also speculators in the sale of livings, as there are speculators in the funds and joint stock companies. To allow any one who has money to spend for personal advantage or family aggrandisement, whether man or woman, infidel, profligate, or heretic, to purchase the power and right of assigning a christian minister to a christian flock, is one of those desperate follies and enormities which are among the foulest blots on the church of England, the shame and grief of its most pious members, and in our opinion a sufficient justification of the conduct of nonconformists in peaceably retiring from a communion, where such practices are not occasional but habitual. We think the right of a church to choose its own spiritual guide and overseer is so just a deduction from all the facts of the New Testament, so obvious a dictate of common sense, so unalienable a privilege of the church of God, that no incidental evils with which the exercise of it happens sometimes to be associated, should for one moment allow us to hesitate between the exercise of this right and the monstrous usurpation of the system of patronage.

(4.) The want of adequate provision for the purity



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of communion, and the fellowship of saints, is felt by us as an objection to the church as by law established. Christ's church is a community called and separated from the world; "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; beloved of God, called to be saints." This is ever supposed in the apostolical epistles to be the character of church members, and we think that no church can be scriptural in its constitution which does not possess the means for preserving the purity of its communion. We do not see any provision adequate for this in the church of England, where the sole right of admission to the communion is with the clergyman, and where even he is liable to be embarrassed by the control of his diocesan and the spiritual courts. I do not mean to say that all the members of our churches are real Christians, but they have all been admitted upon a credible profession, which has been previously and carefully enquired into, both by the minister and some of the more intelligent members of the church. In the church of England a man is a member by birth, baptism, and confirmation, and is assumed to be a Christian, unless there be any flagrant act of immorality, or a vicious course of life to prove the contrary. This we think not enough to constitute membership, and therefore require satisfactory proof of real conversion to God.

(5.) The manner in which discipline is provided for and exercised in the church of England, or rather I may say the total want of it, is felt by us as another ground of separation from the establishment. In the churches planted by the apostles discipline was exercised by the church members themselves, as is evident from the case of the incestuous member

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of the church of Corinth. This seems the natural course of things; for who should deal with the offender but the community with which he is connected? In the church of England the power of excommunication lies not with the congregation of which the individual is a member, nor with the clergyman, his rector or vicar, but with the bishop in his spiritual court, or the chancellor of the diocese who I believe can compel the clergyman to retain any member in communion, or admit any person to the sacrament against the convictions of his own judgment. As to the application of discipline to beneficed clergymen, such difficulties are thrown in the way of it by ecclesiastical and common law courts, that few prelates ever attempt it, except in very extreme cases. The whole system of the spiritual courts, both in theory and practice, is in direct opposition to the New Testament which invests the church itself with the right and power of excommunication, a power of which, in the case of the community at Corinth, the apostle did not deprive it, but merely commanded them to exercise it.

(6.) Much as we admire the beautiful forms and truly devotional spirit of many parts of the church service, we prefer the exercise of extempore prayer, as more accordant with the Scriptures, more edifying to the people than a continued repetition of the same language, and more adapted to the ever-varying circumstances of the congregation, the nation, and the world.

(7.) We seriously and conscientiously object to many of the articles, offices, forms and services of the Book of Common Prayer, to which every clergyman is required to subscribe before he can exercise his ministry; and to all which before he can take a benefice, he must

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declare his unfeigned assent and consent, as containing nothing contrary to the word of God.

The catechism, the service for the baptism of infants, and the order of confirmation, teach the erroneous and dangerous tenet of baptismal regeneration; while we are of opinion that the baptismal fluid only exhibits in emblem regenerating grace, but does not convey it; and is not, even when the sacrament is duly administered, necessarily attended with the communication of divine influence.

The employment of sponsors in the baptism of infants to the exclusion of the parents presents to our mind an insuperable difficulty, an objection of such strength, as to be of itself a sufficient ground of secession from any church which thus opposes the order of nature and the directions of scripture. This is rendered still more objectionable by the nature of those vows and obligations, which the godfather and godmother undertake in the service of the church of England. I do not know anything in the whole Book of Common Prayer, which to my own mind is so liable to strong objection as this service. It seems to me to teach that the eternal salvation of the child depends till the time of confirmation upon the conduct of the sponsors; till then, they are to repent, believe, and lead a holy life, not only for themselves but for their god-child; so that if they perform these vows, and live in this manner, the child, if it die before confirmation, is safe; but on the contrary, if they neglect their vows, and the child should die whilst they are living in sin, it is lost. "I may be incorrect," says a clergyman who seceded from the church of England, (the Rev. S. Blyth formerly of Leek) "but this seems to me, the most in-

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telligible interpretation of the baptismal service and the catechism of the church of England taken in connexion with each other.”

The order of confirmation appears to us much calculated to foster delusion, inasmuch as the bishop recognizes all who are confirmed as persons who are truly regenerated by water and the Holy Ghost, and who have received forgiveness of all their sins. The form of prayer used on that occasion, does not simply ask that this may be their state, but it declares it to be so.

The power granted to clergymen to absolve men from their sins, which is expressed in almost the identical language used in the church of Rome, is considered by us as a most alarming invasion of the prerogative of God.

The burial service, though truly beautiful and affecting when read over the remains of a departed Christian, is calculated by its indiscriminate application to all persons, except those denied by law the right of sepulture, to cherish delusions among the living in matters of everlasting moment. In addition might be mentioned the reading of Apocryphal lessons in the church service, the objectionable character of the state services, the assumption of the state prayers, the unsatisfactoriness of the three creeds, and the discordance between the Prayer Book and Bible translation of the Psalms.

These are the grounds of our separation from the national church; and it is worthy of remark, how much we are justified in our conduct by the recent admissions which have been made in so many quarters of the abuses and evils of the establishment, and of the necessity of reform. Churchmen have outstripped dissenters in their exposure of the evils of the estab-

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lishment, and have written more pamphlets and volumes in the last five years, to prove the necessity of reform, than nonconformists have sent forth within the last half century. The cry for reform has been heard within the church, uttered by more voices and more loudly than have been raised against it from without. There is scarcely an objection taken by dissenters which has not been urged by churchmen, not excepting even the union of the church with the state. If therefore these matters are viewed by us in so serious a light as to render it impossible for us conscientiously to remain in communion with the national church, it can be no object of surprise and ought not to furnish occasion for censure much less for slander.

The church of England separated from the church of Rome on the ground of its corruptions; we carry the separation still further, and claim the right of dissenting from her as she does from the see of St. Peter: we are both dissenting bodies viewed in different relations. Not that I mean to say the reasons of separation are of equal strength in the two cases, but the principle is the same, the right of private judgment, and the practice is the same, a peaceable secession from a community to which we religiously object. That the sincerity of our reasons for seceding from the church of England is doubted by some, and that their sufficiency is disputed by others, by whom they are considered frivolous though sincere, is nothing to us. It is enough that they are satisfactory to ourselves. We believe that those who remain are as conscientious in their conduct as those who separate; we respect them for their conscientiousness and ask in return for the charity we exercise. We see very much in the church that com-

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mands our veneration and affection, though in her establishment by law every thing to condemn. If her constitution, her offices, and her ritual were as scriptural as her doctrines, she would be eminently entitled to the character which she claims as an apostolic church. We are grateful for the benefits she has rendered by many of her writers and her preachers to the cause of our common humanity and Christianity, and feel that we cannot render her better service or utter for her more useful wishes, than to desire that the time may soon come when purified from her corruptions, rescued not by violence, but by the progress of intelligence in the nation from her vassalage to the state, she may, whether retaining her temporalities, (for I care not much about this matter) or what is better, supported by the voluntary contributions of her members, be made as powerful an engine of spiritual good to the souls of men as notwithstanding her episcopal form of government she is capable of becoming. Then will come the trial, I will not say of dissent, for dissent can exist no longer than the establishment, but the trial of independency. Then will it be seen whether Congregationalism can sustain the conflict with episcopacy, or be swallowed up in its imposing grandeur and extent. Men begin to cry out for a general union of Christians. Some in the national church are courting the methodists, and some of its writers talking of a comprehension which shall include dissenters. Such an union I am afraid is a vision, bright and beautiful indeed, but never to be realized till the millenium; at any rate the first ground of such a hope is the reformation of the church of England, and her freedom as an independent and purely spiritual body.

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III. I now go on to point out the intimate connexion between the principles of dissent and the interests of true piety.

If we had any serious doubts whether such a connexion did really exist, we should justly conclude that we had mistaken the word of God, inasmuch as it is evident that as the one design of the whole system of revealed truth is to make and keep men holy, whatsoever cannot be shown to be in harmony with this purpose cannot be proved to be according to holy Scripture. Not only are the doctrines of the New Testament "according to godliness," but its precepts, its institutes, and its rights. Holiness is the great end of all, and which every thing truly scriptural must necessarily promote. The obvious moral and spiritual tendency of any system, therefore, whether of doctrine, of morals, or of church polity, is no fallible test of its scriptural origin. We think that the principles of evangelical dissenters are in close and obvious connexion with the interests of holiness. It is this indeed which in our opinion constitutes their excellence, importance, and strength. They are a part of the great system of moral means for the renovation of the world, and are singularly efficacious, when properly and in christian charity supported, in separating and keeping separate the people of God from the men of the world. They are not only supported by truth, but adorned by the beauties of holiness. They are not, as too many affirm, the strife of the world carried into the church, the symbols of party politics hypocritically veiled in the guise of religion, a species of religious whiggism, or radicalism, by which we vent our discontent against the state, under cover of dissatisfaction with the church; no; they are means of

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grace, ordinances of religion, matters of solemn transaction between God and our souls, and eminently conducive to holiness of conduct, devotional feeling, and spirituality of mind. They aid the spread and influence of religion in the world at large, as well as the vigour of it in the heart of individuals. We do not deny that piety, eminent piety, is to be found in many of the members of the national churches, for of this we have abundant and delightful evidence in the holy conduct of great numbers of our neighbours; the question is not about the comparative holiness of selected individuals, but the tendency of the systems. Some persons may have better health in an insalubrious atmosphere than others in a healthier climate; yet nobody will on that account question the connexion between pure air and good health. I appeal to proof.

1. By removing religion from the jurisdiction of the civil power, and resting it for support and promulgation on the arm of God, and the voluntary zeal of its friends, we clear it from all suspicion, and by maintaining its spiritual purity increase its general efficiency. The character of Christianity, as much so that of its individual followers, is of infinite consequence to its moral influence. It must stand clear from the suspicion of being the tool of princes or the trade of priests; but how can this ever be the case, at least in the estimation of multitudes, so long as it is seen in alliance with the state; where, supported by power, enriched by affluence, emblazoned by titles, and clad in purple and gold, it will find it difficult to convince men that it is not of the earth earthy? True it has a character of its own, and is itself distinct from all these adventitious circumstances, and refers for its true nature to its own inspired records;



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but how many are there who will not take the trouble to search the scriptures, but prefer the easier, though certainly not the fairer method of studying its claims in the conduct of its followers! And what is the favourite topic of infidels? What in fact has led many to profess their infidelity? I answer, the corruptions inseparable from religious establishments. Far be it from me to say, that these are the sources of infidelity, which has its origin in fact in the depravity of man's heart, but they are its powerful auxiliaries, its successful pleas, and its ready excuses. The dissenting system presents religion to the world supported exclusively by its own evidences and the arm of God, borrowing nothing from the power, the revenues, or the patents of kings. It wields no other sword than that of the Spirit; asks no sceptre but that of Christ; looks to no resources but such as are found in the voluntary affection of the people; appeals not to imagination by what is splendid in architecture, venerable for antiquity, imposing in rank, or national in profession, but simply commends itself by manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It breeds no suspicions by its mixed character, partly secular and partly sacred; excites no alarms by its political aspects, raises up no prejudices by its monopoly of honour or affluence; arrays no hostility by injustice and extortion; and thus in attacking the stronghold of corruption in the human heart, it has not to subdue an extended line of outworks before it can assail with advantage the citadel itself. It speaks to men on the subject of their eternal welfare, but instead of the harsh voice of human authority, employs only the accents of persuasion; it enforces truth by the aid of pains and penalties, but they are such as the truth itself

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contains, and which relate to another world: in short in every view we take of it, we think it is the counterpart of primitive Christianity, which went forth without arms, or patronage, or wealth, taking nothing of the Gentiles but what the Gentiles willingly gave, and established itself in the earth not by the force of legislation, but by the grace of God. On this account we believe it to be eminently favourable to the interests of godliness, by conciliating, as far as it can be conciliated, the human mind in favour of religion.

2. The supremacy of Christ is the only basis on which the whole system of our ecclesiastical polity rests. With an undivided and undiverted allegiance we continually cry "We have as Christians, and in religious matters, no king but Jesus." He is the only Head of the church whom we acknowledge, to whom there is no second, and for whom there is neither deputy nor substitute. To him, and to him alone, we bow the knee, and confess with the tongue. When we meet it is in his name, and in his presence; not to make laws, but to obey and execute those which he has already made and promulgated in his word. All the ordinances, laws, and regulations of our churches are exercised by us as the expression of his high and sovereign will. All our acts and services we perform as homage to him. We acknowledge him as the source of holy influence, who has given us his Spirit to illumine and to sanctify our hearts, and to testify of and glorify himself. The great design of our communion is that out of his fulness we may more amply receive grace for grace. In the firm belief of both these interesting truths, the Saviour's influence and his authority, we exult. In our difficulties, we repair to him imploring his wisdom to guide us and his power to pro-

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tect us. In the admission of members to our communion, we receive them because we think he has received them, and in the exclusion of the unworthy, we put them away as those whom it would be an insult to Christ to retain in the church, which is his house. Through the whole range of our discipline, we have exclusive regard to the authority of this Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, whom we regard as really though invisibly present. When our churches are deprived of their pastors by death or removal, we spread their case before him, the great Shepherd, and appeal to his love for his flock. Is there nothing in this that tends to keep up in our church proceedings, as well as in our more strictly devotional exercises, the love of Christ in our souls? If there is any one principle which predominates in personal Christianity, it is a regard to Christ. "To them that believe he is precious." And can any one fail to perceive the tendency of our system to keep us in submission to Christ, and to raise the Saviour in our esteem? No king, no parliament, comes between him and us; we have to do with him, and with him alone; and are thus kept continually in his presence. I would again guard myself from being misunderstood. I do not say dissenters are more distinguished by love to Christ than their pious brethren of the church of England; far, very far from me, be such a declaration. From many whom I know would I gladly learn in this particular. Nor will I deny that in their liturgy there is much that is calculated to feed the sacred flame of attachment to the Saviour.

3. By making the privileges of church membership depend on evidence of genuine conversion to God we preserve more accurately and visibly the distinction

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between the church and the world; and thus recognise in our discipline as well as in our doctrine the necessity of a holy character for salvation, and of divine influence to form that character. We continually proclaim by our very system of ecclesiastical polity, as well as by our pulpit ministrations, that it is not membership that entitles to the christian character, but christian character that entitles to membership. Upon the portals of our spiritual edifice is written in legible characters, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Wherefore come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing." We present the church of Christ as a spiritual body, in its state of separation from the world, and in its high and sacred design as the light of the world. With us, church membership by birth, by residence, by political incorporation, by ecclesiastical enactment, is a thing unknown, it rests exclusively on character. Our very system of polity is thus, we think, a kind of ordinance of religion, a source of instruction, a means of grace, a guard against self-deception. We show by our discipline what kind of character a Christian is, and remind our flocks that they are especially called to be witnesses for God. We distinguish between the mere attendants at our places of worship and the church; and consider no one a member of the latter till he comes forward and confesses Christ before men. I do not mean to affirm that we are not sometimes deceived in the persons we admit; we often are (for who can search the heart but God?) but still none, whether rich or poor, are admitted to our communion but upon satisfactory evidence of personal piety. We thus seem to publish to the world, by acts as well as by words, that no

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man is a true member of the church of Christ unless justified by faith and regenerated by the Holy Ghost; and lifting up a warning voice to the world, we circulate in loud echoes through the land the apostle's solemn admonition, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

4. The connection of dissent with the interests of practical religion, may be seen in the provision which it makes for the continuance of a holy and faithful ministry. The pure gospel of Christ is the ordained instrument of God for the salvation of souls; and the preaching of it by enlightened and holy men is the instituted means of applying the instrument to this purpose. The importance of a holy and faithful ministry is so great, that scarcely any representation can rise into hyperbole, or swell into exaggeration. How then can this be most certainly secured? I reply, not merely by drawing up articles, creeds and confessions, and handing them down from generation to generation; no, nor even by transmitting the scriptures to posterity, essential as this is, for it has been found by experience that with both sound confessions and the word of God, religious bodies have been awfully destitute of gospel preachers. The continuance of a holy and faithful ministry cannot be secured, but upon the principle of making the church the conservator of the ministry. By the church, I mean those "who are called to be saints, beloved of God," separated from the world. The church so considered, as not only holding the doctrines of the gospel in its creeds and confessions but

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in the minds and hearts of its members, is "the pillar and ground of truth:" and is by a succession of true believers to hand forward the glorious deposit to posterity. From age to age it is to supply from its own body those members whose piety has been tried and whose talents are known, to preach the gospel for the edification of believers and the conversion of sinners. As long as the church is sound in the faith, and fulfils its obligations, it will secure to itself faithful men who are able to teach others. Our churches are formed on the principle of true conversion being requisite to membership, and none are admitted but upon an enquiry into their faith and practice. From the churches so constituted our ministers are called and chosen. At their admission into our colleges they undergo a second examination, touching their personal religion and doctrinal views; and at their ordination they make a public confession of both a third time. Thus every precaution is taken that can be adopted, to see that none but such as are sound in the faith and holy in conduct shall enter the sacred office. How came it to pass then, it will be replied, that so many of our churches have become Unitarian? Just because in those instances, which almost all occurred in the old Presbyterian congregations, discipline was relaxed, and the government was in the hands of the minister and other official persons, but not with the people. The defection began in removing the separation between the church and the world. But it is particularly worthy of attention, that in these cases our system supplied a self-adjusting principle, and the minority withdrew from the erroneous teacher and his supporters, and founding a new congregation, re-kindled the lamp of truth, and still continued to be the light of

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the world. Your congregation my friends was thus founded. An Arian minister having been introduced to the pulpit of the Old Meeting in this town, a few Trinitarians retired and built themselves a house for God on this spot. Many of our most flourishing congregations arose out of a similar state of things, and thus proved the capability of the system to provide for a truly faithful and holy ministry. I may boldly say that though the ministers of our denomination as a body are behind the clergy of the establishment in learning, (and who can wonder at this when we are most unjustly excluded from the universities?) yet in regard to all spiritual and theological qualifications for the efficient discharge of the sacred functions of their office, they have nothing to fear from the most severe comparison. There has never been a period in our history when the great bulk of congregational ministers were not the faithful expositors of God's word, and examples to their flock of the influence of the truths they taught.\*

5. We conceive that our mode of church polity and discipline alone provides for the communion of saints. What fellowship can there be where the communicants have no knowledge of each other, and never meet except at the sacrament? Communion cannot exist but upon the ground of mutual knowledge and confidence. It is confessed by the advocates of the church of England

\* See a most valuable tract entitled "The Church the Conservator of the Christian Ministry:" being the 19th number of the Library of Ecclesiastical Knowledge. It is to be regretted that all the series are not written with the temper and ability of this number. But after all the hue and cry raised against the publications of this Society, some of which I could have wished had been otherwise, can they be compared for virulence to some of the tracts of the Bartlett's Buildings' Society?

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themselves, that the communion of saints is very little known and enjoyed within their pale. But it is a most important means of grace, and a valuable auxiliary to the interests of piety. The cheering influence of sympathy, the protecting influence of companionship, the guiding influence of experience, and the warning and preserving influence of mutual supervision are of no small moment in the life of godliness. The oversight of the pastor in a large community must necessarily be partial and inefficient without the mutual oversight of the brethren; but this will be considered more particularly a little further on. No one that has ever obtained the slightest acquaintance with the working of either the methodist or the congregational systems, can doubt the superior advantages which they possess in this respect over the establishment. It will not be denied, that religious friendships may be as closely cemented and as sacredly enjoyed in the latter as in the former, and may be expanded in some cases into little circles of Christians, where the sweets of communion may be not only tasted but be a continual feast; but it is to be recollected, that this is a very different thing from the communion of a christian church as such. To say that our union is never weakened by division, our communion never disturbed by strife, would be contrary to fact. Scenes do occasionally occur, especially on the choice of a minister, which we deeply deplore; which are our disgrace and our injury; and deliverance from which many churchmen consider a compensation for some of the evils connected with establishments. These however are not the rule but the exception. Through God's grace, we have never had one disturbed church



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meeting through a period of twenty-eight years; and many churches can testify as much for themselves.

6. We are of opinion that the discipline of our churches affords its supporters great assistance in resisting the temptations to sin to which believers are ever exposed.

“Our personal obligations,” says Dr. Pye Smith, “to a pure and holy separation from the sinful practices of ungodly men are habitually presented to view, and on occasions of frequent occurrence, those high and sacred obligations are impressed upon us in the most affecting manner. How tenderly and how solemnly are we reminded of our near relation to the blessed Redeemer as his subjects and disciples. How beneficial to the promotion of every holy disposition and action are the ordinances and laws which he has appointed to be observed in his churches! Who that duly considers the influence of circumstances and associations in the formation of human character, can be insensible to the practical effects resulting from our church meetings, our mutual prayers and intercessions for each other, the edifying examples of the power of divine truth and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which occasionally arise, and the affectionate and vigilant exercise of reciprocal inspection and discipline?” Introductory Discourse at the ordination of the Rev. John Bruce.

Brethren, I remind you who happily know them by experience of the mingled emotions, all of them friendly to piety, which are excited by the scenes continually occurring at the usual convocations of the brethren; scenes as much beyond the belief as the knowledge of those who know each other as Christians only amidst the cold and distant formalities of an establishment. How humbled have you been, when some individual, far your inferior in rank and station, but no less your superior in piety, has been introduced like a glowing seraph to the church! And to speak of other occurrences, how have your godly jealousy, your holy fear, your apprehensive caution, your prospective solicitude, your most fervent prayer, been awakened, by the sad

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tale of a brother's delinquency, who was "rebuked before all, that all might fear." You have pictured yourself to your own sensitive imagination accused like him before the church, like him grieving the friends of religion, and like him causing its enemies to rejoice, and with an intense fervour almost before unknown you have gone home to present the prayer, "hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." But independently of this more public and solemn dealing with offenders, there is ever going on in our churches a system of mutual vigilance and reproof. It is considered by us as a solemn duty to watch over one another, not as spies but as brethren careful about each other's welfare. We feel it our duty to "exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and when a man is "overtaken in a fault, to restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering ourselves lest we also be tempted." Thus amongst us, there is no such thing as individual piety in a state of dissociation, or placed merely under pastoral supervision, and exposed in consequence of its isolated condition to all the force of temptation, unprotected and alone; but it is piety surrounded, watched, and guarded by the associated and friendly sympathies of the household of faith.

7. The voluntary system of church polity is eminently conducive to the cultivation of a spirit of christian liberality. We do not conceal that nonconformity is rather an expensive profession, for we have to build our own places of worship, to support our own ministers, and in fact to defray the whole expense incurred by our separation from the church of England; a state of things which subjects us of course to incessant claims upon our benevolence. The sums raised both by the methodists

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and dissenters for the support of their respective systems would astonish some who have been accustomed to consider religion as an article which the state has provided for them. But this, while it attaches them to the principles which thus call for their pecuniary contributions, carries on at the same time a moral process in the heart by producing a spirit of liberality; a liberality which while it takes care of the denomination within which it has been cultivated, sends the fruits of its mercy in the form of christian missions to the ends of the earth. I would not be thought to indulge the spirit, or to utter the language, of boasting, but with the simple design of sustaining my argument, would appeal to the pecuniary efforts made both by the methodists and dissenters for their denominational objects and their missionary institutions, as well as for the general claims of humanity. Is it not proverbial that all their public collections are larger than those usually made by congregations connected with the establishment? How comes this? It is not that they have naturally more oral liberality than their brethren in the church of England, but that the system of establishments withers the energies of benevolence, and restrains the efforts of beneficence, by dispensing in many religious matters with the obligations to individual and voluntary contribution. Liberality in the church of England will be found to flourish most in that portion of its members, which in their opinions, and feelings, and habits, most nearly resemble the methodists and evangelical dissenters. When I consider the wealth, the immense wealth, which is in the possession of the lay community of the establishment, I feel persuaded that there needs only the removal of the superincumbent pressure of a state pro-

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vision from their spirit of religious zeal, to call forth energies of active benevolence, which would at once astonish, delight, and bless the world.

Such then we think is the influence of our principles as connected with the interests of piety; that they are never associated in practice with the evils which are incident to human nature in its best state, it were false to deny, and foolish to attempt to conceal. These evils I have publicly exposed, with the hope of doing something towards their removal. The causes which disturb our churches disquieted those which were planted by the apostles, and are to be viewed not as the faults of our system but of our own corrupt nature; and our duty is not to abandon the former, but to labour in the work of reforming the latter.

It will perhaps be asked in reply to this, whether if systems are to be tried by their practical effect as regards religion, the present increase of piety in the established church is not an evidence of its being approved by God, and adapted to promote the religion of the country? It is undoubtedly a proof that God has raised, up a large number of holy and faithful men in that communion, for some great purpose of mercy towards the nation which they are blessing with their labours, and towards the church which they may be the means of reforming by their intelligent piety; but it would not be so easy to prove that this state of things is the result of the alliance between church and state; it is a distinguished blessing, not rising out of the system, but superinduced in mercy upon it. And if we may believe some modern episcopalians, this revival is to be traced rather to events without the church and operating upon it, than to any first movement within its own bosom; and they

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have most candidly acknowledged their obligations to the labours of Whitfield and the Wesleys, whose burning zeal rekindled the dying embers of devotion on the altars of the establishment.

IV. I shall now set before you the spirit and temper with which these principles ought to be maintained and propagated. This is of great consequence to the credit of our opinions, the reputation of our body, and the piety of our own hearts. "It is good," says the apostle, "to be zealously affected, always in a good thing." Believing as we do that our views of the nature of Christ's kingdom are scriptural, and that they are important to the interests of religion, we feel we should be acting inconsistently if we did not manifest some degree of zeal in their support.

Permit me to remind you however, that your zeal should be Intelligent; a zeal according to knowledge. A blind attachment to any system is bigotry; and bigotry, as its fervour is generally in proportion to its ignorance, is often transvenomed into fanaticism. Study well the question of dissent; if it will not bear scrutiny abandon it. It comes before your courting enquiry, and demands that you should open not your ears to the voice of authority, but your eyes to the light of evidence. It is not an abstruse and difficult subject, one of the deep things of God; a mystery which requires to be explored by the profoundest intellects, aided by the lights of antiquity and of universal science; on the contrary, it is one of the simplest of all theological enquiries. What a christian church is, what the characters of its members, the end of its formation, the kinds and qualifications of its officers, and the means of its support and extension; these are the questions

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which are to be asked in settling the subject before us, and they are within the comprehension of an ordinary intellect. Or they may be still more compressed in the interrogatory, How is true religion to be supported and propagated? To what oracle shall we carry the subject for decision? To the Fathers? No. To general Councils? No. To Acts of Parliament? No. "What do they know about the matter but as they interpret the Bible? Their responses will be confused and contradictory when they leave the New Testament, and if they decide according to it, why should we not go at once to the source of their information? Read the Acts of the Apostles and learn how churches were formed by inspired men; and then read the epistles to learn what are the characters of church members, and the kinds, and qualifications, and duties of church officers. I am content to leave the matter between your conscience and the New Testament. If however, you wish to search and read further, and to study the Scriptures with an interpreter at your side, take the most approved works on the subject by dissenting writers.\*

Our zeal ought to be Earnest and Serious. Without pretending to put the subject on a level with either the doctrines or the duties of religion, I still claim for it a high degree of interest and importance. The nature of Christ's kingdom cannot be a trifling matter. Church polity is intimately connected with church prosperity.

\* For an extended, elaborate, and incomparable review of non-conformity, I refer you to Courier's able work. Scales's Treatise on Dissent is exceedingly valuable. And as a piece of caustic and irrefutable controversy, Mr Bedford's pamphlet in reply to Mr Garbet is exceedingly clever. A very clear and masterly pamphlet against establishments his lately been published by Dr Heugh, of Glasgow.

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It involves, when properly viewed, not merely a question about rites, ceremonies, and offices, about episcopacy, presbyterianism, or independency, but about the best means of supporting and propagating Christianity in the world. It is not simply an enquiry into the best form of religion, but whether religion itself in any form should become the subject of civil legislation, and be supported by the arm of the secular power; or should be left for its preservation and propagation to the omnipotence of its Author, and the voluntary energies of its friends. It is no question of politics, but of piety; and should be taken up in a spirit far removed from the levity, flippancy, and profanity with which it is sometimes treated by its opponents. Deeply and for ever is it to be deplored that it should have been taken from the hands of divines, and put into those of senators; that it should have been carried from the region of religious truth to the arena of political strife; where, torn and disfigured by the rude hands of the combatants, and covered with the dust of the conflict, it loses much of its own pure dignity, and fails to inspire religious reverence in the minds of spectators. But it is a sacred subject after all, a subject intimately connected with the purposes of divine mercy, the designs of the cross of Christ, the salvation of souls, the conversion of the world, and the glories of eternity. It is worth all the zeal that has ever been manifested on both sides of the question, and all the volumes that have ever been written; though, alas for the manner in which that zeal has been perverted; as if dungeons, and intolerance darker than dungeons, swords, and words sharper than swords, fires, and wrath fiercer than flames, were the best or only method of settling the nature of that kingdom which

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consists not in meats or drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Be Consistent in your profession as dissenters. If you believe that your principles are scriptural teach them to your children. Bring them up first in true piety and charity, but add beside right principles of ecclesiastical polity. Attend regularly upon the preaching of ministers of your own denomination. Suffer not the truly delightful increase of spiritual religion in the church of England to diminish your conviction of the importance of your principles. In leaving the church, we dissent not from doctrines, nor from good men, but from principles of government, and they are the same whether the pious clergymen are few or many. We may embrace, and ought to embrace all opportunities to mingle with pious church people in the operations of benevolence and the intercourse of society; the more we do this the better, as it tends to soften the asperity of discordant sentiment, and to maintain the communion of saints in the parlour and the committee room, although it is without the formalities of devotion and the symbols of sects; but still we ought never to scruple on all suitable occasions to avow, defend, and propagate our principles. Courtesy is carried too far when it trenches upon conscience. If we would be consistent we ought liberally to support our own institutions. Our colleges ought to be objects of our munificence: our grammar schools should receive our cheerful patronage. Our county associations and our general congregational union should interest our feelings. The literary organs of our body should be read and supported. The Eclectic Review, the only review devoted to the cause of evangelical piety and nonconformity, has been far too much



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neglected, notwithstanding it has admitted a few injudicious paragraphs to its pages. The Congregational Magazine, the representative of our body, and not unworthy of us, should be taken in by every family that can afford it. The Patriot newspaper should be weekly in the hands of every evangelical dissenter in the kingdom. We must neither be ashamed of our principles, nor neglect the organs by which they are set forth and advocated. If we neglect our institutions episcopalians do not neglect theirs. Instead of blaming them, I would propose their example for imitation.

Let your zeal be Calm and Temperate, maintained with all the steadiness of deep conviction, but expressed, at the same time, with the meekness of wisdom. We must make up our account to have our motives misconceived and our conduct misrepresented. Ignorance can not and prejudice will not understand us, while slander will calumniate, and bigotry will hate us. Already the flood-gates of abuse and vituperation have been opened against us; but none of these things should be suffered to move us: and even if the wise and pious members of the established church should permit their grief to degenerate into distrust and alienation, we must make all due allowance for the feelings of wounded affection, and shew no resentment. It is difficult I admit to be not only suspected but accused of sinister aims, and not lose our temper; but we must conquer the difficulty, and go quietly forward through good report and through evil report; blessing those, if any such there are, who curse us, and praying for those who despitely use us. It is charged upon us, that we covet the wealth of the church, and are striving to strip her of her endowments, that we may be enriched by the spoil. If so,

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we are fools as well as knaves to say so much about the support of religion by voluntary contribution, and prepare the nation to reject any claim we may present to share the plunder with the scorn and indignation it deserves. If we wanted State property, we should have struck another note, and instead of speaking of the voluntary principle, should have talked of an equitable division. No, whatever becomes of the funds of the establishment, we do not ask, and would not receive, a single shilling. Having nothing of this sort in view, and the consciousness that our motives are as pure as our object is scriptural, we need not suffer our minds to be disturbed, much less our anger to be kindled, by the suspicions of the ignorant, the insinuations of the prejudiced, the libels of the slanderous; no, nor by the mistakes of the wise and the good. In meekness possess your souls. A good cause and a good conscience require not the wrath of man for their support. Say nothing rashly, do nothing violently. If the zeal of our body ought not, in this crisis of our history, to stagnate in quiescence, like the waters of the pool, neither ought it to dash and roar like those of the cataract, but to urge forward its resistless course in the deep channel of our principles, with the ceaseless motion and majestic force of a mighty river.

Nor less distinguished should it be for Strength of Principle and Tenderness of Conscience. We should not take up our principles lightly, and lightly we should not lay them down. If any are convinced that establishments are the scriptural and best method of supporting and extending religion, nothing short of the want of an opportunity to hear preachers of the gospel in the national church should induce them to come out and be

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separate from its communion; but if on the other hand we are satisfied that they are unscriptural and injurious to the cause of pure religion, we ought to separate from them, and thus bear testimony against the corruption of primitive Christianity. The attractions of literature, of rank, of elegance, of fashion, (a large portion of which will ever be found on the side of state churches,) should when weighed against the truth of Scripture, be but as the small dust of the balance. If religion were a matter of imagination and not of conscience, and were to be regulated by what is tasteful rather than by what is scriptural, nonconformity could have small chance against the imposing pomp, dignity, and grandeur of a national church. With you however the whole matter is and should be an affair of conscience. It is become rather common with some to say, "The gospel is every thing, and provided we have that all besides is non-essential; and since there does not appear to be any particular form of government laid down in the Scripture, it is not worth while to contend about such trifles as discipline and ceremonies." The gospel is indeed the first thing, but it is not every thing. There are principles, if not a form, of government laid down in the New Testament, and we have no more right to reject them than we have to oppose the other institutes of Christ. The carelessness with which matters of this kind are treated, is one of the proofs that the religion of the present day is too much a mere matter of taste, and too little an affair of conscience. The whole body of nonconformist ministers who left the church of England on the passing of the Act of Uniformity, gave up their livings and their labours, their support as men, and their prospects of usefulness as christian ministers, on the ground

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of ritual. They could not read the services, perform the offices, and practise the ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer; and rather than violate their conscience, they cast themselves upon Providence for support, and exposed themselves to all the persecutions of a relentless intolerance. Nothing but conscience should make a man a dissenter, and nothing but conscience should lead him back to the communion of the so called national church. Having espoused from conviction the principles of dissent, he should religiously maintain them with the zeal of an apostle, the courage of a martyr, and the purity of a saint.

Charity should be a main ingredient in the zeal of nonconformists. I would be the last man willingly to wound the feelings of those from whom I differ. I have sacred friendships with members of the established church which I would not recklessly put in peril. There are among them men whom I love and esteem with an affection second only to what I bear for the truth; and on their account, if on no other, I would repress every thing calculated to give unnecessary offence. The ministers of Him, who is the Prince of Peace and God of Love, are commanded to be "examples to the believers in conversation, in charity, in spirit." Charity which should burn as a lamp in the profession of every private Christian, should shine as a star on the foreheads of the teachers of the gospel, or as a crown of glory on their brows. But still it is not necessary we should be silent on the subject of truth in order that we may not offend against love. These two are in reality near relations and dear friends, although great pains have been taken by prejudice ignorance and malignity to set them at variance. Controversy if carried on in a right

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spirit can do no harm, and must do good. It is to be deprecated, not on its own account, for the spark of truth is struck out by the collision of contending parties; the thing to be feared is the conflagration that is kindled by the falling of the spark on such inflammable matter as human prejudice. Truth can lose nothing by controversy, though love may lose much, and in the end when truth has vanquished all its enemies, it will make amends to charity for the injuries it may have inflicted upon its gentle spirit during the season of conflict, by exalting it to be co-partner of the throne from which it will give laws to the world.

There is nothing I deprecate more than that dissenters should contend for their principles and their claims with carnal weapons. And what are carnal weapons? Not only swords, bayonets, and cannon, but anger, wrath, and bitterness, malice and all uncharitableness. Truth is far better served by the graces than the furies. We should never forget that we are contending not against pagans but professing Christians; not against papists but protestants; and not only against secular and anti-evangelical protestants but against thousands of men who are our fellow Christians in all the essentials of piety, and our fellow labourers in the word and kingdom of Christ: a consideration which though it should not diminish, in the smallest degree, our convictions of the truth or importance of our principles, should certainly exclude all bitterness from our minds, and all asperity from our language. We cannot comprehend how men so enlightened and so holy as many of our opponents are can be blind to the evils of establishments in general, and the objections to their own in particular; and

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they can as little comprehend our opposition to them; we regard state churches as impediments to the spread and power of religion; while they are of opinion, that to separate the church from the state would be to surrender the cause of religion into the hands of infidelity. When conscience is on both sides of a strife, which is a kind of civil war in religion, the combatants should at any rate be prevented from shooting with poisoned arrows, and a resolution to shew no mercy. I am quite aware that it is difficult to bear the calumny the insult and the bitterness with which dissenters are sometimes treated. The holy, the wise, and the good members of the national church little know all the instruments which are employed by ecclesiastical bigotry, aristocratic pride, and tory malevolence against nonconformity, or they would not wonder that the trial should sometimes prove too strong for human forbearance, and that words should be uttered, and tempers indulged, which though they cannot be justified by the rule of charity, are far, very far, within the limits of retaliation. I would however remind you that, with the consciousness of having truth and no small share of public opinion on our side, we may be content to be reviled without returning railing for railing. What is gained by argument in a good cause is sometimes lost by temper; and the still small voice of reason is not unfrequently drowned in the loud clamour of passion. A bad temper is bad policy, as well as bad morality, since it frequently gives an opponent the only advantage he can obtain from the conflict.

I shall now point out, in as few words as possible, the duties which you owe to yourselves and to your cause in this peculiar juncture of your history. I need not inform you that there is at present a general move-

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ment in contemplation by the dissenting body to obtain a redress of grievances, an extension and consolidation of our religious liberties. A great point, and not greater for our relief than for the honour of the national church, was gained by the repeal of the Test and Corporation laws. We are tauntingly and insultingly told by some, "that with this boon we ought to be content, instead of which our ambition is inflamed by concession, and our demands increase with our privileges." Tyranny always adds insult to oppression, as long as the oppressed are willing to submit to its iron yoke, and are content to receive as a gift of favour that which belongs to them as a matter of right. We are still but half free from the domination of the establishment, and it is the natural effect of granting men one portion of liberty to make them wish to possess the other. We claim to be released from all compulsory payments towards the support of a form of religion from which we conscientiously dissent, to be relieved from the hardship and stigma of exclusion from the universities the national fountains of education; to be allowed to celebrate the religious forms of the marriage ceremony, by our own ministers, as our brethren in Scotland and Ireland are already; to possess a legalised registration of the births of our children, and to be permitted to bury our dead according to our own method, and by our own pastors, in the parochial cemeteries. In most of these matters our wishes are responded to by the sympathies of the great body of the nation; and will, if we urge them on the present government and at the bar of the legislature receive, we doubt not, the support of at least one of the Houses of Parliament.

It will be thought perhaps by some that as all the

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deprivations under which we labour are but the results of the political alliance between the church and state, I ought, in order to be consistent, to urge you to lay the axe to the root of the tree, and call upon you to make the dissolution of that union the main subject of appeal to the government and the senate. I need scarcely tell you that this point has been much agitated and discussed, both in the different committees of the dissenting body, and in their periodical journals; and that the general feeling is, that while all our memorials to government, and all our petitions to parliament, should contain a strong protest against the alliance, coupled with a declaration that the dissenters consider every reform to be incomplete as long as this remains, yet that it is not expedient to make its removal the great object of confederated effort. It may not be improper to introduce here an extract from a letter, which lately appeared in the Patriot newspaper, from John Wilks, Esq., who as you are aware, is an evangelical dissenter, and a member of the House of Commons. It was written in reply to an application from the dissenters at Bristol, for his advice as to the measures now expedient to be adopted.

“They (the united committee) have repeatedly met, and intend next week to address the dissenters of England and Wales, and to invite their co-operation for the redress of the grievances of which dissenters may yet justly complain. They will in their address assuredly state their conscientious disapproval of all religious establishments, and of an unhallowed alliance between the church and the state; and they will recapitulate all the grievances heretofore announced by them, and stated at Leeds: and which mainly consist of the want of an improved and civil parochial registration; of compulsory payments for the support of the church; of the exclusion of dissenters from an equal participation with churchmen in the benefit and honors of the universities; and of the degradation of



dissenting ministers by preventing them from celebrating marriages, and from officiating in churchyards on the interment of their friends. Until this address shall appear, yourself and enlightened colleagues will probably defer any public proceeding and final resolves; and, when it is received, I sincerely hope that prudence, and not passion, will dictate the course they pursue. The opinion of the government, and of many parliamentary friends to liberty of conscience and the cause of dissent, I believe to be that any immediate and urgent attempt at the severance of the church and the state would utterly fail, would injure the administration, would delight and strengthen the tories, still numerous, affluent, and strong, would delay the ecclesiastical reforms, intended and desired, would retard the abolition or commutation of tithes, and would prevent the dissenters from progressively procuring that redress of practical evils by which they are afflicted; and which, if they be temperate, united, vigilant, and judicious, they will gradually acquire, and at last completely obtain. In these views I am much disposed to concur; and at least I urgently recommend them to devout and deliberate thought."

I approve of the sentiments of this able and eloquent advocate of religious liberty, and have reason to believe they will be adopted as the rule by which our body will be guided. Until the union can be dissolved by the diffusion of sound scriptural sentiments, both among the people and the legislature, both within the church and without it, most of the sober and reflecting members of our different denominations are quite averse from making the attempt by the force of political agitation. Let our efforts be directed to the extension and consolidation of our own liberties, leaving the church, if it is to be pulled down, to pull down itself, or the church and the state to do it between them.\*

\* "To pull down the church," is a very common expression, both in the lips of churchmen and dissenters, and it is considered by the former as a comprehension of all possible horrors, involving the triumph of infidelity irreligion and anarchy, over religion justice law and order. As used by dissenters it means nothing more than a separation of the church from the state. In point of fact it is an

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In our endeavours to gain the relief which we have an equitable right to expect, I prefer that we, in this town, for reasons which will readily occur to you, should act as separate congregations, and that we should have no recourse to agitation and clamour. The best way to disprove the calumnious assertion, for calumnious it is, that dissenters are in league with infidels and radicals, is to act by ourselves. I hope that we shall never give colour by any part of our conduct to the

inaccurate expression, and means more than dissenters intend to convey. The true mode of expressing our meaning is to speak of pulling down the establishment. We contend for nothing more than this, and for this, not in a way of violence, but of law. Were this to take place next year the church would remain with all its essentials as a religious institution, though it would no more be a political one. Its buildings, its creeds, and formularies, its apostolical succession, its prelates, its clergy, its sacraments, every thing in short which belongs to it as a church would remain, though its connexion with and dependence upon the secular power, would be removed. As to its temporalities, I leave this question to be settled between itself and the legislature, repeating what I have already said, that personally, I care nothing about this matter; intending by that expression, only, that I neither grudge them, envy them, nor covet them; and not that I think the retention of them is either a scriptural, a necessary, or an efficient means of its support. The expression, "pulling down the church," thus explained, loses its sting and becomes innocuous. It is evident that no external violence, short of the setting up of a popish and intolerant government, can destroy the church; it may die a natural death by the total abandonment of episcopacy on the part of the people; or it may be destroyed by an entire relinquishment of it by its clergy, events by no means likely to happen, but it can never be slain, except by a suicidal act of its own. It may bid defiance to kings, lords, and commons, as long as it lives in the affections of its ministers and members: and to affirm that its separation from the state would terminate its existence, is in my opinion, to pronounce its condemnation as a Christian institute, by representing it as founded on human laws, instead of the word of God.

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slander which has been so industriously circulated, and so greedily received, that we are after all far more of a political than a religious body. It appears to me that if we ever aim to carry a question by the power of numbers rather than by that of truth; by clamour and not by cool, dispassionate reason; by the influence of political strength, rather than by the progress of conviction; and by secular confederation, rather than by ecclesiastical association; we shall by so doing be setting up, though in a modified form, the alliance between church and state among ourselves. I again quote from the beautiful speech of Sir George Saville, and address to you, and would address to our whole body, the nation at large, to the government and the legislature, were I writing for them, the forcible and sacred motives with which he appealed to a British House of Commons:

“I therefore beseech you; I become an humble and earnest supplicant to you, by the benevolent spirit of the gospel, by all that is serious, I beseech you by the bowels of Christ, that this affair be treated, not as a matter of policy, not as a matter of levity, not as a matter of censoriousness, but as a matter of religion.”

In conclusion, I would say, let it never be forgotten, that the two strongest evidences in favour of the scriptural authority of any system of church polity, are its obvious adaptation to promote the interests of true piety, and to cherish towards the universal church the feelings of christian charity. Whatever scheme of government is seen by its own inherent constitution to provide most securely and most amply for those vital and essential parts of Christianity, of whatever else it may be destitute in the way of secular grandeur or power, will commend itself at length to the conviction of all thinking, reflecting and impartial persons, as the nearest approach

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to the plan laid down in the New Testament. Apply therefore, your principles to the production of these results. Submit yourselves not only in these matters, but in all others, to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, as expressed in his word. "Submit yourselves unto every ordinance of man, (in civil matters) for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free (or seeking to be free) and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king." "And besides this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." In all our conduct towards our brethren of the church of England, as well as towards other denominations of professing Christians, let us manifest as well as cherish the most candid respect for their conscientious convictions, the most tender regard for their feelings, combined with that genuine affection which is due to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

"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 developement 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 the christian 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 period 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 is to 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 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 matters, 'study first to be peaceable, then pure;' 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 of heaven, you will display less of that diversity of sentiment which hitherto has distinguished and often distracted the church on earth." *Fiat Justitia*, 62, 63.

[Then there follows the quotation from Dr. Redford, to be found at p. 216 of this volume.]



**SKETCH OF THE GENERAL HISTORY OF  
NONCONFORMITY AND REFLECTIONS**

EXTRACTED FROM

“THE HISTORY OF PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY  
IS BIRMINGHAM.”





## PREFACE.

HISTORY, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by facts, and is therefore a most important branch of general science. No history ought to be so interesting to us, none is so momentous or instructive as that of our country, and of our church; the one appertaining to us as citizens, and the other as Christians. The general principles of the constitution under which we hold our property liberty and life should be known to us. How else can we give it our intelligent support, or aid in carrying forward those repairs and improvements which the corroding influence of time, the corruptions of man, and the progress of events, render so necessary to adapt it to the circumstances of the age? The principles of the constitution are best understood by studying its history, in which they are so clearly, and have been so gradually, developed. These remarks are as true when applied to ecclesiastical, as they are in reference to secular history. The truth, beauty, and power of our church principles, will ever be felt more impressively, if not seen more clearly, in the struggles of heroes who have contended for them, and in the sufferings of martyrs who have died for them, than in the creeds of theologians who have recorded them. It is therefore to the temple of history that the followers of any system of government should repair at once to express their zeal, and to have it both enlightened and stimulated.

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It is however to be recollected by all parties that the best and only infallible and authoritative standard of ecclesiastical polity and rule is the inspired one contained in the New Testament, and he who does not find his own opinions and practices tally with that, may be quite sure, that with whatever devotion he may have defended or propagated them, they are but the inventions of men, and not the institutes of God. What is it but a forgetfulness of this which has so complicated one of the simplest questions in religion, "What is the Church of Christ?" and raised a controversy which in its progress has so bewildered the judgments and envenomed the passions of the combatants, that in contending for their church, they have almost sacrificed their religion? And yet, what is the church but a mansion of which religion is the occupant; or a body of which it is the animating and impulsive soul? Alas, that this should have been so generally forgotten, and that the pages of ecclesiastical history from the time the apostles fell asleep, should have been either so crimsoned with the blood, or so blackened with the crimes, of men contending about the form of church government, and persecuting even to death those who conscientiously differed from them, as to compel many a spectator of the conflict to exclaim "These men seem far more intent upon the structure of the temple and the form of the altar, than upon the nature, the claims, and the homage of the deity who is to be worshipped there." It is a melancholy proof of the lapsed condition of humanity, that the first practical lesson which the believer is taught in the school of Christ as contained in the song of the angels who heralded him into the world, and as enforced more fully in his own beautiful sermon on the mount, is the last which Chris-

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tians are willing to learn, and which they have not thoroughly learned yet, to love one another, and to live in peace and good-will with all.

The following pages contain a fearful and instructive exhibition of human weakness and wickedness, in the way of persecution. "Then why," it may be asked, "revive and perpetuate the recollection of events, over which it would be better to draw the veil of oblivion?" Because they are facts, and if bad men and their actions, and the imperfections of good men, are to be buried in forgetfulness, a great part of universal history, and even of that which is inspired, must be consigned to the same tomb. In all the annals of man, virtue and vice are strangely blended together, and the record of both must be preserved, that by the power of contrast they may magnify each other, and serve the one for example, and the other for warning. The character of the persecutor and that of the oppressed, must stand side by side upon the same page, the one enshrined in honour, and the other gibbeted in infamy. Besides, it will make the dark back ground of the past throw out in bolder and brighter relief the improvement of the present, for the admiration and imitation of the future.

The origin of this work is as follows. On Christmas day last, the author celebrated with his flock the centenary of the foundation of their church, on which occasion he gave them a history of their own body. In preparing this account for publication, the horizon of the subject gradually widened upon his view, till it comprehended, not only the history of other denominations in the town, but of nonconformity in general. In giving an account of each congregation, and of each class of congregations, he thought it would be interest-

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ing if he prefixed a short narrative of the denominations to which they belonged. This has its disadvantages, inasmuch as it will necessarily lead to some repetitions and some anachronisms.

This little work makes no pretensions beyond that of a compilation, of which the facts are often expressed in the very words of the authors from whose volumes they are derived. The author therefore advances no claim to originality, and as little to elegance of language, or the graces of composition. Simplicity, truthfulness, and candour, have been his aim; how far he has been successful in this must be left to others to determine.

The works from which the facts of this history have been taken, and on whose authority they are given, are Neal's "History of the Puritans," Calamy's "Nonconformists' Memorial" by Palmer, Bogue and Bennet's "History of Dissenters," Brook's "Lives of the Puritans," and "History of Religious Liberty," Price's "History of Nonconformists," Hanbury's "Memorials of the Independents," and Fletcher's "History of Independency."

The author earnestly recommends the perusal of these works to the younger members of the nonconformist body, and the re-perusal of them to all. They demonstrate that nonconformists have a history rich in the records of piety, heroism, and martyrdom, and adorned with the names of men, to whom even by the admission of their opponents, England is much indebted for the most precious of her possessions, her civil and religious liberties. Dissenters have no cause to be ashamed of their pedigree, and they would be more convinced of this, if they would make themselves better

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acquainted with the virtues, the struggles, and the sufferings of their illustrious ancestors: men of whom they are not worthy unless they are prepared to imitate their courage and their constancy, their glorious union of exalted piety with their ardent attachment to the cause of freedom.

This work is intentionally and almost exclusively historical, and only incidentally and undesignedly controversial. The author's track however is along the border country, where the war of parties is still going on, and perhaps it is hardly to be expected that he will escape attack. Should his apprehensions be realized, it is not his intention to return the fire of any assailant. He has neither time, taste, nor talent for controversy, and is arrived at a period of life, when men usually covet repose rather than conflict. He has written nothing but what he believes to be true and good. Should any one prove that he is mistaken, he has neither the wish nor the pride to defend any thing which he had advanced, merely because he has advanced it.

The usual clerical and characteristic prefix of "Reverend" has been omitted, not because the author has any conscientious scruple about using this conventionality, nor in the way of retaliation for the assumptions of high churchmen in appropriating this honour exclusively to themselves, and denying the right of it to dissenters, but to avoid unnecessary and wearisome repetition. If at any time the author has advocated his own opinions, or opposed the opinions of others, it has been his endeavour to speak what he considered to be the truth in love. It were well if all controversialists, especially those who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, would remember the very apt illustration of Mr

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Hugh Miller, in his late beautiful work, entitled "Foot Prints of the Creator:" "I have not from any consideration of the mischief thus effected, written as if argumenta, like cannon balls, could be rendered more formidable than in a cool state by being made red-hot." And the comparison admits of the additional remark, that the artillery-man is much less likely to point his gun with precision when perturbed with passion, than when calm and collected.

The author will conclude with the remark, that while it has been his desire and his aim to speak respectfully of those from whom he widely differs in sentiment, he does not wish this to be misconstrued into any want of perception of or indifference to what he considers to be the error or the danger of their theological opinions or ecclesiastical systems. Religious sentiment is in part, and only in part, the bond of ecclesiastical union. There are many with whom we can exchange and enjoy the courtesies of social life, with whom also we can maintain the intercourse and co-operate in all the works of citizenship; but with whom from our extremes of opinion, we cannot in the fullest sense of the term, reciprocate the sympathies of a "like precious faith," or enjoy the fellowship of Christians.

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NONCONFORMITY in relation to existing and prevailing systems of religious doctrine or polity, is no new thing, and should not be considered as pertaining exclusively to this age or to this country. It must be judged as regards its moral character, by the ground on which it rests, and the spirit by which it is actuated. Separation from a system of error originating in conscience, maintained in a spirit of charity, and avowed with the meekness of wisdom, is not only defensible but praiseworthy, and is indeed demanded by God as an act of allegiance to Him and to truth.

In almost every age since the commencement of the Christian era there have been nonconformists of some class or other. Such, in fact, were the first Christians in relation to Judaism and Paganism; such were the Cathari, or Puritans as the word signifies, of the third century; such were Claude of Turin and his followers, who were the Protestants of the ninth century amidst the valleys of Piedmont; such were the Albigenses and Waldenses, who held fast their separation from Rome amidst the fortresses of the Alps; such were Wickliffe and his followers; such were the Lollards and their murdered leader, Lord Cobham in the time of Henry V; such were the followers of John Huss and Jerome of Prague; such were Luther and the reformers. And what, indeed, are the church of England, and all the

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other reformed churches, viewed in relation to the church of Rome, to which they were all at one time subject, but nonconformists, seceders, separatists, dissenters; a fact which ought to make all those communities very cautious how they bring the odious charge of schism against those who conscientiously and peaceably retire from their communion.

The separation of dissenters from the church of England is precisely on the same general ground as that taken by the church of England in seceding from Home, a conscientious regard to truth, or at any rate to what is apprehended to be such. The errors which in the two cases cause the separation it is admitted are vastly disproportionate as to magnitude and importance; but still the separation itself is in each case produced by a conviction that there is something erroneous, something contrary to the word of God, in the system from which the secession takes place. Nor is it enough to justify the secession in one case and to condemn it in the other, to alledge that the errors of the church of Rome are of such magnitude as not only to warrant but to demand a separation, while those of the church of England, even by the admission of dissenters, are of far less consequence, inasmuch as they do not extend to fundamental doctrines. It must be left to every one's conscience to determine what measure of error in any given system is sufficient to demand his separation from it. No one man, nor any set of men, can determine this matter for another.

The reformation effected in this country by the passions and authority of Henry VIII, in fact was still a modified papacy with a king instead of a pope at its head; and the most stringent laws were passed in his age



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to enforce conformity in doctrine, sacraments, and polity to the state-religion. There were some of his subjects who went farther than Henry in their views of reformation, and wished to throw off a great deal more of popery than he was prepared to relinquish. The publication of Tindal's and Coverdale's translation of the Scriptures, which took place at this time, greatly promoted the work of reformation, but it soon received a powerful check by the passing of the terrible and bloody act of "The Six Articles." By this law the doctrines of the real presence, the communion in one kind, the perpetual obligation of vows of chastity, the utility of private masses, the celibacy of the clergy, and the necessity of auricular confession were established by royal authority, and all who spoke against transubstantiation were rendered liable to be burnt as heretics. No wonder that after the publication of the Scriptures in the vernacular language, many refused to conform to Henry's decrees, and suffered martyrdom rather than profess such doctrines as these, among them were Bilncy, Byfield, Freeth, and Dr. Robert Barnes, all men of eminent piety and distinguished zeal in the cause of the reformation. They were the first non-conformists after the nation had thrown off the yoke of Borne, and they were its proto-martyrs.

On the accession of Edward VI, the work of reformation, under the advice and direction of Cranmer and the Duke of Somerset, made rapid progress, and a mass of superstition was removed from the English church, an event which was hailed with delight by the nonconformists, of whom there were then many. But even this measure of reform could not satisfy men who were anxious to bring all things into agreement with the

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New Testament, and who saw many things yet remaining which were in opposition to that standard, and savoured strongly of popery.

In the year 1552 forty-two articles of religion were agreed upon by the Convocation to which subscription was required of all persons who should officiate at the altars of the establishment, or enjoy an ecclesiastical benefice. This was the commencement of subscription to articles of faith as the door of entrance to the pulpit. Against some of the things thus enjoined by authority many divines of distinguished learning and piety raised a protesting voice. They excepted, for instance, against the clerical vestments, especially the use of the surplice; kneeling at the Lord's supper, as countenancing the popish notion of adoring the host; the use of godfathers and the sponsorial service in baptism; the superstitious observance of Lent; the use of the sign of the cross in baptism; the oath of canonical obedience; pluralities and non-residence; with other matters of a similar nature. To these things they could not and did not conform; and therefore became, on such points, zealous nonconformists. The disputes about these subjects were introduced to the pulpit, and carried on with great warmth, one party insisting on the necessity of absolute and universal conformity, the other pleading for liberty and latitude in reference to these lesser matters.

Edward, though so young, was not inattentive to the controversy, and was set upon removing the ground of it, by putting aside many of the usages against which exception had been taken; and there is little doubt that Cranmer, to a certain extent, coincided with his views. Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, the two celebrated divines brought over by Edward from the continent to

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carry on the work of the reformation by acting as professors of divinity in the universities, were both of them, in some things, nonconformists. "When I was at Oxford," said Martyr, "I could never use those white garments in the choir, and I am satisfied with what I did." He called them relics of popery. Nor could Bucer ever be prevailed upon to use the surplice; and when asked why he did not wear the square cap, replied "Because my head is not square." Hooper, appointed to the see of Gloucester, and afterwards burnt there in the reign of Mary, refused for a long time to submit to consecration, because he would not wear the prelatical vestments required by law. Latimer, Coverdale, Rowland Taylor, John Rogers, John Bradford, who subsequently were distinguished soldiers in "the noble army of martyrs," were all in these matters zealous nonconformists. At length, so continued, and so strong, was the resistance to these impositions, that it was wisely thought expedient to leave it as a matter of indifference, to be settled by a man's own taste and conscience.

As dissatisfaction with many things contained in the Book of Common Prayer continued to increase, and it was by many wholly or partially disused, alarm was taken by the heads of the church, and a royal commission was issued to repress nonconformity by punishing those who practised it, and at the same time to visit with the penalties of the law the "anabaptists" as they were called. Persecution thus found its way into the kingdom under the reign of the pious and gentle Edward. On the trial of a member of an obscure sect of separatists in the county of Kent, their leader thus addressed Cranmer in open court: "Well, reverend sir, pass what sentence you please upon us, but that you

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may not say you were not forewarned, I testify that your own turn will be next." This was not inspired prophecy; yet how soon was it fulfilled! A little while after this Edward died, the prisoners were liberated, and Cranmer himself brought to the stake. This venerable, but imperfect man, fell a victim to the severe intolerance which he himself had manifested, and having burnt others for heresy expired in the flames for the same alledged offence.

The early death of that scarcely full-blown rose of monarchy, Edward VI., is one of those deep mysteries of Providence which man's finite reason attempts in vain to penetrate. What a work of reformation was stopped; what a reign of darkness, of terror, and of blood was introduced by that event! What the church of England would have become, and what would have been the necessity for nonconformity, had he lived, it is impossible to conjecture; though when we consider the strength of his intellect, the kindness of his heart, and the liberality of his sentiments, we are ready to imagine things would have been widely different from what they became under his lordly sister Elizabeth.

The reign of Mary was a dark night of protestant history, illumined only by the lurid glare of the flames of Smithfield. There were a few nonconformists then, and it is a deep and indelible disgrace to the national clergy that there were no more. The few that existed were illustrious ones, and much have they added to the glory of our English martyrology. As popery was now the state religion, all the ministers and members of the church of England who held fast their protestantism were thrown into the ranks of nonconformity. It is true they did not assume the name, and did not go the

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lengths of those who had previously been so called, but dissenters they were. Was nonconformity their shame and their infamy? Do they deserve to be reproached for their dissent? Are they to be accused of schism when they had cut themselves off from the state church? Is there an episcopalian who will enter into the prisons or approach the stake of these illustrious martyrs, and revile them as sectarians and separatists? And yet they were such. In them, at any rate, nonconformity was a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty: and why should it be a stigma upon those who, on the same general grounds separate from the community of which these confessors and martyrs were ministers?

Elizabeth was an extraordinary woman, a much improved, yet certainly another edition of Henry VIII; not of course in his vices, but in many of his principles, and in some of his passions. No sooner was she quietly settled upon the throne than, forgetting the sufferings through which her fellow protestants had passed in the reign of her sister, and the dangers she herself had escaped; untaught alike by observation, reflection, or experience; equally ungrateful to God and tyrannical to man; impelled by her own intolerant disposition, and urged forward by her no less intolerant ecclesiastical guides, she passed "The Act of Uniformity," the design of which was to extinguish all liberty in matters of religious worship, and to make it as necessary, in order to officiate at the altar of the church of England, to wear the surplice, as to be clad in the robe of righteousness and the garment of salvation; to trace the sign of the cross upon an infant's brow in baptism, as to preach the doctrine of the cross in the great congregation; and to administer the elements of the bread and wine in the

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Lord's Supper to the people on their knees, as to observe the sacred festival at all. It is not meant that the Act of Uniformity intentionally reduced all these matters to the same level, viewed by themselves, but that it made one as necessary as the other, in order to be a minister of the national church. The controversy about all the disputed points was now to be settled by royal authority, and the penalties of law. Absolute, universal, unhesitating conformity was determined upon by the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity of Common Prayer, which was passed in the first year of her reign. Then in 1559 came forth her Injunctions, consisting of upwards of fifty distinct articles on religious subjects, all intended to make the religion of the church of England as palatable to the Roman Catholics as could be done without totally unprotestantising it. To carry out this purpose, a committee of divines was appointed to review King Edward's liturgy, and it was enjoined on them as her Majesty's will and command that they should strike out, as far as possible, all passages offensive to the pope, and make the people easy about the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. The liturgy was therefore altered as much as it could be to secure the approbation of the papists.

"To this day," says Lord Macaulay, "the constitution, the doctrines, and the services of the church, retain the visible marks of the compromise from which they sprang. She occupies a middle position between the churches of Rome and Geneva. Her doctrinal confessions and discourses composed by protestants, set forth principles of theology in which Calvin or Knox would have found scarcely a word to disapprove. Her prayers and thanksgivings, derived from the ancient liturgies, are very generally such as bishop Fisher or cardinal Pole must have heartily joined in them. A controversialist who puts an Arminian sense on her articles and homilies, will be pronounced by candid men to be as unreasonable, as a controversialist

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who denies that the doctrines of baptismal regeneration can be discovered in her liturgy.”

The multitude of the clergy who had become Protestants under Henry and Edward, and had relapsed to popery under Mary, now turned round again to Protestantism under Elizabeth. Still there were many among them who saw with concern the popish aspect their church had assumed in its worship, and were truly anxious, and even zealous, to obtain a further reformation. Among these were some of the exiles, Fox the martyrologist, John Knox the Scottish reformer, and others who had fled to Geneva during the persecuting reign of Mary, but who had now returned to England, on her death and the accession of Elizabeth. In the year 1562 was held the famous convocation which set up “The Thirty-nine Articles” of faith which now constitute the theological basis of the church of England. At this meeting Bishop Sandys put in a paper calling for further reformation of the church, especially touching the matters which during the reign of Edward had occasioned such division of opinion, and which were considered to savour so strongly of popery. On this subject the convocation was much divided in opinion, but the party for retaining things as they were prevailed, and the bishops became resolute to maintain the authority of the canons, and to enforce conformity to their prescriptions in all things. Many of the clergy refused canonical obedience, and those who thus contended for greater purity in the worship of God were on this account called, in derision and sarcastic contempt Puritans. They had no reason to refuse the designation nor to blush over it, any more than the followers of Jesus had when at Antioch they were first called

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Christians. What was intended as their reproach, was their brightest honour.

It must be here observed that the nonconformists were not yet separatists. By some it will perhaps be contended that they ought either to have come out of the church, or to have conformed to its canons and the Act of Uniformity; while by others it will be thought that it was hardly worth while to make such comparatively trifling matters a subject of division and contention. In reply to the former, it must be said, that separate worship was not allowed by law; silence and the neglect to exercise their ministry would have been incompatible with their ordination vows to labour for Christ; and the exercise of any secular calling was contrary to the laws of the church, and inconsistent with the indelibility of their clerical character. So that they were shut up to the necessity of being nonconformists, and of remaining in the church. As to the comparative unimportance of the matters with which they could not comply, this must depend upon the view that was taken of them by the persons who refused compliance, and the manner in which conformity affected their conscience. If they were matters of indifference in the view of those who imposed them, then why enforce them? Why break the unity of spirit by an unimportant uniformity of ritual? Moreover, we see even by modern feeling and conduct, that these matters are not so indifferent as many seem to represent. What a stir and ferment are excited in many parts of the country in this day of Puseyite zeal! What commotions have been excited in our day by the wearing of this very surplice in the pulpit! Whole congregations, which could endure the linen in the desk, have been dis-



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turbed and divided when “the white-robed priest “has appeared in the pulpit. At this very time (1849) appeals are going on from a whole district to the primate and the queen, against the religious fopperies of certain clergymen of the church of England with a prelate at their head. Now, what has roused this spirit of opposition and given importance to matters seemingly so unimportant? There is not in the mere garment itself anything to call forth these expressions of impassioned zeal, for surely those who can tolerate it in the desk might be supposed to be able to endure it in the pulpit: there seems no more impropriety in wearing it in the latter than in the former. Nor is it merely that the surplice in the pulpit is an innovation upon usages long established, for this could perhaps be borne with. But this revived custom is the symbol of sentiment, the badge of a party, and part and parcel of a system of opinions. It is a thing indifferent in itself, but connected with, and introducing things absolutely bad, or inevitably leading to them. It is a leaning towards Rome, and therefore, although at all times such things would be considered objectionable, yet at this time they are doubly so, from the zeal and success of the church of Rome, with whose spirit they so entirely sympathise, and to whose communion they so insensibly yet so directly lead. How easy is it to learn from hence, the danger which must have been apprehended by the Puritans from all these Popish practices, when the nation had been but recently recovered from the dominion of Rome, and when there was so strong a party in it, ever ready to return to the fellowship of that apostate church! It requires no great sagacity to perceive that many things derive importance from existing circumstances,

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and that what may be harmless and innocuous and therefore indifferent at one time, may be replete with mischief and therefore important at another.

With these views the Nonconformists in the church continued their resistance to the imposition of the vestments, and of other matters; while the advocates for unbroken uniformity were no less zealous in their endeavours to enforce them. To aid the latter in this work of coercing the conscience, a tribunal unknown to the constitution, and contrary to its spirit, was erected, called "The High Court of Commission," of which Mr. Macaulay gives the following account.

"The tribunal afforded no protection to the subject against the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of that period. [Charles the First's reign.] The judges of the common law holding their situations during the pleasure of the king, were scandalously obsequious. Yet, obsequious as they were, they were less ready and efficient instruments of arbitrary power than a class of courts, the memory of which, after the lapse of two centuries, is still held in just abhorrence by the nation. Foremost among these courts in power and in infamy, were the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission, the former a political, the latter a religious inquisition. Neither of them was a part of the old constitution of England. The Star Chamber had been re-modelled, and the High Commission created by the Tudors."

The High Commission was set up by Elizabeth, and consisted of a tribunal composed of both clerical and lay members, and vested with extensive powers to take cognizance of heresy, and to summon, try, and punish heretics. Permitted to examine by interrogation, and to dispense with the law of evidence, it was emphatically what the historian just alluded to has called it, "The English Inquisition."

The terrors of this infamous outrage upon English liberty were all brought to bear upon the Puritans; and though they had friends in both houses of parliament,

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and even in her Majesty's privy council, it was of no avail; invested with such powers, the bishops were too strong for the recusants, and trod them down with the iron heel of oppression. That the Puritans were not few or inconsiderable may be learnt from the fact that the principal persons for learning and piety in the university of Cambridge not only opposed the severities now so generally practised against them, but refused themselves to conform. The fellows and scholars of St. John's college, to the number of nearly three hundred, threw away their surplices with one consent; and many in the other colleges did the same. But it was all in vain; one archbishop after another, with nearly the whole bench, determined to crush and extirpate the spirit of nonconformity. Clergymen were suspended and deprived of their benefices; churches were shut up; the rites of worship were in many places discontinued, for want of ministers to conduct them. It is computed that a fourth part of the clergy were suspended as Puritans. Among the men thus silenced was the venerable Miles Coverdale, the translator and first printer of the Bible in the English language, who was driven from his flock and obliged to relinquish his benefice.

The Puritans finding at length that they could enjoy no services in the church which their consciences approved determined to separate from it. This was considered by their persecutors to unite the crimes of schism against the church and rebellion against the state. Upon the discovery of one of these congregations, in the year 1567, in London, a fierce persecution commenced, and no less than fifty or sixty persons were imprisoned for the crime of separate worship. This called out the celebrated Thomas Cartwright, of Cambridge, one of the

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most accomplished men- and most elegant Latin scholars of his time, who, himself a Puritan, became their apologist, and appealed to the parliament on their behalf. This produced a controversy between him and Dr. Whitgift which exalted the advocate for conformity to the see of Canterbury, and drove the champion for non-conformity into exile.

No relief could be obtained from parliament, and therefore conformity or persecution was left for the choice of the Puritans. Very many chose the latter, and bitter was the cup they had to drink. Mr Brook, in his history of the Puritans, has given us a list of several hundreds of these illustrious confessors, whose heroism, sufferings, and virtues reflect as much disgrace upon their persecutors, as they do honour upon themselves. Multitudes were imprisoned, of whom many died in jail, some were beheaded, and some were burnt alive in Smithfield.

Sometime about the middle of the reign of Elizabeth lived Robert Brown, a clergyman by education and office, and a kinsman to the great Lord Treasurer Burleigh. This man had come to the belief that as to church government neither episcopacy nor presbyterianism was the polity laid down in the New Testament, but independency, a system which makes each church complete in itself, and competent to the management of its own affairs, without any control whatever from without. He was a man of great ardour and zeal in the promulgation of his own opinions, (for such they were,) believing that he who knows truth should spread it. Being a preacher of ready, earnest, and impassioned utterance, he drew crowds to hear him first at Cambridge, and

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afterwards at Norwich. It was not likely such a zealot would escape the notice of the prelates. He became the object of relentless persecution, but both his zeal and his sufferings made many converts. He endured persecution with the most dogged obstinacy, if not with the most exemplary patience, and even boasted that he had been committed to more than thirty prisons. At length he fled for safety to Middleburgh in Zeeland, where he first instituted a church after his own model, then quarrelled with it, and finally left it. Such is the versatility of man, that on his return to England he reconciled himself to the church he had so vehemently opposed, and by which he had been so virulently persecuted and became again a beneficed clergyman of the church of England.

“He lived,” says Dr. Vaughan, from whom this account is taken “to an extreme old age, but the last forty years of his life were the years of a sorry worldling, and his death is said to have been brought on by one of those fits of passion and self-will to which he was liable. The story of this unhappy man is instructive. He was one of a class, a zealot in religion without being religious. His hatred of some real or supposed Christian abuses, was presumed to be evidence of his own Christian character; but while doing so much to mend the religion of other men, it was ere long to be manifest that he had no religion of his own. Passionate opposition to error is not the surest way to truth, Piety is self-government in its highest form. It is the Christian profession which must regenerate Christian institutions.

“Brown’s opinions outlived his apostacy and his life, and were embraced by men whose character for piety was the opposite of his own, but who were naturally anxious not to be known by a name so dishonorable and so detestable. But their enemies were but too happy in such an opportunity of rendering them odious, and therefore they fixed the stigma upon them, and independency became identified with all that was extravagant, fickle, and base in the career of Robert Brown, an association as just as it would be to identify the church of England with all that was licentious, tyrannical, and murderous in the character of its founder the eighth Henry.”

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At length Elizabeth departed to give an account of her administration to a higher tribunal.

It has been said that, "as to her religion, she abjured nothing in popery but submission to a higher authority than her own, and was no further a protestant than was necessary to make herself a pope. She had images, a crucifix, and lighted candles in her own chapel; and when her chaplain preached against the sign of the cross, she called out to him to desist from that ungodly digression, and to go on with his text. As an enemy to preaching, she scarcely ever heard a sermon, and used to say, one or two preachers in a county were enough. The exercises which were most calculated to form a useful ministry she suppressed, and broke the heart of Grindall, the best primate that England has known. That such an idolater of her own prerogative should hate the puritans was natural, for they were not the courtly men who could join the priests of the day to all her goddess. A life spent in defiance of the genuine spirit of religion, was closed without its consolations, while the gloom which hung over her latter days was aggravated by seeing her courtiers turn to worship James the rising sun." Bogue and Bennett's History of Dissenters.

There is enough, and in the estimation of some more than enough of severe justice in these remarks, for whatever were the faults of Elizabeth, and they were neither few nor small, she was still the main prop and pillar of protestantism, as viewed in its national form among the kingdoms of Europe. This was felt and acknowledged by the puritans whom she persecuted, who, even in the depths of the prisons to which she had sent them, prayed, and with no simulated fervour, that she might be kept from the dagger of the assassin, that rebellion might be put down under her feet, and that her arms might be victorious by sea and land.

"One of the most stubborn of the stubborn sect, [thus harshly does Macaulay speak of them,] immediately after one of his hands had been lopped off by the executioner, for an offence into which he had been hurried by his intemperate zeal, waved his hat with the hand which was still left him, and shouted 'God save the queen.'

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The puritan historian Neal confirms this by his own testimony, for after censuring her cruelty to the sect to which he belonged, he concludes thus: "However, notwithstanding all these blemishes, queen Elizabeth stands upon record as a wise and politic princess for delivering her kingdom from the difficulties in which it was involved at her accession, for preserving the protestant reformation against the potent attempts of the pope, the emperor, and the king of Spain abroad, and the queen of Scots and her popish subjects at home. She was the glory of the age in which she lived, and will be the admiration of posterity."

One thing, it is evident from these extracts, the puritans had learned, and that is, the hardest of all the lessons of Christianity, and the one most rarely practised, the duty of returning good for evil, of blessing them that curse us, and praying for them who despitefully use us, even as our Lord has instructed us to do. The men who, in the dark vaults to which their sovereign had committed them (for no crime hut that which she herself had committed during the reign of her popish sister, worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience,) could lift up to heaven their prayers for her protection, and of whom one was found who, when his hand was chopped off in punishment for a reflection on the state religion, waved his hat with the other, and invoked the blessing of heaven upon his persecutor, proved themselves worthy of better treatment from their sovereign, than to be hunted down as heretics, and from the historian who has alluded to their virtues, than to be stigmatised as a "stubborn sect." The puritans had their faults, but they have been exaggerated not only by their enemies, but even by others who were neither insensible to their virtues, nor backward in many things to admit their claims. Mr Macaulay has not been wanting in eulogy, though it is by no means impassioned, on the better parts of their character, but

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he has not been sparing of darker colours with which he has painted, and far too deeply shaded, their failings. Speaking of them in an after page of his history, he says,

“The persecution which they had undergone had been severe enough to irritate, but not severe enough to destroy. They had not been tamed into submission, but baited into savageness and stubbornness. After the fashion of oppressed sects, they mistook their vindictive feelings for emotions of piety, encouraged in themselves by reading and meditation a disposition to brood over their wrongs, and when they had worked themselves up into hating their enemies, imagined they were only hating the enemies of heaven.”

But is this the way to speak of men who were worn out with persecution, and into whose soul the iron had entered? Is it borne out by the testimonies and the facts he had already recorded? Does it comport with the prayers going up from the prisons of the incarcerated confessors for their persecutors, and with the “God save the Queen” from the man who had lost his hand? They had no doubt a measure of fanaticism; they did certainly in some cases study the pages of the Old Testament, and draw inferences from the theocracy which that unique polity was never intended to furnish, (as others have done since,) and when in adversity they forgot to profit by their own experience; but still they never in the days of their suffering imitated the savageness of wild beasts baited into ferocity by the attacks of their persecutors.

James I. had been educated in presbyterian principles, and the English prelates dreaded in him what they called “the Scotch mist:” but the nonconformists cherished the hope that from that mist would emerge the sun of their liberties, or distil the refreshing rain of religious principle. The sequel of this dark and



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dreary chapter of our history dissipated the fears of the one, and equally disappointed the hopes of the other. James had all the bigotry of Elizabeth, without her genius to throw a lurid glare on the dark thunder cloud. Before he left Scotland, he said to the presbyterians of that country, "I thank God that I am king of the sincerest kirk in the world; sincerer than the kirk of England, whose service is an ill-said mass; it wants nothing of the mass but the liftings," meaning the elevation of the host. "Put not your confidence in princes," said the Psalmist; and alas! that the chronicles of royalty should furnish such ground for the caution. At the very time the hypocrite was uttering these words, he was carrying on a correspondence with the English nobles and bishops, and promising to continue the liturgy, which he derided as "an ill-said mass." From such a monarch and head of the English church, the puritans when they knew, and they very soon did know, his hypocrisy, could expect but little in the way of relief to their consciences or mitigation of their sufferings. They were not slow to appeal to his wisdom and his clemency, of neither of which could he boast a very large share. To save appearances, he appointed a conference at Hampton Court between the two parties of the high church and the puritans, representatives consisting of eight bishops and as many deans on one side, and of four advocates for nonconformity on the other. They were directed to discuss the points of difference, in order to see if any concessions could be made by either party. The only good, and it is a mighty one, which resulted from this conference was our present English version of the Scriptures; for when Dr. Reynolds, one of the puritan divines, requested, in the name of his brethren, that

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this work might be undertaken, as the Bible then extant was a very imperfect translation, the king, in opposition to the opinion of the Bishop of London, approved of the proposal, and a committee of divines was appointed to undertake the momentous work. No fault whatever can be found with the instructions given to them for their undertaking, and indeed almost all the wisdom which James ever displayed centred in this affair. The translation, as a whole, is a glorious achievement, though it sufficiently evinces by some of its renderings that it was the work of episcopalians exclusively.

The condition of the puritans underwent little improvement during the reign of this royal pedant. Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, persecuted them with such merciless severity, that a contemporary writer informs us that in one year three hundred ministers were suspended, deprived, excommunicated, imprisoned, or forced to leave the country.

James followed Elizabeth to the bar of God, to account, as she had been called to do, for cruelties towards the servants of the Lord, and was succeeded by his unhappy son, Charles I. That ill-fated monarch inherited the combined errors and prejudices of the Tudors and of his father the first of the Stuarts. He soon evinced that with far greater personal respectability than his father, and far less of foolish pedantry, he had all his contracted views, arbitrary principles, and high church prepossessions. It was very early discovered that the opponents of the state-worship had little to expect from one who, though not a papist, liked a papist far better than a puritan. He was a zealous episcopalian in religion, and a despot in politics. With a

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conscience sensitive in little things, but obtuse as to the great cardinal virtues of truth and justice, he was prepared to play the part of a persecutor towards those who differed from him either in civil or sacred matters. In Archbishop Laud, who was his evil genius, he found a man to foster his worst qualities as king and head of the church. Every thing now looked as if an attempt were to be made, if not to reunite the English church to the Romish See, to bring it into as near a conformity to it as possible, in Arminian doctrine and popish ritual. The puritans beheld all this with alarm and dismay, and some few ventured to protest against it. Dr. Alexander Leighton, father of that archbishop, who in his commentary upon Peter, gave to the world the sweetest exposition ever written by an uninspired pen, for daring to publish an appeal to parliament against prelacy, was sentenced by the Star Chamber to a sentence so mild and equitable that, when it was pronounced, Laud pulled off his cap and gave God thanks. That we may justly appreciate his lordship's devotion, he has recorded in his own diary the sentence which raised his gratitude to heaven. "His ears were cut off, his nose slit, his face branded with burning irons; he was tied to a post, and whipped with a triple cord, of which every lash brought away his flesh. He was kept near two hours in frost and snow. He was then imprisoned with greater severity for about eleven years, and when released by the parliament, he could neither hear, nor see, nor walk."

It is no matter of surprise that in such circumstances our persecuted forefathers should call to recollection the words of their divine Lord, "when they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another;" and looking across the

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broad Atlantic, they determined to seek in its dreary wilds an asylum from the tyranny of Charles, the bigotry of Laud, and the cruel oppression of the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission. Among others who determined to expatriate himself was Mr Robinson, formerly a clergyman of the church of England, but subsequently a Brownist preacher, who however so far modified the principles of the Brownists, as to bring them into the form of modern Congregationalism, and is on that account generally regarded as the father of the English Independents. This man with many of his flock determined in the first place to emigrate to Holland; but when about to sail from Boston, in Lincolnshire, they were betrayed by the captain of the vessel, seized, and many of them committed to prison. A second attempt was made, when a still more melancholy incident occurred; for, during the embarkation, when only a part of the men had been put on board, the captain, seeing an armed company approaching, weighed anchor in all haste, and sailed away to Holland, leaving Robinson and the rest of the crew to witness the outburst of agony from the wives and children whose husbands and fathers had been thus torn from them. In the next year, however, this devoted party and the rest of the company reached Holland, where the vessel which had borne their fore-runners, after having been well nigh wrecked on the coast of Norway, had arrived before them. Here they found a settlement at Leyden, and exhibited Independency in much of the simplicity of the primitive churches. But the soil of Holland was not yet prepared for the seeds of this form of polity, and its professors felt themselves ill at ease there amidst a people who,

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though at one with them in theological doctrine, were diverse from them in ecclesiastical order. Added to this, a lingering patriotism for the country which was not worthy of them, and loyalty for a king who had insulted and oppressed them, still made them cling to their English birth and English relationships. Not wishing their children to become presbyterians in religion, and Dutchmen in nationality, they turned their eyes to the western world, and determined to fix their residence in the desolate country, which its northern shores presented. After observing solemn days of humiliation and prayer for divine guidance, it was determined that part of the church should go before their brethren into America, to prepare for the rest; and that if the major part should choose to go over as the first section, the pastor should go along with them, but if the major part stayed, he should remain with them. The majority determined to continue where they were for the present. Robinson therefore remained with them. The number to emigrate amounted to about a hundred and twenty. Two small vessels, the *Speedwell* and the *Mayflower*, were engaged to convey those pilgrim fathers of the great western republic across the Atlantic.

The time of separation arrived. They were to sail from the neighbouring port of Delft Haven. Those who were to remain accompanied the colonists to the scene of their embarkation.

“The night before was one of little sleep, and was employed in friendly entertainment and Christian discourse, and other real expressions of Christian love. The next day they went on board, when doleful was the sight of that sad and mournful parting: what sighs, and sobs, and prayers did sound among them; what tears did gush from every eye, and pithy speeches pierced each other’s hearts;

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sundry of the Dutch strangers that stood spectators could not refrain from tears. Robinson fell upon his knees, the whole company around threw themselves into the same posture, and while every cheek of man, and woman, and their little ones, was bedewed with tears, the man of God sent up his parting prayer for the much needed blessing of heaven upon them."

After various delays, and touching at different ports to repair the vessels, which were found to be in a very crazy state, and after a long rough and somewhat perilous voyage, the Speedwell and the Mayflower reached the coast of North America, near Cape Cod. Their destination was the Hudson river, but weary of the voyage, and longing to set their feet on dry land, they begged to go on shore, on reaching which, they fell upon their knees, and poured out their hearts in prayer and praise to God. "It is not too much to say," writes Dr. Vaughan, "that in that first prayer from the soil of the new world, ascending from so feeble a brotherhood, amidst a wilderness so desolate, there were the seeds of a new civilization for mankind, the elements of freedom for all nations, and the power which in its turn shall regenerate all the nations of the earth."

The vessels now sailed southward, and explored the coast, and after many dangers from the intense cold of that northern region in mid-winter, from breakers and the rocks, and from the attacks of Indians, they landed on a point to which they gave the name of New Plymouth, in grateful memory of the hospitality shewn them in the last English port from which they sailed. Here they resolved to fix their permanent abode: and here they laid the corner stone of that vast nation which is destined to bear so large a share in the future destinies of our world. A new town of course has long since

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sprung up on the spot trodden by the feet of these pilgrims of persecution; the rock on which they landed is surrounded with an appropriate enclosure; and their descendants still commemorate, on the eleventh of December, the arrival of men of whom they justly boast, and of whom any country might be proud.

They had no sooner landed and provided the first and most necessary means of social and civilized life, than they adopted the polity both in church and state which had been determined upon even before they embarked. Independency was the form of their ecclesiastical government, and democracy that of their civil statutes. Robinson, with the other part of the church, kept up a constant correspondence with their brethren, and intended speedily to follow them; but various impediments were thrown in their way by the company of merchant adventurers at Plymouth in the old world, and he died before his desire could be accomplished. After his decease, his family and the rest of the church joined their brethren at New Plymouth.\*

This is perhaps a long digression from the course of the nonconformist history, or rather a considerable expansion of one of its incidents; but who would wish it shorter, when to its own inherent interest is added the consideration that it contains the origin of a nation, evidently destined not only to be the largest on the face of the earth, but to be itself an experiment for the instruction of all others in government, both civil and ecclesiastical.

\* The reader is directed to the first article in the first number of "The British Quarterly Review," entitled "The Pilgrim Fathers," written by Dr. Vaughan, and since published with his other papers prepared for that periodical. To that beautiful essay I am indebted for the facts I have narrated of the history of Robinson and his church.

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In twelve years of Laud's administration, four thousand emigrants became planters in various places of America, chiefly in the more southerly parts, which had been already colonized, and Neal affirms that he possessed a list of seventy-seven divines, ordained in the church of England, who became pastors of emigrant churches in America before the year 1640. Persecution, while it curses the country in which it rages, by draining its wealth and driving its citizens to other lands, has been often overruled by Providence to be a blessing to the world. "Those that were scattered abroad by the persecution that arose about Stephen, went every where preaching the word." The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which drove out the Huguenots from France, impoverishd that country to enrich many others.

With a singular species of cruelty, Laud and his party, while they harrassed the puritans to death at home, would not have suffered them, if they could have prevented it, from seeking safety abroad; as if they would detain them purposely for the malignant gratification of tormenting them. Some opinion of the vigilance of this infamous primate in persecuting the objects of his hatred, and in either driving them out of the country, or into the greatest retirement in it, may be formed from the fact that

"The report of the state of the province of Canterbury, as delivered by him to his master, at the close of the year 1639, represents the church of England in the highest and most palmy state. There was scarcely the least appearance of dissent. Most of the bishops stated that all was well among their flocks. Seven or eight persons in the diocese of Peterborough had seemed refractory to the church, but had made ample submission. In Norfolk and Suffolk, all whom there had been reason to suspect had made profession of conformity, and appeared to observe it strictly. It is confessed there



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was some little difficulty in bringing some of the vulgar in Suffolk to take the sacrament at the rails of the church. This was the only open instance of nonconformity which the vigilant eye of Laud could find in all the dioceses of our twenty-one suffragans, on the very eve of a revolution, in which primate and church, and monarch and monarchy were to perish together.”\*

This report, if correctly made, of which there is some reason to doubt, viewed in connexion with the revolution that followed, proves either that there must have been a widely diffused, though suppressed, puritanism, or that it spread most rapidly when the pressure was taken off by the Long Parliament. Both are true. And the report of Laud proves, in addition, and it is one of the most striking evidences of it on record, that the stillness produced by oppression is often a most deceptive augury, being only the unruffled surface of the accumulating lake just before it bursts the dam, and rushes forward with the irresistible force of a torrent, and the overwhelming power of an inundation.

In the contest between Charles and his parliament, puritanism, which had been gaining ground in the legislature, triumphed. The Long Parliament was at one time a collection of patriots, whose eulogium is thus pronounced by the eloquent historian so frequently alluded to in this sketch, “For the authority of law, for the security of property, for the peace of our streets, for the happiness of our homes, our gratitude is due, under Him who raises and pulls down empires at his pleasure, to the Long Parliament, to the Convention, and to William of Orange.” This is true: but it is not the whole truth. There were spots and broad ones too upon the disc of its glory. It may not be irrelevant here to remark that though the parliament contained

\* Edinburgh Review, No 100, p, 552, by Lord Macaulay.

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many puritans it had no separatists. They were all, as admitted by Clarendon, up to that time, members of the church of England, and nearly all advocates of episcopacy. Such was the constitution of the very house which, after passing various acts, even in the time of Charles, though much against his inclination, for liberty of conscience, and for destroying the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission, proceeded to overthrow the episcopacy altogether, and to set aside the book of Common Prayer. That august body, in the year 1643, appointed an assembly to take into consideration the state of religion, and to devise and recommend to parliament such measures as might be, in their opinion, conformable to the word of God. This convocation held its sittings in Henry VII.'s chapel at Westminster, and on that account was called "The Westminster Assembly:" it was composed of one hundred and twenty divines, and thirty lay assessors. By this time, partly through the influence of Scotland, and partly through that of Geneva, in both of which places presbyterianism was the established religion, this form, of policy had now become exceedingly prevalent among the theologians of England, and was favoured by the parliament, perhaps in some degree on account of their partial dependence in the conflict with the king on the Scotch army. A few of the episcopal clergy were nominated on this assembly, but when Charles protested against it, they all withdrew. With the exception of six members, who were independents, and on that account called "The dissenting brethren," the assembly consisted wholly of presbyterians, at least as regards the ministers of religion. The power of this body was not legislative, but simply advisory.

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The parliament had put aside episcopacy, but was not prepared with any other system to set up in its place: and acted very wisely in abolishing all penal statutes against religion and allowing every one to think and worship as he pleased. Well had it been for the honor of those who belonged to it had they persevered as they commenced, but falling under the influence of "The Westminster Assembly," they were soon betrayed into acts of intolerance which have left a stain upon their memory never to be effaced. The divines of the Assembly were eminently good men and sound theologians, and as such put forth some valuable confessions of faith, but they did not understand the subject of religious liberty. In common with many others, they were misled by drawing their arguments and precedents too much from the Old Testament instead of the New, and seeking for their models in the Jewish theocracy.

When penal statutes against heresy were abolished, and liberty of conscience, though with some restrictions, was granted, an inundation of sects rushed in to fill up the vacuum occasioned by the overthrow of the establishment. Never did any age manifest a greater fecundity in the production of systems than that, which was just what was to be looked for; as liberty of opinion, like every other privilege, may of course be expected to be much abused or misdirected when first enjoyed. Some of the earliest efforts of an emancipated slave when his fetters have just dropped from his limbs may very probably be wild, freakish, and to all appearance almost insane. It is one of the mischiefs of long-continued oppression that it not only makes a wise man mad while under the yoke, but even when he has recently thrown it off. This multiplication of creeds alarmed

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the assembly of divines, with whom it now became a question of grave and momentous consideration what system was to be established upon the ruins of episcopacy, and whether toleration should be extended to any who dissented from it. In a convocation of presbyterians the former part of the subject was soon disposed of, and it was agreed that presbyterianism should be recommended as the state religion. It was not so easy to dispose of the second part of the question. It might have been expected that men who had drunk so deeply of the bitter cup of persecution, as many of them had done, would have been backward themselves to mingle and administer wormwood and gall to others. It is said that emancipated slaves often make the most tyrannical masters. It was found too true in the present instance, in the spirit of the remark, if not to the full extent of the letter. A fine opportunity was now presented to the assembly to manifest how well, in imitation of some we have already mentioned, they also had learnt, in the school of affliction, that hardest but loftiest lesson of Christ, to love our enemies; to bless them that curse us; and to pray for them that despitefully use us. Unhappily the opportunity was suffered to pass away unimproved, and instead of this, the "Westminster assembly took up and used the carnal weapons of persecution, which they had wrested from the hands of the episcopalians.

The divine right of presbyterianism was set up in the assembly and contended for by the main body of it with a zeal not at all inferior to that which had been displayed for the divine right of episcopacy. It was argued by these casuists, that if this were a divine institution, it could admit of no infraction, and therefore toleration

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would be a sin against God. This brought on a struggle in the assembly between the friends of liberty and the advocates of intolerance, which was maintained for a considerable time with all the force of argument which the different parties could command, and all the vehemence of passion which both, but especially the presbyterians, could feel.

In that assembly, as I have said, were six Independents, they were Mr Thomas Goodwin, Mr Simpson, Mr Philip Nye, Mr Jeremiah Burroughs, Mr William Bridge, and Mr Drury. By the declared opinions of the presbyterians on toleration, these brethren felt the danger they were likely to be placed in by the bigotry of the assembly, and pleaded nobly the cause of religious liberty.

Let it be distinctly borne in mind that the question, then discussed by the champions of liberty, was not the establishment of presbyterianism or independency as has been too often affirmed, for the independents conceded the subject of the establishment of the former, and only asked for toleration on behalf of those who conscientiously seceded from it. But their forcible arguments and eloquent appeals were in vain. No toleration could be granted, and absolute and universal conformity to their opinions was required by the sticklers for the divine right of presbyterianism. The parliament was disposed to more liberal opinions, and to grant a certain measure of toleration, but it was controlled by the influence of the assembly. The whole country was in a flame about the subject, and one Edwards published a tirade against toleration, called "Gangræna." so full of fire and fury that it contained combustible matter enough to set the nation in flames. Toleration was re-

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viled as the great Diana of the Independents. The opponents of liberty said, "If we tolerate one, we must tolerate all." And why not? Little did it occur to these persecuting theologians that in less than twenty years from that time, all this artillery would be turned upon themselves; and that they would be excluded the establishment by a re-enactment of the Act of Uniformity; and reduced to the necessity of pleading for the indulgence which they now refused to their brethren.

The Long Parliament at length lent itself to the cruel and dirty work of persecution. They required all men to subscribe to that renowned instrument, "The Solemn League and Covenant;" they interdicted, under heavy penalties, the use of the book of Common Prayer, not only in churches, but in private families. "It was a crime in a child to read by the bed-side of a sick parent one of those beautiful collects which had soothed the griefs of twenty generations of Christians." Most of the old clergy were ejected from their benefices, and in some instances exposed to the outrages of a fanatical rabble. Severe punishments were denounced against such as should presume to blame the Calvinistic worship. Nor were they more tolerant of things than they were of opinions, for they waged war against matters of taste as well as religion. Churches and sepulchres were defaced; fine works of art and precious remains of antiquity were destroyed. Popular and polluting amusements, which should have been suppressed by the growing intelligence and virtue of the people, were put down by statute. All this, alas for human consistency! was done by the very men who had delivered the nation from despotism; and it proves how greatness may be sometimes allied to littleness, and how a passion for

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liberty in one direction may be associated with a taste for persecution in another.

The bigotry and intolerance of the Assembly of Divines and their adherents, roused to indignation the mighty soul of that great man whom the pen of Macaulay thus beautifully describes:

“A mightier poet, tried at once by pain, danger, obloquy, and blindness, meditated, undisturbed by the obscene tumult which raged all around him, a song so sublime and so holy that it would not have misbecome the lips of those ethereal virtues whom he saw with that inner eye which no calamity could darken, flinging down on the Jasper pavement their crowns of amaranth and gold.”

Milton stepped forth to wither with the sarcasm of his verse, and to abash with the power of prose immortal as his poetry, the narrow and jealous spirit of the party predominant in the Assembly. In a work entitled, “The Liberty of Unlicensed Printing,” written to defend the freedom of publications against the Assembly, who had seized the press and set up a system of licensing, he pleaded in some of the noblest paragraphs in the English language for unrestricted toleration.

One of those great minds, which appear at rare intervals of time, now rose upon the nation, and threw the light of his genius upon the troubled scenes of intestine commotion. At length, after ages of misrepresentation and misconception, the clouds of reproach are rolling off from the true character of Oliver Cromwell, and by the defences of two such opposite men as Carlyle and Merle D’Aubigné, aided by Macaulay, he begins to be understood. In common with those who acted with him, he committed the sin and the fault, for it was both, of beheading Charles it is true; he had, however, by his despotism, his perfidy, and his obstinate folly,

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exhausted the forbearance of his foes and disgusted even his friends. Whatever may be said in the way of palliation in regard to the death of Charles, it cannot be defended. It is a question, however, whether Cromwell could have averted it, had he been so disposed.

In his views of religious liberty, he surpassed his age. The power, and therefore the persecutions, of the parliament, were now over, and Cromwell granted liberty of conscience to all but Papists and Unitarians. The clergy of the Anglican church were allowed to celebrate their worship in their own forms, on condition that they would abstain from preaching about politics; and even the Jews, whose public worship, ever since the thirteenth century, had been interdicted, were, in spite of the gloomy opposition of zealous traders and fanatical theologians, permitted to build a synagogue in London. Just a little before the Protector's death, the Independents petitioned his highness for liberty to hold a synod, in order to agree upon, and publish to the world, a confession of their faith. The very act of asking permission for such a meeting shows that even in the time of the protectorate religious liberty had yet some heavy restrictions upon it; for who, when this is complete, would think it necessary to ask the civil magistrate for permission to assemble for such a business? The meeting accordingly was held at the Savoy, in the year 1658, and consisted of ministers and delegates of above one hundred churches. A declaration of principles was agreed upon, which was soon after published, and on account of the place where the meeting was held, was called "The Savoy Confession."

It may be here proper to remark that the great question of modern times, the exemption of religion



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from the jurisdiction, of the civil magistrate, and the support of it exclusively by the voluntary offerings of its friends, had scarcely been mooted, except in a few minds like those of Milton, and even in them rather as a matter of speculation than of practicability. The Independents came nearer to this than any other, but even they were not clear upon the subject. Dr. Owen, in his sermon entitled "Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrates' Power," preached to the parliament, October, 1659, has the following remarks: "Some think that if you were settled, you ought not in any thing, as rulers of the nation, to put forth your power for the interest of Christ: the good Lord keep you from such an apprehension. If it once comes to this that you should say you have nothing to do with religion as rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest that he hath nothing to do with you as rulers of the nation." He also uses the very allusion and illustration, the fallacy of which has been so often and so fully demonstrated in modern times, of the duty of the parliament, as fathers and masters of the nation, to take care for the religion of their great household. The Independents generally contended for an establishment, but an establishment which at the same time should allow of toleration, and also comprehension. Their theory was the protection and support of those who preached the gospel, whether belonging to Presbyterians or Independents; and many at that time possessed benefices in the church, though the great bulk of the ministers were presbyterians. The principle, that religion is to be exclusively left to voluntary support, was almost unknown, and had scarcely become a matter even of speculation. It was the

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establishment of error only that was opposed; for nearly all allowed of the establishment of truth. This is not unfrequently alledged against the modern dissenters, who are told, by an *argumentum ad verecundiam*, that they go farther than their great ancestors, who only contended for reform, but not for an entire revolution. But the question is not what the nonconformists of ancient days believed and practised, but whether their faith and practice were accordant with the New Testament.

Mr Macaulay gives us a very accurate and striking description of the religious and moral character of Cromwell's army: "That which chiefly distinguished it from other armies was the austere morality and the fear of God which pervaded all ranks. It is acknowledged by the most zealous royalists that, in that singular camp, no oath was heard, no drunkenness or gambling was seen, and that during the long dominion of the soldiers, the property of the peaceful citizen and the honor of woman were held sacred. If outrages were committed they were outrages of a very different kind of which a victorious army is generally guilty. No servant girl complained of the rough gallantry of the red coats. Not an ounce of plate was taken from the shops of the goldsmiths. But a Pelagian sermon or a window on which the virgin and child were painted produced in the Puritan ranks an excitement which it required the utmost exertions of the officers to quell. One of Oliver's chief difficulties was to restrain his pike-men and dragoons from invading by main force the pulpits of ministers whose discourses, to use the language of that time, were not savoury; and too many of our cathedrals still bear the marks of the hatred with which these stern spirits regarded every vestige of popery." And now let the same pen tell what these warriors continued to be when, at the restoration, they laid down their military character and returned to the occupations of peace and their homes. "The troops were now to be disbanded. Fifty thousand men accustomed to the profession of arms were at once to be thrown upon the world; and experience seemed to warrant the belief that this change would produce much misery and crime, that the discharged veterans would be seen begging in every street, or would be driven by hunger to pillage. But no such result followed. In a few months there remained not a trace indicating that the most formidable army in the

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world had been admitted into the mass of the community. The royalists themselves confessed that in every department of honest industry the discarded warriors prospered beyond other men, that none was charged with any theft or robbery, that none was heard to ask an alms, and that if a mason, or a baker, or a waggoner, attracted notice by diligence and sobriety, he was in all probability one of Oliver's old soldiers." All history may be challenged for the parallel to this.

Such testimony proves that if it be the tendency of one great crime to subvert the foundation and overthrow the superstructure of all personal virtue, and leave the character in ruins, how well and strongly must the basis of morals and religion have been laid in those men's hearts, when, to borrow the representation of many royalist writers, even the shock of this greatest of all crimes next to the death of Christ did not in the smallest degree weaken it.

On the death of Cromwell, and the resignation of the Protectorate by his son Richard, the nation, tired of changes, and now in danger of universal anarchy, manifested the general uneasiness which was felt. General Monk with his army was called out of Scotland, and on his arrival in London declared in favour of Charles II. A council of state was summoned, and having agreed to invite the royal exile to the throne, put the question, "Whether they should call him in upon treaty and covenant, or entirely confide in him?" After some debate it was resolved to trust him absolutely. This want of caution has been severely censured by many, but has lately been explained and even defended, as rendered necessary by the circumstances of the nation, which did not admit of the delays and the dangers which protracted discussion on that point would have certainly occasioned. And, moreover, with the army on his side, and the nation so generally conciliated to his interests

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it may be questioned whether any covenant he might have entered into to secure liberty of conscience, would have been permitted to remain in force a single year. The puritans, notwithstanding this omission, entertained hopes that, though episcopacy would of course be re-established, yet toleration would be granted to those who conscientiously dissented from it. For these hopes they had all the ground that could be afforded by the word of the king. Both to the presbyterian divines who waited upon him, and in his declaration from Breda, he assured them that "He would grant liberty to tender consciences, and that no man should be questioned for a difference of opinion in matters of religion, who did not disturb the peace of the kingdom." Had the king been left to himself, it is the opinion of many that he would have abided by his own declaration, and that it was the instigation of the bishops, and of others bent upon revenge, which so soon led him to falsify all these promises. Episcopacy was restored in all its splendour, and with it of course all that pertained to the offices and services of the hierarchy and the church. The clergy who had been expelled, by order of the Long Parliament, for incompetency or immorality were restored to their former livings: the fellows and heads of colleges of the two universities, who had been ejected, were re-instated, and things were brought back as nearly as possible to their condition before the Commonwealth.

The puritans would have had no great reason to complain, considering the views entertained on these matters by the court and the nation, had matters gone no further than this, and if they had been allowed in matters of indifference to use their liberty in the church or to

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exercise their ministry according to their own views out of it. But they soon learnt that they were permitted to do neither. The king was scarcely seated upon his throne before persecution commenced its dreadful work, by dragging the nonconformists into the spiritual courts, and there mulcting them of their property and condemning them to prison.

Still the voice of the puritan ministers, who called for church reform, was not wholly suppressed, for a commission was granted by the king for the purpose of reviewing the liturgy, and holding its meetings at the Savoy, in 1661, was called "The Savoy Conference." On the side of the church of England were the archbishop of York, and many of the bishops; and on that of the puritans many of their leading ministers, among whom were Baxter; Bates, Calamy, and others. At this meeting the nonconformists proposed the alterations which they desired in the liturgy and in the rites and ceremonies, which were the same as those that had all along been the ground of contention. The conference ended in a determination on the part of the bishops to make no alteration in the liturgy, and therefore no concessions to the objecting party. There had not been some wanting in the church of England, both among the higher clergy and laity, who were desirous of a coalition, and who laboured hard to promote it, among whom was the eminently learned and pious Usher, primate of Ireland. The questions in dispute at that time lay within a very narrow compass, and if at the Savoy Conference the church party would have conceded such seemingly trifling matters as the use of the cross in baptizing; kneeling at the Lord's supper; the surplice; the exclusion of the Apocrypha from the public

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services of the church; and a few other such things, treating them as matters of liberty either to be observed or not, as the consciences of ministers might prefer, the consequences of the Act of Uniformity which soon followed, might have been spared, and though there would not have been rigid uniformity, there still might have been what is a thousand times more valuable unity. Or, though this had not been conceded, (and in the estimation of many it would have failed to secure the harmonious working of the establishment,) yet had toleration been granted to separatists, the dissidents would have felt that much was gained, and like their descendants have been, if not altogether satisfied, yet certainly thankful and happy.

But those instances of petty malice were but the first drops of the thunder cloud, which was rolling on, surcharged with its bolts. The Act of Uniformity was in no long time passed. That act was worthy of the day of its birth. The papists had already rendered Bartholomew day, or the eve of it, dark and infamous in the calendar of bigotry and intolerance. It was a little less than a century before that, on the memorable evening of the 24th of August 1572, orders were issued for extending the massacres of the Huguenots, which had commenced in Paris, and did not stop till, in the space of two months, thirty thousand protestants had been butchered in cold blood; if indeed that expression appropriately describes the mind of those who were influenced by passions set on fire of hell. On the 24th of August, 1662, was passed by the British parliament an act which required perfect conformity in practice and opinion to the Book of Common Prayer, and to all the rites and ceremonies of the church of England,

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under pain of expulsion from their livings to all clergymen who would not swear their unfeigned assent and consent to all things contained in this unbending rule of faith and practice. In many parts of the kingdom the ministers could not procure the book before the time within which the law required them to swear to it, or resign their livings; so that in their farewell sermons they had to tell their flocks that they were obliged to leave them for not swearing to a book which they had not been able to see.

Upon the passing of this act more than two thousand of the best and holiest ministers of the national church threw up their livings, and cast themselves upon the providence of God for the support of themselves and families, rather than violate their consciences by swearing their assent and consent to all that was contained in a directory which they did not approve. Of the sufferings of nonconformists in consequence of this act, only an imperfect statement can be made. The exact record is on high. Mr Jeremy White is said to have collected a list of sixty thousand persons who had suffered for dissent between the Restoration and the Revolution, of whom five thousand died in prison. Lord Dorset was assured by Mr White that King James offered a thousand guineas for the manuscript, but that in tenderness to the reputation of the church of England, he had determined to conceal the black record. In the preface to the Plea for the Nonconformists, by Mr Delaune, that gentleman is said to have been one of eight thousand who in the reign of Charles II. had perished in prison for dissenting from the church of England. It is added, that within three years, property was wrung from them to the amount of two millions

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sterling. But who could calculate the total loss of lives and of substance which the dissenters sustained from the first rise of the puritans to the triumph of toleration under King William? It is justly questioned whether the annals of the christian church since the Reformation contain any instance of persecution equally severe. The multitudes who fled from their oppressors peopled a considerable part of the new world, while the English refugees, who formed churches in all the principal towns of Holland, added to the strength and industry of that rising state. Yet from these accumulated injuries, the dissenters were at the revolution little diminished in strength, numbers, or spirit, and capable of turning either scale, into which they might choose to turn their weight.\*

But to return to the Act of Uniformity and its consequences. "The world," says Bishop Kennet, "has reason to admire not only the wisdom, but even the moderation of the act, as being effectually made for ministerial conformity alone, and leaving the people unable to complain of any imposition." Such were episcopal views of moderation in those days, which makes it very easy for us to credit all that history has recorded of prelatical cruelty during the ages of intolerance, for as moderation is the attainment of very few, what must have been the tender mercies of the many? However, even this moderation was soon withdrawn from those who were the objects of it; for in addition to the loss of their beloved pastors, expelled from their churches by the operation of this statute, they were soon forbidden by the "Conventicle Act," under severe penalties, to assemble for worship in any other place than the parish

\* Bogue and Bennet, vol. I. p. 8.



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church, and were commanded by statute not to neglect assembling there. So that intolerance did not restrict itself to the ministers, but extended its cruelty to the people. By "The Conventicle Act," it was enacted, "That if any person above the age of sixteen shall be present at any meeting for worship different from the church of England, where there shall be five persons more than the household, they shall for the first offence suffer three weeks' imprisonment, or pay five pounds;" for the second, the punishment is doubled; and for the third, they are to be banished to America, or pay a hundred pounds, or if they return from banishment, suffer death. The oath of any common informer was sufficient to inflict all the severity of this statute of Draco. In consequence of this, multitudes of the best men in the kingdom were filling our jails, while the vilest of the human race were rioting in debauchery by the money obtained as spies and informers.

There have not been wanting writers to represent and justify these measures, as only an imitation and a righteous retribution of the measures pursued by the puritans during their domination, in compelling so many of the episcopal clergy to resign their livings. I pretend not to justify that measure, and I have already condemned much that was done by the Long Parliament, and the Westminster Assembly of Divines: but still there are some differences in the two cases which ought not to be overlooked. The first is that the clergy ejected by the puritans were deprived of their livings not upon the ground of nonconformity to religious rites and ceremonies, but either for incompetency or gross immorality; and secondly, even when expelled they were allowed as a means of support one-fifth of

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the produce of their sequestered livings, "This example," says Macaulay, "the cavaliers, intoxicated with animosity, had not the justice and humanity to follow."

The name of puritan was now dropped, and that of nonconformist assumed by those who dissented from the church of England. Among the many who thus for their adhering, at the dictation of conscience, to what they believed to be the principles of the New Testament, were suddenly deprived of their means of subsistence, and of what they felt still more bitterly, their opportunities of usefulness, were Owen, Baxter, Howe, Bates, Manton, and Henry; names that will be dear to every lover of evangelical truth as long as there shall be any who understand the English language, and hold the doctrines of protestantism.

One act of oppression followed another in rapid succession to torment and crush the nonconformists. Though many of their ministers remained in London while the plague was raging, and preached to the people in the pulpits which the clergy had deserted; though God had visited London with the awful fire which consumed so large a part of the city, the hearts of the persecutors were not softened, for the Parliament which sat at Oxford while God was consuming the people by his judgments, was busy in passing what is called "The Five Mile Act," a statute which required the nonconformist ministers to swear that it is not lawful, on any pretext whatever, to take up arms against the king, nor to endeavour at any time to make any alteration of the government, either in church or state; and if they refused this, they must not come, unless upon the road on a journey, within five miles of any city, corporation, or any place that sent burgesses to parliament, or any

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place where they had been ministers, or had preached after the Act of Oblivion.

“This was a most cruel statute, and reduced the objects of it to great distress, by driving very many of them from their places of abode and the circle of their friends, and turning them out upon the world homeless and penniless to live upon Providence. But Providence did not forsake them, for we are informed by Mr Francis Talents of Shrewsbury, who reckoned up as many as a hundred that were ejected within a few miles round, that though many of them were brought very low, had many children, were greatly harrassed by persecution, and their friends generally poor and unable to support them, he never knew nor heard of any nonconformist minister in prison for debt.”

As a proof of the good disposition of the nonconformist body, and their zeal for protestantism, it might be mentioned, that they concurred in the Test Act, which was passed in 1673, and remained in force till the reign of George IV. This celebrated statute required that every person admitted to a place of profit or trust under the crown, whether civil or military, should qualify for his office by taking the sacrament according to the rites of the church of England. It had been preceded many years before by “The Corporation Act,” which required the same qualification, in every one who entered a corporation, and also an oath similar to that required by the “Five Mile Act.” The design of the Corporation Act was levelled directly against the nonconformists, but the Test Act was directed against the papists, though of course it equally excluded dissenters. “When the Test Act was brought into the House of Commons the court most strenuously opposed it, and endeavoured to divide the church party by proposing that some regard might be had to protestant dissenters, hoping by this means to clog the bill and throw it out of the house. Upon which Alderman Love, a dissenter,

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and member for the city, rose and said, he hoped the clause in favour of protestant dissenters would occasion no intemperate heats; and therefore moved, that since this was a considerable barrier against popery, the bill might pass without any alteration, and that nothing might interfere till it was finished; "and then," says the alderman, "we dissenters will try if the parliament will not distinguish us from popish recusants by some marks of their favour: but we are willing to lie under the severity of the laws for a time, rather than clog a more necessary work with our concerns."

In our days this would have been a strange combination of disinterestedness and selfishness, which would be scarcely entitled to praise: but in the circumstances of that day, when such efforts were made to subvert the constitution and the protestant religion, it was deserving of high commendation.

Charles died in the communion of the church of Rome, though the head of the church of England, and was succeeded on the throne by one still more of a papist than himself, and of course not a less determined enemy of puritanism, which is the most direct antagonist of popery. The persecution of the nonconformists was now carried on with tenfold fury under the direction of Jeffreys, the veriest monster that ever disgraced the bench or soiled the ermine. This ferocious judge, whose conduct set manners, morals, and justice equally at defiance, would, if he had not been restrained by private and powerful remonstrance, have had Baxter publicly whipped for his nonconformity through the city of London. It may be conceived what must have been the sufferings of less considerable men, when so distinguished a man was in danger of being treated with such cruel

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indignity. An act was passed about this period in Scotland, more atrocious than almost any other that was passed in those dreadful times, "That whosoever should preach in a conventicle under a roof, or should attend, either as preacher or hearer, a conventicle in the open air, should be punished with death or confiscation of property."

James, to accomplish his design of favouring popery and finally restoring England to the papal see, published his royal declaration of liberty of conscience, and commanded it to be read in all churches and chapels. This was exalting the kingly authority above the law, and was truly what it was called, "a dispensing power." In this matter the clergy, who had hitherto preached the doctrine of passive obedience and nonresistance, saw their principles carried to an extent of which they never dreamt, and they now perceived that though this, according to their views, was the duty of the puritans towards the king as head of the church, it was not their duty to the king when his object was to favour popery: and they resisted. Some of the bishops earned for themselves immortal renown, by the stand they took in opposing the project of the king in the exercise of his dispensing power. They were sent to the tower, tried, and acquitted; and to them a debt is due for conduct which had no small share in liberating the country from the yoke of tyranny, and preventing also the yoke of popery. The great body of nonconformists made common cause with the bishops and clergy in their resistance of the dispensing power. They availed themselves of course of the opportunity afforded them by the royal declaration for meeting publicly for worship. It is true this was contrary to statutes which James had by his

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own authority suspended, but the statutes themselves were opposed to the word of God, and were no more binding upon their consciences than were the laws of the pagan empire of Rome upon the consciences of the primitive Christians. Beyond this the nonconformist body would not go, much to the chagrin of the king, who used every method to draw them into an expressed acknowledgment of his dispensing power, and an approval of its exercise. Baxter, Bunyan, and others signalled themselves by their opposition to the king's conduct. A meeting of presbyterian ministers was held at the house of Howe to consult upon the course to be adopted. James knew of the conference, and manifested the greatest anxiety to know the result, and two royal messengers were in attendance during the discussion, who at the close of the meeting carried back the unwelcome news to the palace, that Howe had declared against the dispensing power, and had carried the meeting with him. The nonconformists forgot the injuries they had received, and found themselves attracted by a strong religious sympathy towards those bishops and priests of the church of England who, in spite of royal mandates, threats, and promises, were now waging vigorous war with the church of Rome; and they who had been so long separated by a mortal enmity were now daily drawing nearer each other. So great was the danger from a common foe, that it led them for a while to look above and beyond the differences by which they were severed.

James abdicated the throne: the glorious revolution of 1688 followed, and also the accession of William and Mary. One of the first and most precious fruits of the revolution was the Act of Toleration which vir-

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tually, though not formally, annulled the penal statutes against the nonconformists. This celebrated act may be called the Magna Charta of dissenters, to whom it was a matter of universal delight and of unbounded thanksgiving, yet was it in some respects incomplete. Its title is obnoxious, inasmuch as it tacitly implies that dissent, though an evil, was on some grounds tolerated, and only just borne with. And is there not a certain concealed assumption of a right to treat it as an evil, though that right is, for political reasons, put in abeyance? Besides, toleration, in reference to religious matters, has' rather an ungracious sound in another point of view, for it is not only tolerating man in worshipping God, but seems to imply, or to come very near it, tolerating God in receiving homage. We none of us like to be told we are tolerated, and thus to be considered as all but intolerable. It should have been a law for cancelling all persecuting statutes, and acknowledging the right of every man to liberty of conscience. And then, moreover, it was quite incomplete in its extent, for it entirely excluded both the Roman Catholics and the Unitarians, by requiring from all who would enjoy its benefits the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and a subscription to the thirty-nine articles, excepting only those which relate to the powers and government of the church and to infant baptism. This act has been subsequently amended by substituting a declaration, that the person making it is a Christian and a Protestant, and believes the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the revealed will of God. And in the latter end of the reign of George III. it was extended to those who impugn the doctrine of the Trinity. Still it was a wondrous advance

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in religious liberty; it was the first legal toleration England had ever known, and placed it ahead of every country in Europe except Holland, for though in some of the German States, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, enjoyed religious liberty together, and the Reformers in France had once possessed by the Edict of Nantes, much liberty, yet there are circumstances which gave a pre-eminence above all these to the English Act of Toleration.

The nonconformists were now at full liberty to build meeting-houses, and to hold public worship according to the dictates of their own judgment, without interruption or molestation. They were not slow to avail themselves of this rich privilege. Their first work was to build their sanctuaries, and within twenty years after the passing of the Act of Toleration, no less than between a thousand and eleven hundred congregations were formed in England alone, the greater part of which were collected, and their places of worship erected, between the years 1689 and 1696. Of these the majority were Presbyterian in their views of church polity, and the rest Independents and Baptists. The Presbyterians, however, were such only in name, or at any rate they had no more of Presbyterianism than to shut out the suffrages of the congregation, and to direct their church affairs by a body of trustees or elders. No presbyteries were formed, nor any church courts set up beyond the circle of each congregation. Indeed, the difference between the two bodies of Presbyterians and Independents was considered so small as to present, in the view of many, no insurmountable obstacle to a coalition between the two bodies. The London ministers were the first to promote this blessed work of union,



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a basis for which was agreed upon embracing such common principles as both parties could consent to subscribe, which contains this preamble: "The following heads of agreement have been resolved upon by the united ministers in and about London, formerly called presbyterian and congregational; not as a measure for any national constitution, but for the preservation of order in our congregations, that cannot come up to the common rule by law established." The principle of association commended itself to the judgment of very many in the provinces, and similar unions were formed there, the most celebrated of which was the Exeter assembly, which was a revival of one formed so far back as 1665, after the model of that established by Baxter and his brethren in Worcestershire. Why should not this spirit of union extend itself? The spirit of sects is opposed to the spirit of Christianity. Dissenters, in their zeal for liberty, have been in danger of losing a love of unity. They do not deserve the charge of schism as coming from the church of England. It were to be wished they were equally guiltless of this sin among themselves. They have contended nobly against intolerance from without; let them finish their work, and contend as mightily for toleration within.

William was scarcely settled on the throne before he manifested a desire to introduce dissenting laymen to offices of trust, but the Test and Corporation Acts prevented the king from accomplishing his benevolent design. And another most important movement for union which was almost immediately commenced must not be passed over; and that was an attempt, which however ultimately proved abortive, to bring in an act for making such alterations in the liturgy and services

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of the church of England as should meet the scruples of the nonconformists and make way for their being received into the church of England. This had been thought of, and proposed, once or twice before, as we have already seen; but it was now resumed "by Sancroft, archbishop of Canterbury, who for conscience sake soon after resigned his see, and became the head of the nonjuring clergy; that is those who could not take the oaths required on the assumption of the crown by William and Mary. A commission was issued by William, to thirty divines, ten of whom were bishops, to consider this subject. The commissioners, at least most of them, went to their work in the best and most candid spirit, being really desirous of promoting union. As the result of their labours, six hundred alterations, many of them trivial, but some of them important, and viewed as a whole, removing entirely all objections of dissenters to the Book of Common Prayer, were agreed upon as proper to be recommended for approval to the convocation. But the scheme entirely failed, for that body would not so much as take the subject into consideration. Neither had the measure better success in the House of Commons. It may be well affirmed that six hundred alterations proposed to be made in the standards and services of the church of England, by such men as archbishop Tillotson, and bishops Burnet, Stillingfleet, Patrick, Sharp, Kidder, Beveridge, and Tennison, certainly go far to prove that the Book of Common Prayer is susceptible of some improvement; and that dissenters, in objecting to it, are not quite so unreasonable as many in the present day would represent.

The nonconformists continued, during the reign of

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William and the early part of that of Anne, in the enjoyment of their new liberties, not however without some feeble but unsuccessful attempts by the high church party to restrict the meaning of the Act of Toleration, on the plea that though it gave liberty of worship, it made no provision for the education of ministers. There was too much good sense, as well as too deep a regard to justice, to allow the validity of such a quibble, for of what use was toleration to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience, if we had no ministers to conduct our services?

The Scripture says, "how great a fire a little matter kindleth," and this was proved by an unwise act of Sir Humphrey Edwin, who, being a dissenter, while Lord Mayor of London, in the reign of William and Mary, carried the mace to Pinner's Hall, then used as a meeting-house. This needless and irritating act was considered as a very heinous crime, and generated as keen wrath in the hearts of many zealous churchmen as Achilles felt towards Agamemnon. The bad feeling called out by this act of dissenting ostentation existed however already, though latent, and was now only excited to combustion. The fact is, the liberty of dissenters is a right grudged by high church bigots, and they determined if possible to abridge it. The clergy were now distinguished by the names of high church and low church, which were appropriated, the latter to all who treated the dissenters with temper and moderation, the former to those who viewed them as enemies to the establishment, to be oppressed and vanquished, if this were possible, and to be despised and insulted, if not. The spite of the high church party was soon manifested in obtaining, after considerable opposition,

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an act called "The Occasional Conformity Act." In explanation of which it is necessary to say that ever since the passing of "The Act of Uniformity," some of the nonconformists had occasionally attended public worship at the parish church and received the communion there. Men no less venerable and esteemed than Baxter, Howe, Bates, and Philip Henry, sanctioned this practice by their example. This continued after the revolution, and as it was not confined to ministers, but was adopted by laymen also, many of the latter, notwithstanding "The Test and Corporation Acts," had obtained a share of civic office, honour, and emolument. The provisions of "The Occasional Conformity Act," made it a crime, to be visited with a heavy fine, for any one holding office, civil or military, to be found at dissenting worship; and required every one occupying a place of profit or trust to take the sacrament according to the rules of the church of England three times in the year, after he declared his conformity. The object of this cruel measure was to expel all dissenters from every public office, and to compel such as had no conscience, if any such there were, to conform. Great numbers who had a conscience were thus effectually ruined. The church gained some apostates and hypocrites; the dissenters, many confessors and martyrs. For exposing in somewhat disguised but cutting irony, the rancour of this bill, the celebrated Daniel De Foe, the well-known author of the *Life of Robinson Crusoe* and innumerable other works, suffered imprisonment in Newgate, and the indignity of the pillory.

The horizon of the religious world became during the reign of Anne cloudy and lowering with gathering storms of intolerance and persecution. The Scottish

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parliament, (will it be credited?) passed an act, making it high treason to attempt by writing or speaking, to overthrow the presbyterian government of Scotland. In the south a furious agitation was raised by Dr. Sacheverell, chaplain of St. Thomas's Southwark, who threw all England into confusion by his distempered zeal for the church of England, which, as one observes, burnt as hot in his breast as the flames of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. In his rabid passion he reflected with great bitterness on the memory of William; condemned the revolution; vented the greatest fury against the whig administration and seemed to court notoriety and sympathy by provoking suffering. This he gained by a sermon he preached at St. Paul's, November 1, 1709, from 2 Cor. xi, 26, which he entitled "The perils of false brethren both in church and state." It was full of the most virulent declamation against the dignitaries of the church and state; it asserted to the fullest extent the doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance; condemned all toleration; and poured out a turbid flood of scurrility and abuse upon the dissenters. Of this infamous philippic forty thousand copies were sold in a few weeks, and filled the land with myriads of echoes of the portentous sound, "The church is in danger." The matter was brought before parliament, and the author was impeached and tried in Westminster hall. He was during the trial lodged in the Temple, and carried every day to the tribunal in a coach, attended by immense assemblages of the people, who shouted their huzzas, strove to kiss his hand, and struggled for pre-eminence in the most abject obeisance; while others of superior rank from windows and balconies, gave him demonstrations of respect and attachment. So zealous

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were his partizans, that they compelled the passengers in the streets, even members of parliament to do him honour by shouting the watch-word of their party, "High Church and Sacheverell." And they surrounded the queen's sedan on her way to the House of Lords, and to enlist the royal mind in their cause, cried "God bless your majesty and the church, we hope your majesty is for Dr. Sacheverell." The clergy also rallied round the doctor at his trial, and extolled him as the champion of the church. To this there were many honourable exceptions, both among the bishops and the inferior clergy. The trial lasted three weeks, and ended in the conviction of the accused, and the sentence that his sermon should be publicly burnt by the hands of the hangman, and he should be prohibited from preaching for the term of three years. A pitiful exhibition of justice this. By Sacheverell and his friends it was looked upon as a triumph, and received with ecstasies. But this did not satisfy the doctor's friends, for now they turned their fury against what they considered his greatest enemies, the dissenters. The flames of many a meeting house, both in the metropolis and the provinces, crackled to the cry of "High Church and Sacheverell. Down with the dissenters." The doctor travelled through the country in a kind of triumphal procession, and was received with little short of regal splendour. The clergy in their gowns, magistrates in the insignia of office, accompanied by thousands of men in arms, came forth to pay their homage to the champion of the church, and the persecutor of dissenters; while the tory nobility and gentry threw open their mansions at his approach, which they con-

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sidered from that moment dignified and hallowed by the sojourn of such a guest.

But why all this? The people were ignorant, and their leaders intolerant. It was one of the last spasms and convulsions of expiring bigotry. But that it was not yet dead, "The Schism Act," to which we now advert will sufficiently prove. Such events as those we have just contemplated could not have occurred unless there had been a determined hostility in the nation to the nonconformist body, and a resolution to crush their liberties, if not by law, at least by violence. There was a purpose to do both; and under the influence and by the efforts of the infidel Bolingbroke, one of Queen Anne's ministers of state, this was now to be accomplished. It was clearly seen that the best way of repressing dissent, next to the repeal of the Act of Toleration, which their boldest and most cruel foe was not audacious enough to attempt, was to prevent the education of their children in their own principles. Julian the apostate, as he is called, had adopted this refined barbarity against the Christians. His writings and conduct have been the delight of most infidels, and Bolingbroke in this respect also went with his school. The bill to which I now allude was entitled "An Act to prevent the growth of Schism, and for the further security of the Churches of England and Ireland, as by law established;" it forbad, under severe pains and penalties, any one to be a schoolmaster of any grade, public or private, or to teach children any religious catechism whatever other than the catechism of the church of England. The dissenters petitioned to be heard by counsel against the bill, but their petition was rejected.

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However one or two clauses were gained in their favour, such as allowing them to have schoolmistresses to teach their children to read, and even masters to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, or any part of mathematical learning which relates to navigation and mechanics only. And any nobleman or noblewoman might have teachers in their families, provided they qualified them as the act directed. Such an infamous measure did not pass without the most strenuous opposition from the whigs, and was carried at last in the lords only by a majority of five, there having been seventy-seven for it, and seventy-two against it. Twenty-two temporal peers and five bishops recorded on the journals their protest against it. The royal assent was given, and thus by a statute which fouled the stream of British legislation, the education of their children, in defiance of the demands of nature, justice, and religion, was taken out of the hands of the dissenters.

Bitter was the distress of the nonconformists, and loud their cries to Him who tells the groans and hears the prayers of the afflicted, and who in his merciful purposes had determined that this iniquitous measure should not oppress his servants. He sent that grim monarch, to whom all earthly sovereigns must yield, to arrest the British queen in her career, and make way for the house of Hanover to the British throne. Anne died the very day on which "The Schism Bill" was to come into operation.

No part of the population of this country has ever been more loyally attached to the present illustrious family upon the throne of Great Britain, than the protestant dissenters, nor has any had more reason for it, for since their accession, religious liberty has never been



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touched except to be enlarged. From that auspicious era in our history the great principle of freedom for the conscience, like imperceptible but irresistible leaven, has been diffusing itself through, the whole community. A vain and abortive attempt was made in the year 1715 to awaken the echoes of the Sacheverell mobs by the cry of "The church in danger," and some few meeting-houses at Oxford, Birmingham, Bristol, Chippenham, Beading, and Norwich were burnt or damaged. But they were soon stopped. Belief was granted to the Quakers in the first year of George I. on the subject of oaths. In 1718, "The Test and Corporation Acts" were somewhat moderated. There were two events in this reign which were very favourable to religious liberty: the first was the Bangorian controversy which arose out of Dr. Hoadley's sermon before the king, in which he not only advocated the broadest principles of toleration, but also went much too far in his views of the spirituality and liberty of the Christian church, and of the mere human expediency of our Anglican establishment to please the tories and the high church party. The other event was the downfall of bishop Atterbury, the Goliath, as he has been called, of priestly dominion and intolerance. The Schism Act and Occasional Conformity Act were repealed in the early part of the reign of George I. who ever was the enlightened and firm advocate of the rights of conscience.

During the reign of George II. some feeble and ineffectual attempts were made by the convocation of the clergy to infringe the principle of the Toleration Act, and the rights of conscience, by silencing Arians, Socinians, and sceptics. The spirit of persecution, like the ejected demon of which we read in the gospels, still

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roamed about in dry places, restless, envious, and prepared for mischief. The mild, the learned, the pious Doddridge, whom in his latter days bishops delighted to honor, was not only grossly insulted by the populace for his nonconformity, but had to sustain a prosecution instigated by the neighbouring clergy for teaching an academy. Information of this intolerance having been carried to the king, he interfered by his royal authority, and stopped the proceedings.

George III. distinguished the commencement of his reign by a declaration from the throne, which endeared him, as a friend of religious liberty, to every generous and impartial mind, and especially to the great body of nonconformists.

“The peculiar happiness of ray life,” said this amiable monarch’ “will ever consist in promoting the welfare of my people, whose loyal and warm affection to me, I consider as the greatest and most permanent support of my throne; and I doubt not but their steadiness to these principles will equal the firmness of my resolution to maintain the Toleration Act inviolable. The civil and religious rights of my loving subjects are equally dear to me as the most valuable prerogative of my crown; and as the surest foundation of the whole, and the best means to draw down the divine favour on my reign, it is my fixed purpose to countenance and encourage the practice of true religion and virtue.”

These were sentiments worthy of the monarch of the greatest nation upon earth; and what adds might and strength to them is, that, whatever were his weaknesses or his faults as a monarch, this declaration was religiously fulfilled throughout his protracted and chequered reign. Before he closed his career, various cruel and persecuting statutes affecting and oppressing the Roman Catholics were repealed, though from mistaken views of the purport and obligations of the coronation oath, he refused their admission to political power. As the pro-

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visions of the Toleration Act did not include persons impugning the doctrine of the Trinity, it was now extended, as we have already shewn, to embrace them. All could not be obtained, however, which was sought by the friends of religious liberty, for various attempts were made to obtain the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, but though these efforts were sustained by the eloquent arguments of Fox, and many others, they were not successful. An incident occurred in the year 1811, which, whatever was its intention, was in its tendency and would have been in its consequences an invasion of the Magna Charta of nonconformist liberty. Lord Sidmouth scandalized at the invasion of the sacred office by illiterate men, and jealous for the honour of the ministry, proposed in the House of Lords, a bill to restrict the liberty of public teachers, and to institute a legal qualification for the work of preaching the gospel. The whole body of nonconformists, including the methodists as well as dissenters, instantly took alarm which spread with astonishing rapidity through the country, and in the course of a few days, such an opposition was raised and organised against the measure, that Lord Holland in speaking against it, jocosely said, "We could hardly shake hands with our fellow Peers, from the number of petitions that entered against the bill." These petitions were signed by many beneficed clergymen; and the Archbishop of Canterbury did himself honour by his liberal exposition of the doctrine of religious liberty, and his hostility to the bill.

Since then, the British legislature has demonstrated the advance of liberal opinions by passing the Catholic Relief Bill, and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; and granting the privilege to dissenters of cele-

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brating marriages in their own places of worship and according to their own rites.

Such is now the present position of the protestant dissenters in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours. The vine and the fig tree under which we repose in such tranquil security and unmolested enjoyment, were planted amidst the tears and sprinkled with the blood of other generations. Patriots and heroes, martyrs and confessors, hedged them round, some with their swords, and others with their writings. The boar out of the wood, and the wild beast out of the field, did waste them; the storms of persecution rolled over them, the lightnings of which often scathed them; but an invisible yet omnipotent power afforded them protection, and now in their ample shadow millions are feasting upon their precious fruit, who are reversing the order of the plaintive theme of the ancient church, and instead of sorrowfully dwelling upon what was, are exulting in what is, saying of the noble vine, "Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the rivers."

Still the nonconformists, notwithstanding their lofty position, do not consider their liberties quite complete: they are excluded from the national seats of learning, they are forced to pay for the support of a state church from which conscientiously but not factiously they have seceded, they are compelled on entering a corporation to make a declaration which they feel to be an invidious

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distinction, and in other ways they are depressed, as they think, below the true level of the constitution; and no one can justly blame them if they seek, by peaceable means, to gain their proper standing on the platform of this great nation.

Still the man who finds in what he yet desires to possess, more cause for discontent, complaint, and endless agitation, than he does of gratitude, satisfaction, and enjoyment in what he has gained, should re-peruse the blood-stained page of history and if, on contrasting his liberty with the prison, the scaffold, and the stake of his martyred ancestors, he does not find cause for thanksgiving to God, it must be because he either does not believe what they endured, or does not know what he is permitted to enjoy.

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Perhaps I shall be considered by many of my non-conformist brethren as too little sensible of the objections to religious establishments. I plead not guilty to the charge. I see them in all their magnitude, and feel them in all their weight, and the composition of the first part of this little volume instead of reconciling me to them, was likely to make me more than ever sensible of their grievous nature; but I am so affected with a sense of the evils of infidelity and immorality, of sin in all its forms, and unbelief in all its grades, which are crushing the souls of men to eternal perdition, that I cannot but stretch out the right hand of fellowship to the men who, amidst the forms of an established church, are seeking by the power of true religion to save men from the dreadful evils of eternal death. I wish, of course, by the progress of what I consider scriptural

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knowledge and religious conviction, to see the lesser evils removed, but to see the greater ones averted by godly ministers either of the church of England or of any other church, is and shall be a rejoicing of which no man shall deprive me, and of which I will not willingly deprive myself.

I am arrived at that period of life when the shadows of evening are gathering round me, and when I am alternately looking back upon the course I have run, and forward to the account I must give, and like holy Baxter, I sometimes review my past sentiments and practices to compare with them my present ones; and if I know myself, I can truly say I have both a more entire conviction of the scriptural authority for nonconformity, and more charity for those who in this respect differ from me. Like the eminent nonconformist whom I have just mentioned, I can, with some little exception, say,

“I am deeplier afflicted for the disagreement of Christians than I was when I was a younger Christian. Except the case of the infidel world, nothing is so sad and grievous to my thoughts as the case of the divided churches. And therefore I am more deeply sensible of the sinfulness of those prelates and pastors of churches who are the principal causes of these divisions. o, how many millions of souls are kept by them in ignorance and ungodliness, and deluded by faction as if it were true religion. How is the conversion of infidels hindered by them, and Christ and religion heinously dishonoured.

“I do not lay so much stress upon the external modes and forms of worship as many young professors do. I have suspected myself, as perhaps the reader may do, that this is from a cooling down and declining from my former zeal, (though the truth is, I never much complied with men of that mind:) but I find that judgment and charity are the causes of it, as far as I am able to discover. I cannot be so narrow in my principles of church communion as many are that are so much for a liturgy, or so much against it, so much for ceremonies, or so much against them, that they can hold communion with no church that is not of their mind and way. If I were among the Greeks, the Lutherans, the Independents, yea, the Anabaptists,

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(that own no heresy, nor “set themselves against charity and peace) though my most usual communion should be with that society which I thought most agreeable to the word of God, if I were free to choose, I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer Book, and that such forms are a self-invented worship which God rejecteth: nor yet can I be of their mind that say the like of extemporary prayers.”

Such, with some little difference, are the views which have been growing upon me of late, but they are far from producing the least indifference to truth, though perhaps I feel much more disinclination for controversy. “With a growing conviction that God in his wise, mighty, and irresistible providence, is signally fighting against the intrusion of the secular power into spiritual matters, and by political convulsion from without, and the growth of conviction among the episcopals within, loosening the connexion between church and state all over the world, I feel content to stand apart from all political confederations which are formed for the accomplishment of this object. Other eyes than those of nonconformists are open to the evils arising from state connexion with the church, and other pens and tongues are proclaiming them, as will be evident from the following extract from a late number of “The English Churchman,” a thoroughly high church periodical.

“It will be said, perhaps, that in these modern days mere religious qualifications can hardly be looked for in a bishop; that of course, in a political system, political motives must act, and that patronage must of necessity be governed by personal or party bias. No doubt. And the necessity affords the strongest possible argument against a connexion between the church and the state, inasmuch as purity is much more important for a religious institution than wealth. It is not essential for any church that her bishop should live in a palace, sit on a throne, and have several thousands a year; but it is absolutely requisite that her rulers should be pre-eminently religious men. This

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is the main point; but so far is the establishment from affording security in this respect that it operates directly the contrary way. The choice of bishops is notoriously influenced either by motives of favouritism, or, which is no better, by a desire to provide safe, quiet, easy men, who shall make no disturbance, and give no trouble to the government. The chief recommendations to an apostolical successorship are family interest and harmlessness. The church seems to be regarded by the state as an animal sufficiently well managed if she can be kept from doing mischief. That she has a high mission to spiritualise and regenerate the world, or that the character of her chiefs must tend either greatly to advance, or ruinously to mar her work, it never seems to enter into the imagination of a premier to conceive—How should it? His position, his habits, his aims, the principles on which he himself is chosen, and the persons whose interests he must consult, render him the most unfit person in the world to exercise overseership in the church. A pope holding the reins of secular government is not a stranger anomaly than a bishop-making premier. Happily the papacy is expiring; may we not hope that English Erastianism will ere long come to an end.

“Let the churchmen of Norfolk look to it, for the question is especially their own. They have just been deprived by death of their spiritual leader, and they are looking for a successor, to whom? To the church? To any appropriate authority? No: but to a man, who, so far as religion is concerned, is hut the accident of an accident, to a man who may be Lord John Russell to-day, Sir K. Peel to-morrow, and nobody knows who, an infidel, a dissenter, a Catholic, or a Jew, the day following; at any rate to a secular personage, chosen only for secular reasons. Is this right? Is this good for the church, for churchmen, or for Christianity? Are they to be called enemies of the church of England who decry such a system?”

When churchmen write thus, they furnish, not only an apology for dissenters, but a defence of their principles.

If there are any who say that for a consummation so devoutly to be wished as the dissolution of this union, the public mind must be prepared by a diffusion of light, I quarrel not with them, and provided they do but speak the truth in love, I leave them to pursue their vocation in spreading their principles by any confede-



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rations they please to form; I can only say for myself that I feel my calling to be, to pursue the same object in a more quiet manner, and to say to both parties, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;" "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" and "forbearing one another in love."

I have thus exhibited the various bodies of protestant nonconformists which exist in this town, and by searching further and penetrating into obscure retreats, others perhaps might be added to them. To some eyes such a scene presents nothing but unmixed evil, and to none can it present unmixed good. All diversities of creed are, in some respects, evil in themselves, and in some directions, and to a considerable extent, are evil in their consequences. Truth is uniform, but error multiform. Error is undoubtedly evil, and must partake, though in some cases in an inappreciable quantity, of moral obliquity. All these various opinions, of which the congregations that hold them are the embodiment and visible expression, inasmuch as they are opposed to each other, cannot all be true, and in as far as they are false are evil; and they also no doubt tend to produce some degree of strife and alienation, and to engender suspicion and distrust where they do not actually foster bigotry and ill will. Controversy must of necessity rise out of diversity. The odium theologicum, though by no means so bitter or so virulent as some imagine, and more represent, does exist as the offspring of differing sentiments. Yet notwithstanding all this, diversity is better in itself, marks a better state of things, and is followed with better consequences, than that hollow and

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deceptive uniformity, that blind and unintelligent though it may be unvarying assent, or that callous indifference to truth, which are the result of the civil or ecclesiastical tyranny that prohibits the free exercise of thought, and the public expression of opinion. There are spots on our earth where the strife of tongues is unheard, but it is the quietness of the cemetery, the silence of death; so also there are ecclesiastical domains where if there be no din of controversy, no discordant sounds of clashing opinions, the human soul as to all its nobler energies is dead, or lives only in the grasp of a power that forbids it to speak, and even to think.

In passing along our streets and marking the varieties of our sects, as indicated by their places of worship, all flourishing in the shadow of a state-church, we may lament their existence, but still we must rejoice in their permission to exist. How gloriously do they proclaim to the stranger who visits our land, that he is treading the soil of a country where opinions are as free as the air he breathes? There, before his eyes are the palpable proofs and the impressive exhibitions of liberty in its most august and sacred forms; there are the demonstrations given by the noblest nation upon earth of her respect, not only for the claims of religion, but for the rights of conscience. It is not the magnificence of the cathedral of which a kingdom might boast, and the demolition or the defacing of the least of whose ornaments would by multitudes be considered absolute sacrilege; it is not the preservation of its episcopal throne, of its splendid hierarchy and gorgeous ritual from interruption molestation and insult; it is not the teaching there of state-authorised doctrines, and the offering of prescribed devotions, that shows the justice of our laws,

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and manifests the glory of our liberty; but the same protection extended to the little unsightly and uncouth meeting house which rears its humble brow in that cathedral's shadow, and to the few illiterate men who within its mean and narrow walls listen to teaching which by its doctrine and its views of ecclesiastical polity assails the whole system of which that gorgeous fabric is the visible type. Here, in this unfettered liberty of preaching is our country's honour, won by the swords of warriors on the field of conflict, by the pens of writers in the study, and by the sufferings of martyrs at the stake, and which is worth all the expense at which it has been purchased. May Britain's sons prove themselves worthy of the honour thus conferred upon them, to bear witness before the world to the right the bliss and the usefulness of unfettered unrestricted liberty of conscience, and consider that the least permanent infringement of it would be a loss and a mischief for which no accumulation of territory wealth or power could be the smallest compensation. We have varieties of sects and creeds, call them discordances, if you please, but with whatever evil in some views they are attended, do they, we ask, disturb the peace of our town? Do they arrest our municipal efficiency? Do they dissolve the ties of neighbourship? Do they stop the general flow of citizenship? Do they hinder our co-operation in works of mercy or of common benefit? But then, infidelity points at them with a sneer and says, "Agree among yourselves before you ask me to agree with any of you." Has infidelity then no sects and parties? Are not its creeds as various as ours? Is it so ignorant as not to know that human minds left to their freedom are sure to differ on any subject which does not come within the pale of the exact sciences?

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Has it forgotten that various opinions are knowledge in the making? Ought it not to have its prejudices softened by the sight of all these sects asserting and using their liberty in seeking after truth and refusing to bow down to any authority but that which they believe divine? Is not the divided christian world a great battle-field, where the sects and parties, though contending with too much fierceness and too much bitterness it is admitted, are still contending for truth, and truth of the most momentous nature; truth that has respect to man's immortal soul, and his eternal destiny? These combatants, often so truculent, are still the champions of principles the importance of which, as they view it, will remain when suns grow dim with age, and planets fade away.

Or to change the allusion, and borrow Milton's beautiful allegory, "Truth came once into the world with its divine master, and was a most perfect shape, and glorious to look on; but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, there straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, (as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon, with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris,) took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since the sad friends of truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, nor ever shall do till our Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection."

Yes, this is our employment, we are searching after these disjecta membra, and though in the pursuit we are too envious and jealous of each other, and controvert with too much acrimony each other's pretensions to success in the search, and accuse each other of substituting the limbs of the meretricious harlot Error, for those

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of the pure virgin Truth, yet in reality we are engaged in endeavouring to find out the truth.

Nor let the advocate of church authority who would crush the rights of conscience beneath the papal chair, point with a sarcasm to our differences of opinion, and tauntingly exclaim, "This is protestantism. It is its veritable and almost necessary result." It is, we accept the taunt, and wear it as our glory. Not that I exult in this variety of sects, or contradict my words by denying that their existence is an evil: but the liberty out of which they spring is a pure, a legitimate, though often an abused good. If the sects were even yet ten times multiplied, and their hostility more intense, still their existence is a less evil than the slavery that would prevent them. If error has liberty, so has truth; and as truth is stronger than error, give it time and give it room, its victory over error must be complete. But take away liberty, and truth may be in chains and in its dungeon, and error, with the sceptre of authority in its hand, may be upon the throne.

Let the church of Rome make out by revelation and reason her claim to infallibility, and tell us where it resides, and it will be time for us then to think about surrendering our liberties at her bidding; but till then, we will read the Bible for ourselves, judge of its meaning for ourselves, and tell to others the meaning we have gathered for ourselves: and though we should come to very different conclusions as to its import, we think that a far less evil than if by surrendering our privilege and our duty to search the scriptures for ourselves, we were brought to a blind and unreasoning uniformity.

My protestantism is that of Chillingworth, whose beautiful language I now quote. (See *supra* p. 17.)

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Before I close this volume it may be well to look back on what has been written, and to consider the practical lessons which may be gathered from the whole. It is a low, unworthy, and profitless thing to read history only to gratify curiosity. If our errors, both theoretical and practical, are not corrected, and our hearts not made better by such an exercise, we have carried it on in vain.

And what has been presented to us in all the scenes which we have reviewed, but the wickedness of the oppressor, and the virtues of the oppressed; the triumphs of power over piety in one view, and of piety over power in another?

I. We recognize the reality, the power, the beauty, of true religion. Let us turn from the defects, the inconsistencies, the hypocrisies, of professors of Christianity, as they are too frequently seen in the day of prosperity and the sunshine of liberty, producing not only revulsion and disgust but suspicion and scepticism, to contemplate genuine religion, during the dark night of adversity, when it can only be heard by the clank of the prisoner's fetter, or seen by the light of the martyr's flame. Here there is truthfulness, sanctity, and conscience, if nowhere else, and withal a power compared with which the tyranny that has been the cause of all the suffering and the wrong is but as brute force compared with the almightiness of virtue. There is no inconsistency here, no hypocrisy here, but a living embodiment of conscience arrayed in the beauties of holiness. To see men, who, in what many would consider the veriest trifles, trifles in their estimate not worth the cost of a single sigh, or to be upheld by the expenditure of a single tear, exhibit

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the constancy of martyrs at the dictate of conscience, and go to bonds, imprisonment, and death; what is this but to behold not only the grandeur of Christianity, but the evidence of its truth! Infidelity likes not to look upon the martyrs of our faith, but chooses to dwell rather upon its insincere professors. But if it can bear the full blaze of such effulgence upon its weak disordered vision, we bid this evil spirit look upon the saintly virtue of the sufferers for conscience sake. Let the facts of the gospel be disproved, its evidences discredited, and its arguments answered, if they can be. Still how are its effects as set forth in the pages of its martyrology to be dealt with? This noble army of martyrs, how are they to be beaten down, driven from the field, vanquished; they who rise, every one of them, a living witness of the truth, power, and glory of Christianity?

Be this the first lesson we learn, from the scenes which have come before us, and which come before us from every similar scene. The sufferings of Christians from pagans; of protestants from papists; of nonconformists from episcopalians; of episcopalians from presbyterians; all equally show the same transcendent excellence of our holy religion. They tend to keep up the power and dominion of principle, the sovereignty of conscience, the vigour of recitude. They are the lofty dykes which keep out the ocean of sin, and prevent the church, as well as the world, from being covered with a turbid deluge of expedience, utilitarianism, faithlessness, and hypocrisy. Persecution, then, while on the one hand it exhibits in itself the odiousness of vice, calls out with no less power and effect the beauty of virtue. It is in the pages of our martyrology that

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Christianity is enshrined in her highest sanctity and her most awful majesty; it is there that its friends see in it most to love and admire, and its foes most to fill them with dread and dismay.

II. The next thing surely which must strike us is the character and extent of persecution. Intolerance by whomsoever exercised is a deadly evil. It transvenoms all the kindly feelings of the human bosom into malignity, and is marked oftentimes by the most ferocious cruelty. Men naturally amiable, lose all their softness and tenderness of disposition and become morose, severe, and relentless, under the influence of bigotry. The usual expressions of sympathy, commiseration, and charity are withheld, and all the emotions of pity are extinguished. And what is still worse, all this is done under the sanction of religion; and Christianity is thus made to operate in the very opposite way to that so strikingly described in the beautiful imagery of the prophet, and instead of the lion being changed into the lamb, the lamb is transformed into the lion. Men never go to greater lengths in sanguinary violence, than when they become cruel under the alleged command of religion. That surely must be hateful to God which is opposed to his own nature as a God of love, and to the spirit of his law, which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Persecution is as Impious as it is cruel; for it not only opposes every precept of the New Testament, but invades the prerogative of God himself, by assuming a right to punish those who have committed no offence but against Him, and whom he has reserved for his own exclusive scrutiny into their character, and for his own penal visitation. Heresy is a sin, of which the crimi-



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nality can be measured by Him alone, who is the infallible Judge of truth, and of the human heart. Religion is a matter which lies solely between God and the individual conscience; of which God alone can take cognizance; and persecution, therefore, is a usurpation, or an attempt at a usurpation, of the attributes and prerogatives which belong exclusively to the Most High. It is a vain endeavour to ascend into his throne, to wield his sceptre, and to hurl his thunderbolts.

Nor is it altogether free from an air of the Ridiculous, for surely man scarcely ever appears more foolish than when attempting to legislate for the opinions and the conscience of his fellow man, and to make laws for the soul, which lies so entirely beyond his cognizance and his inflictions.

And also its own history shews how Useless it is. Truth is immortal: the sword cannot pierce it; fire cannot consume it; prisons cannot incarcerate it; famine cannot starve it; all the violence of men stirred up by all the power and subtilty of hell cannot put it to death; in the person of its martyrs it bids defiance to the will of the tyrant who persecutes it; and with its confessor's last breath predicts its own full and final triumphs. The pagan persecuted the Christian, but yet Christianity lives. The papist persecuted the protestant, but yet protestantism lives. The church of England persecuted the nonconformist, and yet nonconformity lives. Nonconformists persecuted episcopalians, yet episcopacy lives. Truth, when persecution is carried to its extremest length of extirpating heretics, may be extinguished in one place, as the reformation was in Spain and Portugal, but it will break out in another, as it did in Germany and England. If opinions cannot

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be put down by argument, they cannot by power. Truth gains the victory in the end not only by its own evidences but by the sufferings of its confessors; the flames of the martyr's stake have thrown over it an awful glory, which while it enlisted the sympathies of men's hearts, has excited their admiration and produced conviction in their judgments. The passive power of the sufferer has subdued the opposition of the spectator, and led him to conclude there must be something divine in that which produced such a scene.

This double crime against God and man has been more extensive than many suppose. Its root is the selfishness of our depraved nature. We have all something of it in our corrupt hearts. How ill we bear contradiction! While engaged in argument with those who oppose our views, how many risings of indignation do we feel, especially if we are worsted and wounded in the conflict! What would we do if we could to silence an antagonist, especially when the struggle is carried on with one supposed to be inferior to ourselves, and before others; is there no kindling wrath, no petty malignity, no paltry wish that we could stop his mouth? There, in that state of mind is persecution in its seminal principle and germ. This feeling when indulged in the full strength of magisterial office under mistaken views of the Old Testament dispensation, and of the province of the magistrate, is persecution full grown. And what public bodies have not been guilty of it by turns in a greater or lesser degree? People that boast loudly of their attachment to religious freedom are often persecutors. In proof of this we need only look to the democratic rationalists of Switzerland, and to the infidels of Germany, by whom with all their cry for liberty, evangelical religion is per-

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secuted in one way by mobs, and in the other by law. But we may look nearer home, and find in the contempt and scorn with which professors of the same creed are treated a similar spirit, though not always carried to the same extent, nor expressed in the same outrageous manner. How much bitterness and wrath are cherished by many high churchmen of the present day towards nonconformists! How much of exclusive dealing; of refusal of public charities; of dismissal from places of trust and emolument; of determination not to admit dissenting tenants to farms; of vilifying misrepresentations of nonconformists in public prints; of contumelious conduct in private life, is ever going on: and what is this but persecution? What would not the persons who act thus do if they could, in the way of abridging our liberties, and punishing our nonconformity? Nor am I quite sure that all nonconformists are quite free from the charge of bigotry and intolerance, if we may judge of the tone and the spirit, with which some of them carry on the struggle against establishments. Every departure from the line of calm christian and courteous discussion into coarse vituperative and insulting language; every attempt to hold up good and conscientious men to scorn and contempt, by impugning their motives and judging their hearts, because they are supporting, injuriously it may be, yet ignorantly, a bad system of polity, is also a species of persecution, which neither reason nor revelation can justify. The faithful page of history exhibits nearly all parties involved in this sin, though not in an equal degree. But wheresoever and with whomsoever found, it is a sin of the deepest die, and most criminal in those who live in times and countries of the greatest light.

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III. This sketch proves the danger of entrusting the civil magistrate with power to interfere with matters of religion, or in other words, the all but invariable and necessary tendency of religious establishments to originate a spirit of intolerance, and to carry it out in the way of legalized persecution. An unestablished church may be intolerant in spirit, but it cannot be persecuting in the way of inflicting civil pains and penalties, or depriving the subjects of the realm of any of the rights and immunities of citizenship. This cannot be done but by the power of the state. And it is therefore only when any church is supported by the state that it can be, in the usual meaning of the word, a persecuting church. Take the sword out of the hand of the church of Rome, and its councils, and decrees, and anathemas, are all innocuous, mere *brutum fulmen*, thunder and lightning upon paper. In all its ancient atrocities by the *auto-da-fe* it pretended to clear itself of the guilt of putting the heretic to death, by handing him over to the secular arm, without which indeed its bloody sentence would have been but a sentence. The testimony of history proves that the Romish church is not the only one which, when it had the power of the state at command, employed and abused it for the purpose of persecution; nor is the church of England the only one that has imitated the example of the church of Rome; for we have seen in pursuing this history, that neither Presbyterianism nor Independency could be safely trusted with the sword of the magistrate, since both have employed it for the purpose of persecution. No matter what system of religion is in the ascendant, give it the power of the state, and it will employ it, or unless restrained be strongly tempted to do so, to crush

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the liberty of the dissidents. We see this exemplified, as I have already remarked, in the rationalism of many parts of the continent of Europe, than which nothing is more intolerant. And I am entirely persuaded that if infidelity could wield the sword and the sceptre, notwithstanding its boasted attachment to freedom, the liberties of spiritual Christians would not be safe for an hour. Political power is also dangerous even in the hand of true religion. Men may, from mistaken views, by employing it to suppress heresy and to encourage sound doctrine, think they are doing God service, and be conscientiously wrong. Mr Baptist Noel, in his recent work on the Union of Church and State truly remarks that "The union tried through long centuries of misrule, and found every where to be potent for evil only, should at length give place to Christ's own spiritual law of liberty, through which alone his churches can accomplish their beneficial mission to bring the nations of the earth into the service of the Redeemer, and to make all intellects and all hearts tributary to his glory."

It will probably be replied to this that persecution though generally an adjunct of state religion, is not invariably nor necessarily so, as is proved by the toleration of our own. I willingly concede the fact that our establishment was among the first in the history of the world to set the example of toleration. But then it may be asked, whether toleration itself is not, with all its blessings, in one view, a refined and subtle species of persecution, by placing its subjects below the tolerating party and representing them in effect, as an evil that can be just borne with and permitted, which is to exist by the exercise of a generous forbearance; so that

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the elements of intolerance may be detected even in toleration itself. Abridged liberty is persecution, and the "Toleration Act" has still left the liberties of dissenters incomplete in many respects; and even this boon of toleration is denied to the ministers of the church; for, however clearly convinced a clergyman may be of its errors, and however conscientious in his secession, he cannot at present escape from her communion without exposing himself to civil pains and penalties, and will not be allowed to do so in future without degradation.

Nor is this all, for though toleration is the law of the land, it was granted rather by the state than the church, as is evident from the fact that the canons which still regulate ecclesiastical discipline excommunicate all who dissent from the established religion. Practically these obnoxious rules are abandoned, but not really.

Moreover, as long as the right of the civil magistrate in religious matters is allowed, liberty of conscience must ever be a contingency dependent upon the spirit of the age, and may at any time be destroyed if intolerance should gain the ascendant in the legislature. It is very improbable certainly, but not impossible that changes may take place in the views, spirit, and temper, of the legislature very unfriendly to religious liberty; and we cannot observe the workings and animus of the Puseyite party in the church of England without feeling there is ground if not for alarm yet for vigilance and caution. Let that party be dominant, and the full unrestricted liberties of neither the dissenters nor the methodists, no, nor of the evangelical clergy would be safe. So that there seems to be no absolute safeguard of religious liberty, no certain exemption from the evils

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of persecution, but by taking religion itself as a matter of legislation out of the hands of the civil magistrate and leaving it for its support to the zeal of its friends and the blessing of its divine Author. No unestablished church can be a persecuting one, in the way of inflicting civil pains and penalties, whatever it may be in spirit and desire; all established ones in a greater or less degree have been so. And it is an instructive and impressive fact and worthy of consideration, that it is the union of the church and state, or, in other words, the support of religion by secular power, which in pagan, mahommedan, and popish countries forms at this day the greatest obstacle in the way of spreading the gospel of the great and blessed God.

IV. May we not also learn how much there is in the circumstances and spirit of the times to shape and modify the power and even the disposition to persecute? There are some who will not take this at all into consideration in the way of accounting for, or extenuating the sin of intolerance. And it is admitted that, with man's own reason and the New Testament, it is extremely difficult to allow of any palliation of the guilt of persecution; but when we see men of acknowledged piety and humanity, becoming persecutors, and hunting their victims to prison and to death; when, for instance, we behold Calvin consenting to burn Servetus, and Cranmer urging Edward VI. against all the revulsions of his lovely spirit, to sign the death warrant of Joan Bocher, we must admit that even good men may be so far influenced by the spirit of the times as to do that from which in other and happier circumstances their enlightened minds and renewed hearts would recoil with horror. Persecution itself, is the same unchanged and unchangeable form

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of iniquity in every age. It stands like Lot's wife, a pillar of salt, an object of Divine vengeance, of human abhorrence, and of awful warning to all generations; but it depends in some measure upon the circumstances in which men are placed how far they see its horrid form, and trace upon it the marks of divine indignation with which it has been scathed. The atrocities of the auto-da-fé, the mysterious horrors of the inquisition, the fires of Smithfield, the persecutions of the Puritans by the Tudors and Stuarts, admit of no excuse, scarcely of the least palliation; but we may ask, would these things be perpetrated by the church of Rome or the church of England now? Would Calvin have burnt Servetus now? Or Socinus have caused the imprisonment of Francis David now? If not, then, so far we admit that some small extenuation is to be thrown into the scale when weighing the criminality of persecution in by-gone days, compared with what would be the guilt of those who should practise the same things in these days of greater light and liberty. Why even Paul himself, that once dreadful persecutor, but afterwards glorious apostle, when alluding to his dark career, puts in this as a mitigating circumstance, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief." While, then, we pour out the vials of our indignation upon the persecutors who lived in the ages of intolerance; while we admit that there is still in those who are our contemporaries too much of this dreadful spirit, in whom it is more guilty because of the light of the age, let us not charge the crimes of by-gone times upon all the followers of the same systems of church government who live in our day. Let us not say that every papist would burn us at the stake if he could; and that every clergyman of the church of England



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would silence and imprison nonconformists if it were in his power.

The times must and do modify the spirit of sects, when they may not yet change their theoretic systems. Canons, creeds, and decrees may be still preserved like ecclesiastical mummies long after the spirit that once animated them is departed. Some perhaps will be ready to say that instead of being reduced to the lifeless condition of mummies, these persecuting systems are only in a state of mesmeric slumber, from which they may be roused by the same spirit of the times that brought the sleep over them. Granted. And therefore it were well that the very bodies themselves should be put to death and buried beyond the power of resuscitation.

V. We may surely felicitate ourselves on the times in which it is our happiness to live. The night of intolerance, whatever shadows clouds or mists linger after the sun has risen, has passed away, never, we hope, to return. Nonconformists have yet, of course, something to complain of, and something to seek after. The existence of the union between church and state is to them an evil in theory and practice, and many of the consequences which flow from it are oppressive to them, and no one ought to blame them, if in the meekness of wisdom, and by the force of persuasion, (and in no other way should it be attempted,) they seek its dissolution. It ought however to be and is to them matter of unspeakable thankfulness to consider the glorious change which has come over this country since the revolution in 1688. Thanks be to the men who struggled for liberty to bonds imprisonment and death; thanks to the patriots, who by the act of

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toleration muzzled and chained the savage spirit of persecution; thanks to the senators who since then have protected us in the enjoyment of our rights, and continually enlarged them; thanks be to the monarchs who have determined to maintain that act inviolate; thanks to the British nation which has acknowledged our claims; but above all, thanks to the King of kings, by whose patronage and power (the only patronage and power we invoke,) these blessings have been bestowed upon us, and continued to us.

That there are some high church bigots who grudge us our liberties, and would infringe if not destroy them if they could, may be well supposed, when we observe the bitterness of their language, and their arts of calumny and detraction, and the intense malignity to which they descend in their publications. But the great bulk of the church of England look upon us, we would fain persuade ourselves, in another light than as the objects of dislike, fit only to be the victims of legal persecution. Our right to religious liberty is conceded, though it were well, if in addition to all that has been done, the persecuting laws and canons were expunged, the one by the state, and the other by the church, instead of being covered over merely by an act of toleration. Even these dead bodies of intolerance should be buried out of sight, and put away as memorials of an age which we should all desire to forget.

It is impossible to deny, and equally impossible not to exult, that a better feeling has been springing up between the advocates and opponents of establishments, which, under God's blessing, must be traced partly to the growth of civil and religious liberty, and partly to the rise and spread of evangelical religion in the church.

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Over that blessed revival, so obvious and so extensive, though somewhat checked of late by the spread of tractarian opinions, dissenters have rejoiced as much as the pious members of the church, in which it has occurred. This is the more disinterested, and the more demonstrative of the good feeling by which the non-conformist body is actuated, inasmuch as it has unquestionably led to an efflux to the national establishment of many of the more wealthy members of their body. The time has arrived when churchmen and dissenters are seen side by side on the same platforms, advocating the same religious institutions, and in many cases drawn by the attracting power of the Evangelical Alliance into still closer bonds, despite the controversy which is still going on, and must go on, concerning the question which distinguishes them from each other. The British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Religious Tract Society, have had no small share in the diminution of the spirit of bigotry, and the increase of charity.

VI. How important is it, while we all keep up an enlightened, and even an active zeal for our denominational principles, that we unite with it a spirit of sincere and fervent charity! The question between the advocates and opponents of religious establishments is not among the mere nugæ of controversy; on the contrary, it is a serious and momentous subject. One party views establishments as the will of God, and essential in the present state of things to the maintenance of national religion; the other considers them as opposed to the New Testament, and essentially corruptive of the nature, and obstructive of the process of true religion. There cannot, therefore, with these opposing sentiments

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be any cessation of the conflict between the two parties, or any truce between them. Allegiance to truth, to God, and to conscience forbids it. The advocate of each is contending according to his own view for truth and against error. Each ought to contend. But then, as truth is important, so is love. If truth ought not to be sacrificed for charity, so neither ought charity to be sacrificed for truth. The man who would never oppose error, but allow it to run its mischievous career, for fear of violating charity, is wrong in one extreme; while the man who would do nothing to assist charity in its peaceful and tranquillizing efforts, for fear of compromising truth, is wrong in the opposite extreme. He only is right who fears to be silent in the cause of truth, but equally fears to be uncharitable in the cause of love.

It were well if in this controversy as in all others, the opposing parties would in imagination sometimes change places, and each look at the subject of contention with his opponent's eyes. If the dissenter were to borrow the churchman's eyes, and endeavour to see how the question of establishments appears to him: and the churchman were to borrow the dissenter's eyes and see how the voluntary principle appears to him, how differently would the matter appear; and when each laid down his neighbour's spectacles and took up his own, much reason would both find, if not to alter their opinions, yet to maintain them, not indeed, with less firmness, but certainly, with greater charity.

It is also forgotten by many that, from the very constitution of our nature, we are much more in danger of offending against love, than against truth. Men are far more proud of their intellect than of their affections, and therefore are far more jealous of what

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would impugn the credit of their understanding, than of what would disparage their hearts. Hence they are far more likely to trench upon what concerns the latter than the former. Our chief solicitude therefore, on account of this very tendency, should be not to neglect the meekness and gentleness of Christ. There is no great danger of our being lukewarm about our creed, but the danger is imminent of our being careless about our christian temper.

Nor ought the importance and pre-eminence of love, according to the apostle's decision, to be forgotten. From the moment when the blessed Paul established the superiority of love over faith, men have been trying to invert the order and to establish the pre-eminence of faith over love. The least article of faith, though it relate to the mode of a sacrament, or what is far less, the form of a clerical habit, or the posture of a devotee, has been thought of sufficient importance, and felt to be of sufficient power, to interrupt the exercise and destroy the very existence of love.

Men forget that zeal for truth, unmixed with love, is the very essence of persecution. The thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, had it been universally studied understood and practised, would have kept all persecution out of the world. We should never have heard of the inquisition, the prison, the scaffold, or the stake, as a punishment for error and a support of truth, if that beautiful portion of God's word had been constantly borne in mind. Just in proportion, therefore, as men in the support of their opinions indulge in malice wrath and all uncharitableness, they cherish the spirit and evince the character of persecutors. They are persecutors in a small way,

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and would deal in it more largely if the law did not prevent. Whoever, I repeat, seeks to degrade an opponent as well as to confute him; to insult him by scorn as well as to answer him by reason, to make him appear ridiculous as well as erroneous, to wound his feelings by irony and sarcasm, as well as to convince his judgment by argument and persuasion; who, in short, is not satisfied with demolishing the system he upholds, but aims to crush him personally to the earth; such a man may be a conqueror, but he must be content at the same time to add to that the character of a persecutor.

Let us then, while we all contend for truth, contend for it in the spirit of love. The weapons of our warfare cannot be laid up like the sword of Goliath, by the side of the ark, but must be in constant use. That man is an unworthy member of any church who is not prepared in a right spirit to contend for it against those who would seek its destruction. He who has not love enough for the truth to defend it, has not, whatever he may say, true and proper love of any kind. The smallest particle of truth has a value not to be estimated by gold or diamonds. I should be sorry, indeed, if it should be imagined from anything written in this volume that its author was indifferent to sound doctrine. Truth and charity stand related to each other, as the foundation and the superstructure; charity without truth is baseless, and truth without charity is but a foundation. I hold the importance of right sentiments, and that man is responsible for his belief. Pope's hacknied couplet, in the sense he intended it, is a dogma of unbelief, soaked with infidelity to its very core.

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.”

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My deliberate belief is, that the essential characteristic of Christianity is pardon for sinful man, through a divine Mediator, and grace renewing him by the Holy Spirit, subduing yet exalting him; piercing yet comforting him; humbling him as nothing before God, yet making him mighty against all evil, first, within his own bosom, and then in the wide world around him. So I read the Book. I judge not others; to their own master they stand or fall. I presume not to limit the mercy of God, or to ascertain how far beyond the boundary line of truth it may extend to the votaries of error, it is enough for me to say that, without a belief of essential truth, I should not feel that, in the scriptural sense of the term, I could lay claim to the character of a Christian, or that I was safe for eternity. With these views, therefore, I hold it to be as important to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints as it is for charity; but at the same time to maintain the contest with "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

The law of Christianity requires not only that truth should be spoken in love, but heard in love; charity is as obligatory upon the respondent as upon the appellant. If there are some who violate charity by the manner in which they oppose any given system, there are others who equally violate it by the manner in which they defend it. They cannot endure to have their opinions called in question in ever so mild, candid, and courteous a manner. Even the voice of charity, however soft and mellifluous her tones, offends them, if she venture to speak against their favourite system. This betrays a weak head and a weaker heart, and indeed betokens a conviction so slightly rooted as to be in danger of being

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blown down by the faintest breeze. He is a man of feeble virtue, who cannot bear to be told, however kindly, of his faults. To account a man our enemy because he calls in question the correctness of our views, though he do it ever so respectfully and candidly, is as much a breach of charity as it is to speak against opinions in bitterness and wrath. How are the jarring sentiments of mankind to be harmonized? How is the divided church to be made one? Only by this speaking to one another in love, by this discussion in friendly controversy of our differences, by this willingness to have our errors exposed and refuted, if errors we have. Away, then, with that morbid spirit which makes us waspish petulant and implacable, when our opinions are controverted. The church of Christ can never be tuned to other music as long as this spirit prevails. It is the prevalence of love that in fact must prepare us for the prevalence of truth. The best way to harmonise all minds is to reconcile all hearts. When men have placed their hearts under the government of charity, they are best prepared to discuss the question, "What is truth?" And admitting, as all must do, that it is desirable that men should be brought into more consentaneousness of opinion on religion, we must at the same time believe, that while he who controverts error, does something towards this, and shews what is truth, he also does something who keeps down the heats of party, thus scattering the clouds of prejudice and the mists of passion, and producing that serene and transparent atmosphere of charity in which the sun of truth most brightly shines, and can be most clearly seen.

I cannot more appropriately or more impressively



close this volume than by the following quotation, from the works of Mr. Robert Hall:

“That union among Christians, which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine, than legal restraints, or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety among all sects and parties will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably, to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree, and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassable boundary, or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolising with another class of Christians. The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heart felt homage, for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles, in which they concur.

“To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the Head of the church would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought ever to cherish would incline us to be looking up for superior light, and

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make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church would be exploded, the foolish clamour about schism hushed, and no one, however mean or inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead Christians into a similar train of thinking; and being more under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one communion would probably be productive of much mischief: it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride, acting upon indolence and fear.”

“During the present disjointed state of things then, nothing remains, but for every one to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is intrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents, in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to ‘form Christ’ in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the Christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an identity in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear, and Christians would every where approach toward that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is combined of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms—Since they have all drunk into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth, not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians; maladies, which nothing can correct but deep and genuine piety.”

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In connexion with the foregoing Tracts of the Author, the following Petition and Address will not be without interest.

*Petition to the House of Commons from the Carrs  
Lane Congregation.*

SHEWETH:

That your petitioners, maintaining the scriptural distinction between what is due to Cæsar and what is due to God, declare themselves to be loyally attached to their rightful sovereign William the Fourth, and to the civil constitution of these realms, although they are separatists from the church of England as by law established.

That your petitioners, acknowledging no other rule of religious faith and practice than the holy Scriptures; claiming the indefeasible right of private judgment in the interpretation of the word of God; disowning the propriety of all means of diffusing religion except those of instruction and persuasion, and of all methods of supporting it but the voluntary offerings of its friends, conscientiously disapprove of the political association of systems so diverse in their means, ends, and agencies, as the kingdom of Christ which is not of this world, and the secular governments of the earth; and they neither deny nor conceal, that they shall truly rejoice when, by the prevalence of correct sentiments, the government, the legislature, and the community of this nation shall be prepared to concur in that great measure of sound and scriptural policy, the dissolution of the alliance between the state and the church.

Your petitioners however confine the prayer of their

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petition, to the removal of those specific and acknowledged grievances and disabilities, which now oppress and degrade them, but from which they hope to be speedily relieved by the justice of a British parliament.

They complain of it as a manifest hardship that their registry of baptisms and burials is not received as evidence in our courts of law; in consequence of which they are prevented, in cases of litigation, from proving by this means their own and their children's right to the possession of property to which they are justly entitled.

They are of opinion that as literature and science are not sectarian in their nature, all attempts to restrict by law their advantages to any one denomination of professing christians, is the most unjust and injurious of all monopolies and that it is therefore, a cruel injustice to nonconformists to exclude their youth from the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham, while such exclusion fixes a stigma upon the church of England, by producing the suspicion that she is anxious to maintain her ascendancy by shutting out dissenters from the national fountains of education.

They deem it an infringement of the principles of religious liberty to be denied the privilege of celebrating the forms of marriage by their own ministers, and to be compelled in that ceremony, to resort to the clergy of a church from which they have seceded, and to use a form which they consider as superstitious in some parts, and indelicate in others.

They feel it to be a grievance that on the decease of their friends, they are not permitted to bury their dead in the parochial cemeteries, unless they will employ the clergy, and use the forms of the established

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church; being thus deprived of the ministrations of their own pastors, on those mournful occasions, when their sympathies and their services are so pre-eminently desirable.

They complain of the injustice of being compelled to support, by church rates, Easter offerings, and other exactions a form of ecclesiastical polity from which they conscientiously dissent, and in the benefits of which they have no direct participation; and they cannot forbear to express their deep rooted conviction, that the present mode of defraying the contingent expenses of the worship of the established church, is not more unjust to the dissenters, than it is injurious to the community by opening a fruitful source of ever recurring strife, and detrimental to the church itself by awakening towards her a bitter hostility in the minds of multitudes, who have no connexion whatever with the body of nonconformists.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly but earnestly pray your honourable house, that a national civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths may be established; that dissenters may be allowed to celebrate the religious forms of marriage by their own ministers, and be permitted to bury their dead in the parochial cemeteries by their own pastors, on condition of paying their quota of the expense necessary for keeping the grave yard in proper condition; that the universities and all schools of learning may be rendered accessible to their youth; and that church rates may be abolished, or that at least an exemption from them may be granted to dissenters and methodists, and that they may have such relief in the premises as the justice and wisdom of your honorable House shall suggest.

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*Address to the Queen on the visit of her Majesty and Prince Albert to Birmingham on the opening of Aston Hall and Park for the purposes of a Public Company.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

WE your Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Nonconformist Ministers of religion of various denominations in the town of Birmingham, beg permission, in our own name, and on behalf of our respective congregations, most cordially and sincerely to welcome your Majesty and the Prince Consort to this borough, and gratefully to acknowledge the distinguished honour conferred upon us; this being, we believe, the first time in the history of our town of its being favoured with a monarch's presence.

If any thing could add to the loyalty of a place where your Majesty has already a throne in every heart, it is this gracious and condescending visit to patronize the appropriation of a seat of ancient grandeur to the purpose of popular recreation; an act which so convincingly and so beautifully demonstrates the interest your Majesty takes in whatever promotes the comfort of the people of these realms. Believing also as we do that the stability of the throne and the welfare of the people are most effectually secured by the righteousness which exalteth a nation, it is our special delight to see your Majesty ever ready to sustain by the influence of example the cause of scriptural education and the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Britons we feel somewhat of patriotic exultation that we are subjects of an empire on which the sun never sets; but we are still more devoutly thankful to

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Almighty God that our country is the home of freedom, the emporium of commerce, the domain of science, and the temple of piety, under your Majesty's constitutional sceptre.

As Protestant Nonconformists who in the exercise of their inalienable rights have conscientiously and peacefully separated from the worship of the established church we have special grounds of devotedness to your Majesty's person and government, in that enlightened, consistent, and unvarying determination to uphold the great principles not only of civil but of religious liberty which on all occasions your Majesty has evinced.

Unswerving attachment to the illustrious House of Hanover from the time of its accession to the British throne has ever characterised the various bodies of Protestant Nonconformists; and, receiving loyalty as an heir-loom from those who have gone before us, we should prove ourselves unworthy of our ancestors if this virtue were not cherished by us, especially now when the throne is filled by a Queen, who to every public excellence as a monarch, unites every private virtue as a wife and a mother.

That your Majesty's life through the favour of Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice may be long spared, not only for the happiness of the Prince Consort and your Majesty's royal family, but for the well-being of this great nation; that your Majesty's reign, by the blessings of peace abroad, the prevalence of social order, general prosperity, and true religion at home, may constitute the brightest page of British history; and that when the splendours of royalty, and the pageantry of earthly greatness shall, with all the fashion

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of this world, have passed away, your Majesty may exchange a diadem of gold for the crown of glory which never fades, is, and will be, our sincere, our fervent, and our constant prayer.

Signed on behalf of a General Meeting,  
JOHN ANGELL JAMES,  
CHAIRMAN.



## **PASTORAL ADDRESSES**

TO THE CARRS LANE CONGREGATION UPON THE POPE  
RE-ORGANISING THE PAPAL CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

**AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO "THE PAPAL AGGRESSION  
AND POPERY RELIGIOUSLY CONTEMPLATED."**

THE following address is the substance of a sermon preached by the author to his congregation on Christmas-day 1850, and is now given to them in its present form. Intended primarily and principally for them, the author cannot, of course, trouble himself to consider, much less to reply, to what others may think or say about or against it. That persons of all parties who may look into it may find something that will not quite please them, is very probable. The author is endeavouring to look at the whole affair with as much impartiality and charity as he can command.

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MY DEAR FRIENDS,

YOU partake, in common with the millions of your fellow-protestants of these realms, the indignant surprise which has been excited by the insolent and absurd attempt which is now made to subject this great nation to the ecclesiastical domination of Rome; and although you have the same means of forming an opinion of these preposterous pretensions as I have, yet you will perhaps expect from me as your minister, my views of this audacious aggression of the papal see. Instead however of giving you my opinions in my own language, I shall express them in the calm and lucid statement of Mr Binney of London, which was delivered first of all to his own congregation, and has since been printed in several of the daily and weekly newspapers. His views are in substance mine. There may be here and there a sentiment, as well as an occasional expression, with which I may not entirely coincide; but in the main, I agree with him, and commend the paper to your deliberate and serious attention. What measures I may wish you to take in following up these views will be a subject for further consideration and conference.

In the mean time I doubt not you will contemplate the event in the same light as did her Majesty's First Minister of State, in his well-known letter, as a cause rather of indignation, than of alarm. To me it appears

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a most signal instance of that arrangement of providence by which "God disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise;" by which, "He maketh the wise in their own craftiness, and carrieth the counsel of the froward headlong." That it will do much to rouse the slumbering spirit of protestantism, there can be no doubt, for this it has already done to an almost unprecedented extent, and, as little can it be doubted, that it will tend to check the growth of popery among us, and rebuke that semi-papistical spirit so rife among a certain portion of the established clergy; to which indeed this insolent aggression may in no small degree be traced.

My earnest hope is, and it shall be my prayer, that our zeal for protestantism, and against popery, may be as intelligent and calm, as it is ardent and uncompromising; neither exasperated by passion, nor envenomed by the rancour of intolerance. Let no man think the worse of religious liberty, however much he may think the worse of popery, for this outbreak of Roman catholic assumption: and especially let us deprecate all ebullitions of popular fury, and all persecuting measures of legislation, against the authors and abettors of this aggression. Nor let there be any craven spirits amongst us, who imagine that there is power enough in a cardinal's hat to cover over the crown of these realms, to crush the British constitution, or to extinguish the light of protestantism. We know the wish, the hope, the intention of popery; and thank God we know its doom also, whatever may be its present seeming victories.

As protestant dissenters, we have a cautious course to take, which shall neither compromise our nonconformist

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principles on the one hand, nor our protestantism on the other. We have no need to do either. I will no more yield my rights and my liberty to the church of England, than I will to the church of Rome; but then I will join heartily with the former, as far as I consistently can, in resisting the aggression of the latter. We may have some complaint against Anglican episcopacy, but the little finger of popery is heavier than the loins of the church of England. Let us hold forth our nonconformity, but let us also remember that it is protestant nonconformity; and therefore let us make common cause with other protestants against the determined, implacable, and audacious enemy of us all.

I now commend the subject to your serious and prayerful consideration, believing that in this, as in other arrangements of Divine Providence, all things are working together for good.

Your affectionate Pastor,

J. A. JAMES.

Edgbaston, November 13, 1850.

## THE PAPAL AGGRESSION AND POPYRY RELIGIOUSLY CONTEMPLATED,

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE DELIVERED ON  
CHRISTMAS DAY 1850.

MY BELOVED FLOCK.

In looking around for a subject of my New Year's address I find no difficulty in making a selection. There is but one topic which has power just at present to command and fix attention. Our thoughts and feelings flow with such natural tendency and strong force in one channel, that we are both unable and unwilling to divert or divide the current. It is probable there are some views of this absorbing matter which, amidst our somewhat warm and impassioned discussions, may have escaped observation, but which ought not to be lost sight of. We have looked at the recent papal aggression as Englishmen, and with an enlightened and virtuous patriotism have resented and are prepared to resist it, as an encroachment upon our constitution, an insult to our sovereign, and a real, though unavowed and somewhat concealed assault upon our liberties. We have contemplated it as protestants, and have recognized in it an insidious and dangerous grasp of temporal power for the advancement of a system which is an eclipse of Christianity, an awful perversion of all the truths of the

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gospel, and a snare and a curse for the souls of mankind; a grasp of power, which by all constitutional means that do not infringe the great principles of religious liberty should be prevented. We have scrutinized the scheme as protestant dissenters, and have protested against it as an ecclesiastical assumption, the most gigantic in its size and force for enslaving the conscience, which has been put forth in modern times. But have we sufficiently regarded it as Christians, as those who believe the doctrines, follow the precepts, and imbibe the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ? Has the element of personal godliness mingled sufficiently with the other principles which have actuated us; and are we cherishing in adequate proportions those sentiments and feelings which belong to us, at least by profession, as followers of the Lamb? Is our zeal, righteous as it is, duly enlightened and exerted for the truth as it is in Jesus, and warmed by that love of Christ which ought to constrain us in this, as well as in every thing else? We are, as loyal and patriotic citizens, studying the subject over the statute-book of our country; but are we at the same time, in the same degree, poring over the Bible? We join in public meetings to discuss and debate; do we carry the subject to our prayer meetings, to our family altars, and to our closets? We address our earthly sovereign loyally and devotedly; do we also lay our supplications before our Heavenly Monarch? We are thinking how the event will affect our national liberties; do we inquire how it will influence our personal piety?

Permit me then to call your attention to this view of the subject. A Christian should look at every thing with the eye of a Christian. He is not to be the mere politician, the mere patriot, the mere citizen, in any thing; but the

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Christian in every thing. As in his private matters he is to let his religion have influence upon all his transactions, and to examine how they square with the rules of Scripture morality; so in all his contemplations of public events, he is to examine in what way they accord with the Scripture prophecies, promises and prospects. He must ever live within sight of the cross and the crown of his divine Lord.

Now, surely, surely, there must be something in this event which is moving all England to its very depths, and is viewed with attention by all Europe and the world, that has a connexion with the cause of Christ, and ought to have an interest in the Christian's heart.

I. I shall exhibit those general views which a Christian should take of the event itself.

It should of course be regarded as an event which is comprehended within the general scheme of divine providence: as a something permitted or appointed by God. We are to look proximately, of course, at the ever-encroaching power of the papal see; and at the movement of pride and ambition of an aspiring individual. Human passions and earthly interests are not to be left out of account in this case, any more than in others. The apostle in speaking of the death of Christ, says, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain." Here is the union of God's appointment with man's instrumentality, without any attempt to harmonize the wisdom and equity of the one with the freedom and guilt of the other. So in the present case there is God's working and man's working. God is in all history: he is in this event. The papacy itself through all its dark and



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sanguinary history, with all its crimes and errors, is a permission of divine providence. It is not a something which arose without his knowledge or against his will. Nor did this movement of it; the pope and the cardinal are fulfilling as they suppose their own purposes, or as they assert the purpose of God. So they are, but not in their view of it. Let us not leave God out. He moves in a mysterious way to execute his plans. "Clouds and darkness are round about him. His way is in the sea. His footsteps are in the great waters." But he is there. He is moving, acting, fulfilling now, as truly as ever, as wisely as ever, as justly as ever, his own counsels. Consider not man but God. Rise above the confusion and clamour of men, to God. Ascend above the clouds to where Jehovah Jesus reigns in serene majesty. Let it be your song and your solace that the "Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The event, however threatening its aspect, will be so over-ruled in its results, as that its permission will be seen to be in accordance with the principles of his moral government, and to have been ordered so as ultimately to subserve his merciful designs towards our world. In his administration there are things which utterly perplex and confound us. They appear to be contradictory to wisdom, equity, and goodness. How overwhelming to us is the entrance of moral evil into the universe; which we are ready to say Omnipotence could have prevented. Next to this comes the permission of idolatry; and then the rise, spread, and continuance through so many ages of the papacy. This is one of the deepest mysteries of the moral government of God. But what in fact is the whole of God's reign over the intellectual universe but one continued series of sublime and awful schemes for

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bringing good out of evil. He is never unwise, unjust, unmerciful; though his ways for manifesting these attributes are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. This applies to the providential arrangements which are now developing. That in this age and country of light liberty and commerce, of evangelical preaching and advancing education, popery should be increasing in protestant England, and should have put out a claim so arrogant and so insolent, is what we could not have expected. We are taken by surprise, and filled with apprehension; not indeed for ultimate results, but for present influence. Still let us look up and consider who is upon the throne: Jesus, with all power in heaven and earth, is there; Jesus, the head of all principality and power, is there; Jesus, with his eye ever watchful, his heart ever loving, his arm ever powerful, is there. He has been in every Roman congregation; heard every conference of pope and cardinals; seen every movement; and is now calmly surveying the whole plan, and preparing to break them in pieces with a rod of iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. They may plot, and plan, and purpose; but "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." We know that "all things work together for good." This applies as truly to the church of Christ, and all its changeful history, as to individual Christians. Popery may revive, has revived, and will probably yet revive. But its days are numbered, its destruction is predicted, and the word of the Lord shall stand. Its final downfall will not be in its weakness, but in its strength. The last victory of the Redeemer will be achieved, not when his great foe has become feeble, and when there is to be nothing of his manifested

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greatness, but when his omnipotence shall shine forth with new splendour, and fill the universe with his renown.

It is impossible not to recognize the tokens for good, which have already appeared amidst the confusion and distraction created by this movement of the papal power. Had the nation been passive and quiescent, and allowed this measure to pass without notice, protest, or resistance, it would have been a portentous sign of spiritual torpor and death; and that we were prepared to surrender our protestantism, without a struggle or a wish to retain it. But it is a reviving sight to behold the general rising of our country in favour of the principles of the reformation. We had begun to fear that a spirit of indifference in some quarters, and of half-favour in the form of tractarianism in others, were preparing a large portion of the population to fall into the arms of popery. We heard of secessions to Rome from the church of England, in numbers unparelled since the reformation; a fact which doubtless led the papal power to suppose it might attempt, with good hope of success, this invasion of our land. And had the proceedings of Rome been more stealthy, and more according to its usual caution; had it still continued to work, like the mole, under ground, instead of above it; had it been less audacious, it would have been more mischievous; had it employed the subtlety of the serpent, instead of the boldness of the lion, we might have been more injured. It has in this case lost its usual cunning, and departed from its usual policy. It is no longer "the mystery of iniquity," but its revelation. Plans and purposes formed long since in the Vatican for England's subjugation, have for Rome unwisely, for us happily, been disclosed. The

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nation has been alarmed and has risen up in its mightiness, and has recommitted itself to protestantism. The mighty wave of avowed sentiment and feeling that has rolled over the land, has borne some weeds, and carried some dirt in its course; but who can wonder at this, however they may regret it? All denominations in their own fashion and according to their own views, have recorded before God and their country, their protest against popery, and its pretensions. The papacy has again been presented in its true shape, and colours, and doings, to the nation. Its history has been re-told and re-heard; and its infinite demerits have been publicly exposed and denounced. It has challenged a fresh trial, and it is now passing through it, and has little to expect or hope for from this re-hearing of the case. "God is taking the wise in their own craftiness, and carrying the counsel of the froward headlong." If report says true, there begin to be murmurings, if not mutiny in its own camp, among its clergy; and there needs only the lull of the protestant storm, to have a papist one raised against this newly established hierarchy. Many who are staunch Roman catholics cannot consent to become papists.

But this is not all; Puseyism will receive a powerful check. In all probability the leaders and ultras in this section of semi-popery will some of them go over to Rome, and others be silenced; while many not so far gone, will see their danger, retrace their steps, and renounce the hidden things of dishonesty," and no longer "handling the word of God deceitfully," will either from principle or from policy give up their follies or conceal them. The church of England must purify herself from this leaven, and undergo another reformation. Evangelism, especially under the sanction of the

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late decision of the privy council upon the Gorham case, will we hope triumph over formalism.

Nor will the benefit stop here. The national mind will be roused and set upon investigation. There will be more reading and thinking upon questions of ecclesiastical polity than there ever has been. Men will think for themselves. Inquiry can neither be stifled nor limited. Investigation must go on; all systems must come to the ordeal. It is only by some such convulsion that men can be roused to examine. The usual course of controversy has not power enough to stimulate a searching trial: a hundred pamphlets, or even volumes, would have less force to awaken inquiry than this one event. The popular voice will ask the question, "Who is right?" and "What is the standard?" We must consent to have all our systems weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, the word of God; and they that cannot stand this, will be swept away as the chaff before the whirlwind. Is not all this good, and are not all things working together to produce it?

Let not the Christian then be dismayed at what has taken place, but let him rather look upon it as one of those moral thunder storms which, however awful in its character, alarming in its aspect, and partially destructive in its course, will give us a purer and healthier atmosphere. Like other tempests, which sometimes take a circular course, and after sweeping through the heavens come back to the quarter from which they originated; this storm rolling on from Rome, will roll back to it again, and discharge its heaviest bolts on the city over which it rose.

Let all Christians then be calm and confident. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king." Let

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them be able without alarm, yea, with perfect confidence, to bear present and partial defeat by a few secessions to Rome, even if more, yea many more should follow, under the assurance of final and complete victory. And let us also recollect that history is full of instances of the proximity of danger and ruin to the most flattering and favourable appearances of safety and prosperity. Let not the present rescript from Home, even should it be allowed to stand and operate, shake for a moment our confidence in Him, who is "head over all things to his church;" or unsettle our conviction of the final overthrow of the whole system which it is intended to uphold. Let our faith in God and God's word be strong, steady, and tranquillizing.

The event, in harmony with all other occurrences, indkates the importance in a moral and religious point of view, yea, the unusually momentous character, of the age we live in. In our day nothing is little. Every thing has a character and a prognostication of greatness and power. Man is rising up to do great duties, because God is coming out of his place to work by this instrumentality, in accomplishing some of his grandest purposes. Truth is being assailed by its most formidable opponents, and in the most formidable manner. The enemies of God, infidelity, false philosophy, and popery, were never more audacious. There is an aspect of determination in their looks, and an energy of effort in their actions, which seem as if they were preparing for a last struggle. While on the other hand, His friends were never more active. The christian church is full of schemes of moral enterprise. Just at this time comes forth a papal scheme, to which there has been nothing analogous since the reformation; nothing so

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bold, so arrogant, so astounding, even from Home; a scheme which has moved all ranks of society, all parties in politics, all denominations in religion, in this great country. The sober-minded English are not moved by trifles; and yet all are moved. It must be a great thing which has done it. We do not see the end of the present measure. We know not the length and breadth of the train of this comet, which has now come into our national system, and at which all men are amazed. It is not perhaps yet in its perihelion. A controversy is begun, when, where, and how will it end? Who can tell us? The event harmonizes with the features of the age; it is great and momentous. What kind of people ought we to be who live at such a time? How thoughtful, how devout, how conversant with that only book which by its contents can explain the present aspect of providence, or in any measure unlock the secrets of futurity. Let us catch the spirit of the age, a spirit of greatness, and feel as if we were born at a time when we should be in a mind and state to do much for God, our country, the world, and posterity. We are called to act, when not only neutrality, but lukewarmness of feeling and littleness of purpose are forbidden. Man's existence was never greater. There never was a time when by God's grace working in him, and by him, and with him, he could do more. How ought we to prepare ourselves by prayer and eminent piety, to act our part well!

II. Let us now look at the particular and direct relation, or rather the opposition, of popery itself to the New Testament. We must distinguish between the popish religion and popery as an organized system of political supremacy. It is constituted, we know, of both:

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the sacred and the secular run so entirely the one into the other, and so assist and strengthen each other, that practically they can scarcely be separated. Yet in theory they may be viewed apart. We now consider it therefore in its religious aspect: and see in it I repeat an all but total eclipse of genuine Christianity; an awful perversion of the truths of revelation, which wherever it prevails, must throw over the souls of men the dark shadow of spiritual death. It subverts the true foundation of the sinner's hope before God, and furnishes another rule for the believer's life than that which is laid down in the word of God. It is the christian religion in name, but in very little else, and is rather a paganised Christianity, than an exhibition of the system set forth by Christ and his apostles. It has assumed a right to add to what is written in the inspired books; and its additions are also alterations and corruptions, which have transformed the original substance into quite another thing. Look at its claims for the authority of the church as virtually above scripture, with its assumed right to interpret it authoritatively, and its assertion of a power to do so infallibly. Look at its oral law, its forged decretals, its spurious canons, the pretended unwritten revelation which is made of equal authority with the scriptures themselves, by which it makes void the word of God, by various matters of human invention. Look at its head the pope, uniting the character of a temporal prince, having territorial dominion, money taxes and military troops like other earthly sovereigns, with the christian bishop, so contrary to the express words of Christ, whose vicar he pretends to be, but who said that his kingdom was not of this world, and that his servants did not fight. Look at its scale of



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civil and sacred offices, ascending from the lowest functionary in the public service, up through innumerable gradations till it culminates in the pope, each having rank, title, power, and insignia, so opposed to the injunction of Christ, that it should not be so among his disciples. Look at its high ceremonies at Rome on its great festival-days, when the worldly pomp, the troops, the cardinals, the great officers of the Vatican, in all their splendid robes of every texture, colour, and shape, and all the dazzling assemblage of fashionables and devotees, with the accompaniments of music, and incense, and processions, would lead you to imagine you were witnessing some pagan exhibition or at least some worldly spectacle; and then think how strangely this contrasts with every thing set forth by the divine author of our religion, or by his inspired apostles; how little it seems to comport with the institutes of "the man of sorrows," who by his own personal history and that of the twelve whom he appointed to make it known, exhibited in their sanctity, simplicity, and unworldly appearance, the type of the religion he came to found. Look at the worship of popery, as even now conducted wherever it is professed, the various officers of their cathedrals and chapels, with their superb or gaudy dresses; their multiplied ceremonies; their images; and their pictures; their crossings and genuflexions; the enthronizations and elevations of their higher officers; and say how ill this comports with any idea we can entertain of the ministers and worship of the primitive churches. Look at the doctrines which form the creed of Romanists. Their doctrine of transubstantiation, that monstrous outrage upon the human understanding, by which the bread and wine are changed into the true substance of the person

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of Christ, so that the recipient of these, verily and literally eats the body, soul, and divinity, of our Lord; thus changing the simple nature of the Lord's supper, as a commemorative ordinance, into a mystery, a contradiction, and an absurdity; and by which, contrary to the word of God, which says that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many," there is an offering up of the Saviour every time it is celebrated. Their doctrine of the worship of the Virgin Mary, and their invocation of saints; so contrary to the declaration of scripture, that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Their worship of images, so opposed to the second commandment of the decalogue. Their multiplication of the original two sacraments into seven, without one syllable of Scripture to authorize the addition. Their doctrine of human merit and works of supererogation, so subversive of the great truth of justification by faith without works, and so flatly contradictory of every page and principle of the New Testament. Their doctrine of purgatory and indulgences, so opposed to the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, and to the declarations of scripture, which tell us that departed spirits go at death directly to celestial blessedness or to the state of the condemned. Their doctrine of auricular confession, so impure, so revolting, so totally unauthorized by any part of scripture; so dangerous to the peace of families and the safety of states. Their celibacy of the clergy, so full of temptation to the ministers of religion, so repugnant to the dictates of nature, and so contrary to the precepts and examples of scripture. Look at their monastic and conventual system, by which myriads and myriads of devotees are detached from society, and contrary to the natural order of things are doomed to

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perpetual celibacy and idleness, and by which religion is thus divorced from its connexion with our general habits, and presented to mankind as a mere exercise of devotion instead of a universally influencing principle. Look at the order of the Jesuits, and the subversion of all the principles of morals by their infamous writings; a body so mischievous in its tendency and actual results, as to have been at one time banished from all the catholic kingdoms of Europe, and annulled by a papal bull, as dangerous to the well-being of the community; but now re-established by Rome in spite of its own testimony and in defiance of the world, and swarming out under its favour into every part of Europe, again to plot against the religion, the morals, and the liberties of the nations. Look at its determined, avowed, and inveterate hostility to the free circulation of the scriptures among the people; its declaration, by the council of Trent, that “if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess them without the written permission (of his priest) he shall not receive absolution (without which, he must die unforgiven and be damned) until he has first delivered up such Bible to his ordinary.” I say, look at all this; look at it in the light of the new testament, and say whether as Christians we can contemplate such a system with indifference. We are not, and ought not to be, taken up so exclusively with the defence of our liberties as to forget our religion. Not that we would employ the same means to defend the one as we would the other. In the present case we distinguish between that part of popery which is religious, and that which is political, and while we would curb the latter by law, we would resist the other only by argument. Believing truth to be divine, we will

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defend it by no other weapons than its own. If we cannot convince or stop Romanism by the bible, we will not employ the sword. We will ask for no repeal of statutes of toleration already enacted, nor the enactment of any new civil penalties against the system we so detest.

“We will leave it to others who mistrust their convictions, or are ashamed to defend them, cowardly to coerce those whom they seek not to convince, and are afraid to defy. We know that a religion which lives only in conviction, can never advance its interest by force. Persecution, the cowardly scourge of pampered unbelief, can be employed only against the truth, never for it. In the present conflict impending over our country we will not fight Rome with her own weapons. Let her come like Goliath, armed to the teeth, and breathing her blasphemies, as she defies the armies of the living God; the servants of Christ can advance against her only with the word of truth, the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. And therefore against all actual intolerance we protest with a voice as loud and indignant as we do against the present aggression. We will throw the shield of protection over the just liberty of those who hold a religion we abhor, as we would over that of the men who profess a religion we love.”

But then against popery itself we stand committed in allegiance to Him whom we call our Lord, and look up to as to our only one. We should feel that we were traitors to Him and to his truth if we could abate one jot of our hostility to it as a system of error. And at the same time it would be suicidal if, as Englishmen, we stood by, and saw our liberties invaded, and the wall of our constitution broken down, because its gate was not wide enough to admit this infernal machine to be wheeled into the city for our destruction. We will then tolerate Romanism as a religion, even as we claim toleration for ourselves; but when for the sake of spreading that religion, it comes among us with a demand to surrender

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the laws that are the rampart round our liberties; we will resist it to the last.

III. I will now set before you some evils against which in consequence of the present excited state of the public mind I feel it to be necessary to guard you. It is possible your attention may be concentrated too exclusively upon this one subject. In a time of great excitement, the mind is very apt to narrow the range of its observation, and to leave out of view every thing except that one thing which is the subject of present discussion. Popery is now the engrossing topic, but is it the only error, theoretical or practical, to which our attention should be devoted? We, as dissenters, are convinced of the unscriptural nature of all secular establishments of religion; and though we will not allow our nonconformity to put our protestantism in abeyance in this critical state of our country; so neither will we allow our protestantism to lead us to forget our nonconformity. We will unite as far as we can with consistency with our brethren of the church of England in resisting popery; but we will not allow this union to lessen our conviction of the evil of state endowments of religion. We do not for a moment set the two churches of Rome and England upon a level; and it appears to me a most flagrant violation of truth and charity to attempt to do so. Nor do we feel disposed, in a spirit of bitter hostility, to avail ourselves of the present state of affairs, as an opportunity to attack the church of England, instead of resisting the church of Rome. Yet we are by no means prepared to be silent as regards the unscriptural constitution of the former. It is impossible to forget that without doubt Puseyism has led to the present aggression of Rome; and Puseyism is

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the offspring, illegitimate it is contended by its evangelical members, of the church of England. It is indeed a portentous sign for that church, and one that deserves its most serious reflection, that such a leaning towards Rome, should have been felt by so many of its clergy, and that it should possess either no power or no will to rid itself of the evil. It is clear that as long as this remains, we can never be safe from papal aggression. Hundreds of the clergy of the church of England have, no doubt, been preparing, many of them we fear designedly, this country for restoration to the papal communion. It cannot be wondered that many dissenters knowing this, should feel strongly, and speak somewhat harshly, of the evils of our national establishment. Nor ought any dissenter to be indifferent to the subject. Charity does not mean indifferentism. We must still continue zealous for the authority of the new testament; the sole headship of Christ in his church; the spirituality of his kingdom; the entire independence of his church of all state control; and the voluntary support of religion by the free-will offerings of its friends. There is much popery in the church of England, even by the admission of many of its best supporters, and if they say so, it cannot be wondered at that the affirmation should be believed and repeated by dissenters. Our church of England friends cannot but know, and should not forget, that apart from its religious creed, popery has been in act, cruel, persecuting, and bloody, only by the aid of the civil power. Take away one of its swords, I mean the temporal one, and it might anathematize, but could not kill. Its curses would be only thunder upon paper, mere brutum fulmen. The

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principle which in popery is so dangerous to our liberties is that which she holds in common with every protestant secular establishment of religion, the union of church and state. We must therefore stand forth against the popery of protestantism, as well as of Rome. We must still continue to lift our voice against those religious distinctions which breed civil discontents and ecclesiastical corruptions amongst ourselves. We cannot but mark and reprobate the inconsistencies in which this union of the secular and the spiritual involves the state where it is maintained. It is led by policy to do many things which upon principle it must condemn. Wherefore should the state frown on genuine Roman catholics, if it rears and shelters in its stipendiary church a race of counterfeit and mock Romanists? Why should the state wonder now at these new demands of a power, with whose ambition it was or ought to have been acquainted, whose boldness it has increased, and whose encroachments it has encouraged by the smiles it has shed, and the favours it has lavished upon it, by various arrangements in the colonies as well as at home. We cannot help thinking that much of the evil of popery, and evils of other kinds and from other sources, have arisen from that meddling of the state with the affairs of the church, and of the church with the affairs of the state; against which we, as protestant dissenters, have ever lifted and must continue to raise our protest.

And beside this, we must have our attention kept alive to the progress of infidelity and false philosophy, the increase of crime, the deficiency of education, and the need of national reformation, and evangelization. Popery

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is a bad thing, but it is only one of many bad things on which our attention must be fixed; and while resisting it, we must not neglect them.

We have need to be on our guard lest we allow our minds to be infected and corrupted by a spirit of malice, wrath, and all uncharitableness. Our charity is always in peril when we are engaged in controversy; and our zeal is almost sure to become distempered with a tincture of malignity, when it is strongly excited by what we consider an enormous evil; and especially where, as in the present case, it is directed against those from whom we have suffered grievous wrong. The creed of popery is so awfully erroneous, its spirit so absolutely intolerant, its history so generally written in blood, and its policy so crafty, that there is danger of our feeling it not only lawful, but pious, to cherish towards it, and let loose against it, all the irascible passions in full strength and fury. But even when thinking of this system, and resisting it to the uttermost, we should never forget that we are the disciples of him, who when dying by the malice of his enemies, thus prayed for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and who also enjoined us to pray for our enemies. There is no Christianity in malice; no piety in revenge: and there is just now a danger of our forgetting this. We are excited to indignation, let us take care "to be angry and sin not." With the most perfect abhorrence of popery, let us cherish benevolent feelings for papists. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and unholy anger, and malice, be put away from us. Let us take care that the gall of asps be not under our tongue. Let no popish rancour towards heretics be in protestant hearts towards Roman catholics. Let us not imitate



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our persecutors, nor envenom our souls even towards those who hate us. Our religion is love, and it then shines out most brightly, when it is exercised most strongly towards those who are opposed to us. We should read the blood-stained chronicles of popery to know what it is, and not to exasperate our feelings and goad ourselves into a spirit of revenge. Fox's book of martyrs, and the history of the Waldenses, and the records of the Bartholomew eve massacre, and of the reign of bloody Mary, exhibit the real spirit of popery when it was in power; but we need much of the mind of Christ when we read them. Let us use no unhallowed weapons of detraction and slander: let us beware of attacking the character of the members of the Roman catholic church in their private or social relations. In those respects they stand as fair as ourselves. In all their business transactions and general conduct, they deserve and are entitled to the same respect as their protestant neighbours, and are as amiable and as happy in their domestic circles. And who would wantonly malign the moral character and conduct of most of their clergy? I would abhor any man, and most of all myself, if I could utter a syllable to the disparagement of any men whose blameless lives entitle them to general respect; and who even in supporting what we consider a false and pernicious system, are, we are bound to believe, as conscientious as ourselves. It is with systems, and not men, that we have to do, and with the efforts of the men to employ improper means to propagate their systems. Many men are far better than their systems of religion, and yet will do that for their religion which they would do for nothing else.

Our personal religion may be injured if we do not

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take care. It is impossible to indulge unholy wrath without inflicting a deep wound on piety. Religion is contrary to all malevolence. It is at once a martyr and a seraph: an heroic, and a meek and quiet spirit; it can, when necessary, rush with courage to the field of conflict, the arena of strife, but it loves most the calm retreat, the silent shade. Times and scenes of great public excitement are congenial to its taste, unfriendly to its nature, and unfavourable to its improvement. It always after returning from battle is a long while in healing the wounds it has received in the affray. The time which has been usually given to devotion, is, in such circumstances, taken up in debate and discussion. The thoughts and feelings which should flow to God, heaven, and eternity, are diverted into other channels. The processes of faith, hope, and love are impeded. The exercises of devotion are interrupted. The chafed spirit and agitated heart are unfitted to approach God. The sabbath is desecrated, and the sanctuary is invaded, by stormy thoughts, and passions, and recollections. And when we enter the closet to commune with our Father who sees in secret, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to shut the door and be alone with God. How many things in this scene of our discipline and probation for eternity are continually occurring to hinder our progress to heaven, and to impair our meetness for it! Sometimes the good man intent upon salvation, earnest for heaven, watchful of his heart, jealous of himself, doubts whether he ought to trouble himself about public questions at all, or to touch matters of strife and debate; whether he ought not to hold on the even tenor of his way, and since eternity is at stake leave all such things to the children of this world. But then what would become of the public interests of liberty,

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truth, and religion? Is it not much better, nobler, holier, to take heed to his steps, to watch and pray, to put on the whole armour of God, and to contend for truth in the spirit of faith love and hope? We have all need in such a conflict as that which is now raging around us, to be much with God in private, that we may contend well for God in public; and that in this severe contention for great public and social interests we may not lose much of our personal religion.

There is need of some apprehension lest divisions arise among ourselves. It is a contested question that has come up. Public opinion in reference to it, though generally consentaneous, is not entirely so. Both churchmen and dissenters are divided among themselves, as to the extent of the aggression, and whether there is any aggression at all in the bull of the pope; and also as to whether any thing, and if any thing, what should be done to resist it. This difference perhaps exists more among us dissenters than among episcopalians. Though more difference of opinion than is publicly expressed exists on this point between the tractarians and the evangelicals. With us dissenters it is conspicuous, in our periodicals, in our sermons, in our speeches, in our public meetings. Dissenters are seen arrayed against dissenters. In some cases, discourtesy, incivility, and reproach, are cast upon their opponents. Men look fiercely, speak angrily, and act inimically, towards those who differ from them. Why should this be? Why should temper be lost, charity trampled under foot, and the gentleman, as well as the christian, be lost sight of? Why cannot each party give the other credit for conscience in their conduct, and both pay homage together to conscience by forbearance? Is it not a question on

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which, from its very nature, and the peculiar circumstances of dissenters, it might be supposed a diversity of opinion would exist? May we not believe that some conscientious men would say, "Well, I do not see how I can touch this subject in connection with churchmen without compromising my nonconformity, which turns alike against all state systems of religion: for though the church of England is professedly protestant, yet there is so much popery in it, and so much has come out of it, that I am for striking the axe against the root, instead of spending time in lopping off one of the branches and for opposing, as well that at Lambeth and Oxford, as that at Rome." On the other hand, may it not as readily be supposed that other conscientious men may reason in this way: "Although I believe the church of England to be an unscriptural institution, and in some things injurious to true religion, and will not scruple on all proper occasions, and in a proper spirit, to protest against it, yet considering how much of scripture-truth, though mixed with some error, it contains; considering that it professes to be based upon the scriptures, and challenges appeal to the bible; considering the services it has rendered in past time to the protestant cause in various ways, though at the same time with great inconsistency it persecuted the most intelligent friends of that cause, the puritans and non-conformists; considering the number of truly pious men who are now labouring within its pale; and considering that the present assault of popery is not more directed against that church than it is against ourselves, and that if it could demolish the church of England, we might be buried in the ruins; we feel it not only to be consistent with our principles, but gratifying to our

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feelings, to unite, on grounds common to us both, with churchmen, in resisting the present aggression of the papal see." Now admitting that each party may think the other erroneous in their views, yet if these views are conscientiously held by both, is the difference between them so wide, or is the opinion of either so irrational or absurd, as that christian forbearance is not to be exercised in reference to it? They may be surprised at each other's conduct, and so men always are that view things differently, but is this enough to destroy confidence in each other's sincerity, respect for each other's general character, or intercourse with each other as fellow-christians or nonconformists? Shall Roman catholics be gratified, (and some members of the church of England share the sport) by seeing the dissenters divided and alienated upon resistance to papal aggression? The demand upon our charity is surely, in the present case, not too heavy to be met with readiness and generosity.

We should be upon our guard that our other public duties are not neglected. We are engaged in the great enterprise of the world's conversion, and the more perfect evangelization, education, and general improvement, of our own country. What objects are before us! What a spirit moves us! What institutions are formed by us, and dependent upon us, and looking to us for support! Shall we suffer ourselves to be diverted from all these things, even by the present momentous subject? We must not take our eye, our heart, or our hand, from our foreign and British missions. The world's conversion, the moral condition of our colonies, the enlightenment of the great masses of our labouring population, the education of our too-much neglected youth, the improvement of our public morals by arresting the march

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of crime, must not be forgotten. Yea the attempts of popery to subjugate, not only this country, but the whole world, should make us more earnest in our endeavours to oppose its influence and hinder its success, not only by resisting the present obnoxious measure, but by spreading true religion everywhere. Popery is competing with us for our own country, and for every other on the face of the earth; and you must not allow this contest against it on British ground, to slacken your hand in contending against it all over the world. It would be delighted to see your attention diverted by the present question from your missions at home and abroad. There is danger lest our ministers and pastors should have their labours, in preaching the gospel and seeking the salvation of souls in some manner or measure limited or enfeebled by it; lest our town missions should be neglected; lest our sunday-school teachers should have their interest drawn away from their useful and honourable labours; lest our village-preachers should suffer a diminution of zeal in their self-denying efforts; lest one and all should, by the power and fascination of this new and absorbing topic, be taken off from our glorious work of winning the world to Christ. There is danger lest nothing else should have power to interest us or engage us. The press teems with publications respecting it which descend thick as hail upon us. The daily and weekly journals are full of it. The post office labours with it. The pulpit resounds with it. And amidst all this stir, the great work of converting the world is likely to be neglected. I am aware that the business which now presses most heavily and most directly upon us, is the resistance of papal influence and power; but this is

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not to push aside every thing else. "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Above the noise, and strife, and clamour, of party, let the cry of the perishing heathen be still heard, "Come over and help us." Amidst the fierce contest going on between protestant and papist, let the spiritual condition of our labouring population, and the too much neglected education of their swarming offspring, arrest our attention and affect our hearts. Let our colleges, our literature, our chapel-building societies, our institutions of every kind, continue to receive their due attention.

IV. I will direct your attention to some things which in this juncture of our national history demand and deserve our special attention. We should sincerely desire and earnestly seek a revival of evangelical and spiritual religion. To prepare us for the great conflict on which we are but just entering with "The Man of Sin," and to carry us successfully through it, we need something more than safeguards placed around our constitution and our liberties; something more than national excitement, manifested by public meetings, speeches and resolutions; something more than sermons lectures and tracts; something more than public utterances loud and deep of attachment to protestantism; something more than evangelical orthodoxy. If this be all we have, the spirit of Romanism will be too crafty and too strong for us after all. What we want, what we must seek, and what we must have, is a revived spirit of heart-felt, living, experimental religion. A Laodicean lukewarmness has crept over us, which must be kindled up into the fervour of "first love." The church is infected and enfeebled with

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worldliness. We have, I fear, too much substituted a bustling activity for piety, and are under the influence of a zeal, the flame of which is not sufficiently fed by the true olive tree, of which the prophet Zechariah speaks. Antichrist is a foe which all history proves is not to be despised; a foe to be conquered by the church of Christ in her strength, and not in her feebleness. There is a want of deep earnestness in our religion. Puseyism is in part the consequence of lukewarmness. There were spirits that longed for more intensity than they found prevailing around them; and they took a wrong direction to obtain it. It is only a more pervading, deep, and earnest religion that will prove the great breakwater to keep out the waves of Romanism which are now rolling in upon us. Mere forms and ceremonies will not do it: popery can excel us in them. Articles of faith will not do it: Romanists have them in abundance. Church authority will not do it: where is any equal to Rome's? Sacerdotal assumptions will not do it: she can beat us all by these. Orthodoxy in doctrine, and voluntaryism alone will not do it: Rome boasts of the former and employs the latter. No; it is a living religion actuating the whole protestant church that is now needed. Whatever Rome is destitute of, she is not wanting in earnestness: she is a pattern for us all in this. Oh, shall the crucifix, her emblem, inspire her with more enthusiasm than the cross of Christ, which is ours, does us? Even now, amidst the alarms and contention of the present conflict, I rejoice to hear a cry, like the still small voice amidst the earthquake and the storm, calling out for a revival of religion, and followed by attempts to produce it. It may seem to some almost like commencing a system of



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improved agriculture on a farm within the precincts of a battle-field, or at any rate within the sound of the artillery and the range of the shot. But may it not be hoped, that God will be more ready to give his blessing to efforts made amidst such circumstances? How did He honour the holy audacity, the heroic courage of “Whitfield, when that intrepid man erected his pulpit in the fair at Moorfields, and thus stormed the very citadel of Satan? Oh that a loud and an effectual call for a revival of religion would even now go forth from some quarter over the land! Oh that some flaming seraph would go through our churches, kindling every where the sacred fire which glows in his own bosom, and burning up the chaff of worldliness which lies so thickly upon them! Oh that the resurrection of a living piety would take place, and send forth from the works of our puritan and nonconformist ancestors, the holy and stately forms of their spiritual and heavenly religion, divested of its quaintness and its narrowness! No matter whence, by whom, or by what means a revival is produced, so that it does really come. “O eternal Spirit of the living God! come in all thy fulness into our churches and our pastors; and illuminate, purify, and consecrate us for the great conflict which lies before us.”

Connected with this, and rising out of it, there must be a spirit of general, fervent, and believing prayer. I am not so visionary as to say “Pray, and do nothing else.” But I do say, “Do what you will without prayer, it will be in vain.” An eloquent modern historian in one of his writings said to this effect: “When I see what popery is now, and what attacks it has withstood

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and survived, I do not see by what power it is to be brought down." Nor do I, till I look up to the Omnipotent One who sits upon the throne. Logic will not do it: how much of this has been employed in every age, and yet look at popery now! There is a something about it which makes it treat argument and eloquence as leviathan does straw and rotten wood. If sound arguments, founded both on reason and revelation, could have slain it we had known it now only by its mammoth skeleton preserved in our literary or ecclesiastical museums. It is sustained in my opinion, not only by the temporal power that it commands on earth, though that is great, as all the despots of Europe prove, but by the powers of the infernal world; and it is heaven only that can conquer hell: God only that can subdue Satan: and he will do it, for he has declared that he will. But he says, "For all these things I will be inquired of." Prayer is that which moves the hand that moves all things. Prayer is that which, so to speak, awakens the arm of the Lord. I know that papists pray, and a matter of sport it is for infidels to see them and the protestants praying against each other. Yet is there any thing in this to be matter of sport? What should the litigants on this question do but carry their disputes to him who is the God of truth? Yes, Roman catholics do pray. They are besieging heaven with prayers for England's conversion. One thing, however, is enough to give us assurance of the kind of reception their prayers must meet with in heaven; and that is, they are addressed to the Virgin Mary, more than to God or Christ, (shall I say?) if not, at any rate, to God and Christ through her.

Let us then betake ourselves to prayer, which is

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always our best, sometimes our only resource. Never was there a louder call to prayer than this papal aggression, with all that it implies and indicates, has sent forth. We have perhaps too much forgotten this. We are depending upon an arm of flesh more than upon the arm of God. We are abounding in speeches and resolutions: let us abound more and more in prayers. We are addressing our earthly sovereign, let us not omit to address our heavenly one. Some are expecting much from parliament, let us expect more from God. Let our prayers be deeply Penitential on account of our national sins, for we have cause to humble ourselves. Considering all the religious advantages we possess, we are verily a wicked people, and deserve the judgments of the Almighty, even one of the heaviest possible, to have the candlestick of the Reformation removed out of its place, and its glorious lights extinguished amidst the darkness of popery? Let our prayers be Fervent. It is no mean, or light, or little thing, we ask, for it is to be preserved from the dominion of popery; and who that knows its nature and its history can conceive of a worse moral plague than this befalling our nation except absolute infidelity? Our prayers should be Universal; every denomination, every congregation, every family, every individual, should pray apart. Our prayers should be Believing; they should be offered with faith that they will be answered, and that our great foe will be utterly destroyed. A praying nation is safe. God will be round about such a people as a wall of fire, and a glory in the midst of them. I have confidence in God. Let us fight against popery upon our knees, in the sanctuary, in the social meeting, in the family, in the closet. That beautiful, but profligate popish queen,

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Mary of Scotland, used to say, "She was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox, than of the English army."

"And Satan trembles when he sees,  
The weakest saint upon his knees."

An excellent guide to our prayers has been printed and circulated, which, with a slight alteration, I here insert.

"A PRAYER PREPARED AND SUITED FOR THESE TIMES."

"Almighty God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the church is governed and sanctified, mercifully receive our prayers; and look down upon thy vineyard planted in this land, now wasted by unhappy divisions, and in peril from the designs of evil men. Thou, O Lord, didst aforetime give strength to our fathers to maintain the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of thy Gospel; thou didst deliver this kingdom out of darkness into the light of thy truth. And now we beseech thee to cleanse and defend our churches, and because they cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve them by thy help and goodness, that the craft and subtlety of the devil or man may never prevail to overspread us with darkness again. Show, we pray thee, to those that be in error the light of thy truth, that they may return into the way of righteousness. Strengthen such as do stand, comfort and help the wavering and weak-hearted. Send down upon all who bear rule or minister in the churches the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness. And grant that this nation, which thou hast blest with thy manifold gifts of grace and favour, may continue to maintain the faith as it is in Jesus, and set an example to all men of pure and undefiled religion. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen."

It becomes us to study afresh and intently the nature, history, and pretensions of popery. I know no statement lately put forth on this subject more terse, comprehensive, and impressive, than that which proceeded from the pen of Dr. Vaughan, and formed part of the declaration of the Lancashire Independent ministers.

“Concerning the errors and vices of Romanism, these are not of greater enormity in the judgment of any religious body than in our own. We have separated ourselves from that system more carefully and thoroughly than most of our fellow-protestants, and are bound in consequence to be among the last to look upon it with favour. We see in it a colossal power which is ever aiming at the temporal through the spiritual; which in the doctrine of a future world finds little else than an instrument wherewith to bring the present world to its feet. As now, so always, its professed claim has been for power declared to be purely spiritual, and which should therefore be admitted as most harmless: but its doings have ever been those of a power knowing well how to interpret the spiritual, according to occasions, so as to make it comprehend the temporal. It is before us in history as the great personation of the selfish, the corrupt, and the tyrannical. It may uphold authority, but only as subservient to its own sway; it may patronise learning and genius, but only as tributaries to its own splendour; it may show signs of care about humanity, but only as for the material from which to construct the fabric of its own greatness. It is a religion profitable for the priesthood, but it tends not to give elevation to man as man. It finds its consummation in power, not in purity; in a hierarchy, not in heaven. While pleading the authority of Scripture, it is in nearly all points the antagonist of that authority. It never touches a christian doctrine without tainting it through its whole essence; it never acknowledges a christian precept without knowing how to make it void through some tradition. Every where it has been felt as the great corrupter of the natural purity left to the human conscience, and as a subtle enemy to the independence and liberties proper to civil society. With exceptions more apparent than real, and at best too trivial to be named, it has been tolerant only where it has been weak, intolerant wherever it has been strong; and in the country where it has its seat, and whence this new claim to unbounded licence in its favour has come upon us, it has been from the beginning, and is at this hour, the wily partisan of governments against peoples, the subtle auxiliary of might against right, visiting the slightest tendency towards liberty of opinion with confiscations, imprisonments, exile and death. In the person of its living pontiff it lays claim to all freedom, while it cedes none. It insists that we should trust it without limit, while after long experiment, it has been found a traitor to every trust that has been committed to it. Its demands, in tin’s view, exhibit an effrontery and shamelessness to which history presents no parallel.”

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It is not, however, with such general statements as these you should be satisfied. You should go to the faithful page of history, and read the battles which the papacy has carried on with the nations of the earth, against their rights, liberties, and religion. It must be one of the studies of the age; for it is its great subject. Ecclesiastical history must be your favourite reading just now. It may be you will find that the Roman church in the course of its desolating progress, has rendered some service to learning, to civilization, and even to Christianity itself. It is rarely the case that any system is unmixed evil. It supplanted the Saxon idolatry in Britain: it furnished retreats in some cases for piety and the last remains of literature, amidst the thickening gloom of the dark ages. It preserved, though in corrupted forms, the great truths of the christian scheme. Even at the present day, it is helping to hold in check the atheistic spirit that is spreading over Germany. Alas, that its evil should so outweigh its good, and that pure Christianity, while it acknowledges these benefits, should be obliged to consider it an enemy!

We cannot read our new testament, (and it is there we should study this, as well as every other religious question,) without learning the nature of this conglomerate of error and falsehood, and acquiring against it an irreconcilable hostility. We are entirely convinced that it is to this the apostle Paul refers where he says, "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called Cod, or that is worshipped; so that he as God

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sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is God; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since this wonderful prophecy was written, and I venture to affirm that there never has existed one man, one set of men, or one system, to which with tolerable show of argument it can be applied, except to the papacy. The description of the Roman apostacy in these verses is so graphic, the terms used are so plain in themselves, and so easy of interpretation, so obviously in accordance with all the claims, pretensions, and doings of the popish system, that an impartial person has only to read in order to believe. Has any apostacy from the christian faith ever occurred, save and except that of the church of Home, in which all the things here mentioned have occurred? Turn next to the book of the apocalypse, and then ask the same question; can these sublime and awful visions find their reality in any other events that have ever occurred, save those to which we now apply them? Amidst the partial obscurity which pervades that extraordinary book; and amidst whatever difficulty we may find in searching out the details and ascertaining particular dates, and minute events, do we not see the dreadful form of the Roman Antichrist, rising up before us with all its monstrous and prodigious powers of falsehood, fascination, cruelty, and craft?

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Can we believe these things then, and be indifferent to the system so minutely described, so characterised, so denounced? Can we have any sympathy with the mind of Christ, with the spirit of the Bible, with the holy men of old, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, if we do not view with alarm and resistance this attempt of popery to make a breach in our constitution and to come in through the gap to wage new battles, to win new victories, and make new conquests?

I am far from wishing to exaggerate the evil spirit of the papal system; or to visit the sins of past generations of Roman catholics upon the present one; or even to affirm that they would, if they had the power, exterminate protestants by the sword, or burn heretics at the stake. But when I consider the bitter, relentless, and remorseless persecution, by which seceders from that communion are oppressed; when I know the foul calumnies by which some of them are followed, and the cloud of infamy in which it is endeavoured to envelope them; when I am acquainted with the craft and cunning with which, as I myself personally know, they pursue their designs; when we are told of the malice with which converts to protestantism are treated in Ireland, where they are cursed from the altar, sometimes abjured by their relations, and almost left to starve by their neighbours; and when to all this it is added that canons of the most bloody character, and even general councils no less sanguinary, are still the law of the church of Home; I confess for one, I am not disposed to add one atom more of power to those who hold such a system, for carrying it into more extensive operation. True indeed it is, and sad as well as true, that the Roman church is not the only one at whose door the sin of per-



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secution has lain. Other churches have sipped of the cup of blood, but she has drank of it to the bottom: they have tasted of persecution, she has fed upon it: they have renounced it, but she still professes it. The act of toleration to which the English church virtually by her representation in parliament consented, has suspended the persecuting canons of that community: why will she not finish her work of toleration by abolishing the paltry, the unjust, the impolitic, and persecuting, impost of church rates? Every other church, but that of Rome, has confessed and renounced, with the exception I have just alluded to, the sin of persecution. Has Rome given up, is she prepared to give up a single persecuting statute? Is it not strange then, to hear such demands for not only toleration, but for political power, from a church which tolerates none, except in places and in circumstances where she has no power to prevent it? Can a reflecting mind help asking how it comes to pass that room and liberty shall be demanded, as matter of justice, for a cardinal, and a regular hierarchy, and a canon law, to be admitted here, to claim all England for Rome, and not liberty be given for one protestant minister, to preach one sermon, or circulate one Bible, or say one word, with a view to convert a single papist at Rome? Must not the cardinal who claims all this from us, for himself in Westminster, and denies all this to us at Rome, have singular ideas of justice? It seems in his dictionary to mean a right to convert protestants in England, and to persecute them in Italy. Let an act of toleration, which means liberty publicly to profess and propagate religion, come out from the Vatican, and then and not till then, can the papists talk with a show of reason about liberty and justice: then and not till

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can we meet on equal terms to discuss this subject. It may be said that toleration is no part of their law; we know it, and it is of this we complain. It may be said that an infallible and divinely appointed church cannot tolerate. We deny the premises as well as the conclusion. The apostolic church did tolerate, Romans xiv, xv, and Rome proves her apostacy by the fact that she does not. Labour to understand and to diffuse the principles of a pure protestantism. No term has been more misunderstood or misapplied than this. With some persons, I am afraid, it is rather the designation of a party than a principle; rather the exponent of a system of politics, than of religion; or at best, the badge of adherence to a creed of human composition and almost of imposition, rather than of adherence to the testimony of the new testament. Pure protestantism is set forth in the aphorism of the great Chilling worth, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants." This is the great, the good, the holy thing, we call protestantism. Neither the opinions of fathers; nor the dicta of doctors; nor the decrees of popes; nor the decisions of counsels; nor the acts of parliaments; nor the creeds of churches; nor the articles of prayer books; nor the declarations of faith and order put forth by congregational unions; nor the laws of methodist conferences; no nor any thing else but the Bible can be authoritative to bind the conscience, however they may be explanatory and declaratory as grounds of union, and as mediums of communion. The Bible is the sole and sufficient authoritative rule of faith and practice in matters of religion; and the Bible is to be read, and its contents and meaning judged of by every man into whose hands it comes, without his being compelled to receive any interpretation of its contents

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which may be imposed upon him by others, whether an individual minister, or a collective body called a church; and without his being molested for any opinions he may hold, or profess, or propagate. All opinions, systems, and churches, are to be tried by the Bible. Whatever church assumes a right to depart from the scriptures, to decree what is not in the scripture, or to impose by its own authority what is, in so far departs from pure protestantism as it is now understood.

Hold fast then, as well as understand, this great principle. This one great truth would sweep from the earth the whole system of popery, and every other system of error and delusion that now exists, whether as to doctrine polity or sacraments. Disregard the objection which is brought against it on the ground of the diversity of opinions and sects to which it gives rise. The differences of liberty are infinitely to be preferred to the uniformity of slavery. Besides, popery is not uniform in its views, and its followers know it. There are numerous variations of Romanism, and ever have been in spite of the claim which it sets up to infallibility. Pope has been against pope; council against council; and doctor against doctor, throughout the whole history of the papacy. The fact has been established over and over again by the disputants on the side of protestantism, which prefers no such claim, and therefore can bear up against the shock of different views. "The imputation of dissonancy is, against it, in a great measure, a harmless allegation. But error or change in a communion claiming iuerrability and unchangeability, is fatal. Its numerous vacillations indeed in every age destroy all its pretensions to unity and immutability."

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But to understand and to hold a pure protestantism is not enough, we must do our uttermost to diffuse it. If it be worth holding, it is worth spreading. In this particular, we may learn a lesson from our opponents. Every Roman catholic is not only a believer in his religion, or a defender of it, but an emissary, a missionary, a zealot. He acts as if he thought he had something worth knowing, and worth their having, by his neighbours also. He "will compass sea and land to make one proselyte." True, his means are not always justifiable; but with him oftentimes the end sanctifies the means, according to the principles of Jesuitism. It is only his sleepless and unwearied zeal, not his craft, that I recommend. And instead of raising an outcry against the zeal of the Romish priests so zealously labouring to spread their principles, I maintain their right to do so. People may choose whether they will listen to them or not: and if they are requested to desist, they will of course comply with such expressed wishes and retire. Toleration means a right to proselyte: without this it is but a name and a mockery, and they have this right, nor can we blame them if they use it. We do the same by our town missions and our tract societies. I claim a liberty to go where I please to teach, if people will hear me; disregarding all parochial boundaries, and all wholesale claims whatever to the population; though of course I use my liberty with discretion, courtesy, and a due regard to other men's labours. Rome has England thrown open to her by the present tolerating laws of our country, and she has claimed all England. Let us English protestants then, without delay, form a grand protestant society for the conversion of Italy to our

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faith. Let us so far act upon popish principles. Let us send a deputation to the pope, demanding on the ground of his own bull, a right to convert his subjects, and a right to set up such a system of proselyting as he claims in England. It will not do, in reply to this, to say that there is no Roman protestant population in Rome; because he claims protestants here, as well as papists; and have we no just right, or ought we to have none, to convert papists there if we can? Let us make reprisals without delay. Let us demand the free, unmolested employment of moral means, and protestantism disdains all others, for the conversion of Rome and Italy. The cardinal tells us what he is about to do in Westminster. He will not covet the stalls and patrimony of the abbey church, but will be contented with the humbler lot of sweeping away the moral filth of its vicinity. We only ask for similar opportunities to remove the putrid heaps which travellers tell us send up their reeking odours, almost beneath the windows of the Vatican, and around the altar of St. Peter's. We ask none of the honours, none of the emoluments of the papal see. We will carry out our principles as volunteers, and our ambition shall be as unsordid and as purely religious as that of the cardinal archbishop.

But leaving this as hopeless, I would observe first of all that we must labour to convert the population to Christ and his religion. We must think upon the masses of our people, which are more and more drifting off from religion, chiefly to infidelity; but who, in their present ignorant and neglected state, are likely, many of them, to fall into the hands of Romish priests, now ever active in the dwellings of the poor. And better is it that they should be Roman catholics

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than atheists. A corrupt religion is better than none at all. Every thing connected with the spread of a pure evangelism, in the way of providing places of worship for the preaching of the gospel should be encouraged. Popish chapels are springing up everywhere, and property is always at command for them. Let our protestant gentlemen, who declaim against popery in words that cost them nothing but the breath that utters them, give as freely their property, and put down their hundreds and their thousands, to fill the land with churches, where, not tractarianism, but evangelism shall be preached. Let our wealthy peers, gentry, and merchants, contribute their money as well as their wrath. Papists beat them hollow in this way. Popery has its eye upon the neglected multitudes, and it will have its hand upon them soon, if something more be not done by protestants.

Next to this, the education of the people must receive its due attention. An ignorant, unreasoning, unreflective population is likely to become the prey of Romanism. That demands the subjection of the public mind to the priesthood; and in order to resist this, we must give the people habits of independence. We must enable them to reflect and reason. Education will do this; and I really believe that a reflecting population can never become a popish one. The education we need, however, is not a mere mechanical one, but a rational one, and one based upon the Bible. The people must not have the Bible kept out of their sight. The whole system of our public and private instruction should be thoroughly protestant. Our opponents in this particular put us to shame. They know the value of religious education and how to wield it for popery, if we

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do not for protestantism. Popery is incorporated with the whole system of their instruction. One of the first objects on which the eye of their children rests, whether in families or in charity schools, is the symbol of their religion the crucifix; and one of the first actions they are taught to perform is to cross themselves before it. Before they can read their Pater Nosters, and Ave Marias, they are taught to repeat them. They drink in popery almost with their mother's milk. Their whole system of education is entirely based upon it, as well as incorporated with it. It follows the progress of the mind and the formation of the character, from the infant or ragged school, up to the university. It is never absent, never dormant, never inert. The child is a papist-child, and he grows into a papist-man. Roman catholics never, or rarely, allow their children to go to protestant schools; and when they do, it is with the express stipulation that their principles, their practices, and their prejudices, are never, in the smallest degree, to be interfered with. From their earliest years, a horror is thus inculcated against protestants, as heretics, schismatics, and spiritual rebels. Shall we blame them? No: except in the last particular: but with that exception, let us imitate them. Our education must be as thoroughly protestant as theirs is popish. Our domestic teaching must inculcate our principles: our sons and daughters must in this particular be "trained up in the way they should go." We have been remiss. Our children know not why they are protestants or dissenters: but they ought to know. Our boarding schools must be protestant schools, and must consider the principles of the Reformation a part of their system of teaching. Our Sunday-schools must be protestant schools. Our hun-

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dreds of thousands of teachers must study both popery and protestantism, and be able to teach their classes the nature and distinction of the two systems. They must not inculcate a blind, bigoted, unintelligent hatred of popery, much less of papists. This would be a sad perversion of the Sunday-school system. Let our teachers fill their children's minds with the idea that the Bible is their book, that they are to try opinions by it and are to resist whatever is opposed to it. Let them store the minds of the children with scripture language, and an intelligent acquaintance with scripture truth; especially the doctrines of justification by faith and regeneration by the Spirit. The great mass of the population are in the hands of our Sunday-school teachers, and never, no never, did their office assume a character of greater importance, or involve a weightier responsibility than it does now. Our Sunday-schools, if well managed, will save, by God's blessing, our population from popery.

In connexion with this the scriptures must be put into a still wider circulation: every man should be able to read the Bible, and have a Bible to read. In following up this, our Bible society meetings should be made as popular as possible, that the poor may be brought together in masses, to hear about the Bible, and be exhorted to read it.

Tract distribution should be carried to a much greater extent even than it has been. Nor should it be left to the poor, to the young, and to females. Our men and women of influence should give themselves to the work. Our town missions are admirable institutions, and should be supported with vigour and liberality; and their agents should be men well versed in the prin-



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principles of protestantism, and able to meet the papist on his own ground; but they alone cannot meet the case. Our whole protestant population should be called out to meet in one way or other, the present energetic movements of the papacy.

Ministers are especially called upon, not only to preach publicly, and to teach privately, against the errors of popery, but to train their congregations thoroughly in great protestant principles. The time is come for a recognition of the fact that all can do something, and all should do what they can. Whatever becomes of the pope's bull, should it be sent back to the place from whence it came, the spirit and the system that sent it here will remain. We cannot send away the Roman catholic religion; we cannot silence its priests, or arrest their zeal; all this will continue amongst us; and we must meet it with prayer, with argument, with zeal.

I mention as another thing incumbent upon us, the closer union of all denominations of evangelical protestants. Popery has unity, though as we think of the wrong kind, and for wrong purposes. This unity is its boast, and in great measure, its power. Whatever variations of opinion there undoubtedly are, still there is a fearful concentration of authority and power in the head that wears the triple crown. What that one will and one voice can effect! It speaks from the equator, is echoed back from the poles, and is obeyed at the antipodes. It binds men of all countries to the papal chair, subjects their consciences to the papal will, and unites them into one grand confederation against the religious rights and liberties of the world. How different the aspect of protestantism; divided into innu-

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merable sects and parties, each frowning defiance on the other, and all maintaining a state of intestine warfare and commotion! Still, I repeat, the divisions and contentions of freemen are to be preferred to the compulsory union of slaves. How unprepared are we to resist the consolidated system of popery? We furnish by our divisions its most popular argument, and the means of its greatest success. It is represented as the quiet haven into which the tempest-tossed vessels on the troubled ocean of protestantism are invited to run for shelter. Why, why, cannot we snatch this argument from the lips of our foes, by being more united among ourselves? Why are not the principles, if not the constitution, of the evangelical alliance more generally espoused?

Shall not a common foe in front make us close our ranks and consolidate our force? Shall not a common danger drive us close together? Is there no ground on which the Lord's people can unite? If we cannot have uniformity, can we not have unity? Shall we go on for ever magnifying our differences, and diminishing our agreement? In pursuit of truth shall we trample charity under foot? When the foe has landed, and unfurled his banner, and sounded his trumpet, and demanded surrender, shall we then stand aloof, refuse co-operation, or at best, fight in detached squadrons, and quarrel even upon the field of battle? Shame, shame, upon us, that our Lord's sacerdotal prayer, the injunction of apostles, the bleeding wounds of a rent church, the force of christian love, and the open attack upon us all of the papal power, cannot make us determine to be one in heart.

My desire and effort to promote the union of good

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men of various denominations, upon a basis which does not compromise in anyway their distinctive principles, is ever increasing, both from principle and taste. My motto in reference to this matter is, "Unite where we can, and separate where we must." I am persuaded that, in some quarters, there is a more real and a deeper sympathy between Christians belonging to different communions, than between those same parties respectively and many members of their own denominations. There is a tie more close on the one hand, and a repugnance more strong on the other, than is furnished by denominational sentiments; and it appears to me the time is coming when affinities as to cardinal doctrines will shew themselves with greater power than they now do. Spiritual religion, as distinguished from ceremonial formalism, heartless orthodoxy, church government, and a philosophized Christianity, will be the central point round which the hearts of holy men will collect, and from which all the power and prejudice of denominational peculiarities, will not be able to withdraw them. The centripetal force of the former will be too strong for the centrifugal force of the latter. The battle will soon come to be between vital godliness and all the varied forms of external religion; I am willing therefore for one to help forward the union of the wise and good, and without destroying denominations, which must exist as long as there are various opinions, to oppose to the uttermost the bitterness and schismatic power of sectarianism. I rejoice to think that I have private friendships and public co-operation, with many both of the clergy and laity of the church of England, between whom and myself it is perfectly understood that we are each allowed to hold, to advocate, and to diffuse his own sentiments on

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ecclesiastical polity, and so far to oppose one another, but all in a spirit of brotherly kindness and charity. And it is satisfactory to me to recollect in the present contest, that I found a basis on which I could be associated against popery with those good men, without as I think at all compromising my nonconformity. I never could for a moment consider the present movement on the part of the church of England as a mere contest between the two rival hierarchies, but a contest between Rome and protestant England: and supposing it were only a battle between the two churches, it could be no matter of indifference to me which should prevail, since the one is protestant, and the other Roman catholic: the one foreign, the other domestic; the one is tolerant, the other exclusive and persecuting; the one is within, the other without the limits of the English constitution; and therefore against the one I can raise my opposition by my representatives in the legislature, but not against the other, since it is governed by a foreign power.

And now, my beloved flock, in bringing this letter to a close, I would address to you a few words of solemn and affectionate admonition. You are entering upon another, and with some of you the last year of your existence upon earth. Before the opening of the next year, many of you may be in another world: and the stamp of eternity may be fixed on your doom and character; and as to the rest, whatever you do, or wherever you go, you are travelling to the grave. May your chief solicitude centre in eternity! Endeavour as far as you can, to form the same estimate of all earthly things, as you know you will do, when you survey them from a death-bed, at the judgment-seat, or in the unseen world. Guard against immoderate anxiety about earthly posses-

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sions. Yield yourself to Christ, who has redeemed you by his precious blood. Sum up your aspirations, your plans, your purposes in that declaration of the apostle, "For me to live is Christ:" then may you set out fearlessly amidst the uncertainties of another year, for should it prove your last, death will be your gain. Let your whole existence be a continued discipline, probation, and preparation for eternal life. And never forget that the great preparation for that world of perfect love, is love. In that world will be found Penelon, Pascal, Quesnel, Massillon, and others of the same church, who still preserved themselves holy amidst surrounding corruptions. Nor should we imitate the exclusiveness of those who shut out from heaven all who shut out themselves from their communion. Let us, then, endeavour while contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to cultivate that charity which is its richest fruit, and which alone can prepare us for that world, where the din of controversy, like that of arms, will be never heard. Let none of the questions which agitate society divert your attention from your own eternal salvation. That one soul you carry in your own bosom is in reality, and should be in your estimation and practice, more to you than the whole universe. "Wherefore seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what, manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up."

I am, your faithful Pastor,

J. A. JAMES.



**CHRISTIAN UNION VIEWED IN RELATION TO  
THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES OF ENGLAND.**

FROM "ESSAYS ON CHRISTIAN UNION," 1845.

"Let us, therefore, as many as he perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." Phil. iii. 15-16.





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LORD BROUGHAM closes his "Historical Sketches of Statesmen who flourished in the reign of George the Third," by comparing his work to a gallery in which their portraits were ranged opposite each other in their hostile parties, and by imagining the exclamations with which a stranger from another world would gaze upon their array. "Here," would that stranger say, "stand the choicest spirits of their age; the greatest wits, the noblest orators, the wisest politicians, the most illustrious patriots. Here they stand, whose hands have been raised for their country, whose magical eloquence has shook the spheres, whose genius has poured out strains worthy the inspiration of the gods, whose lives were devoted to the purity of their principles, whose memories were bequeathed to a race grateful for benefits received from their sufferings and their sacrifices. Here stand all these 'lights of the world and demi-gods of fame;' but here they stand, not ranged on one side of this gallery, having served a common country! With the same bright object in view, their efforts were divided, not united. They fiercely combated each other, and did not together assail the common foe. Their great exertions were bestowed, their more than mortal forces were expended, not in furthering the general good, not in resisting their country's enemies, but in conflicts among themselves; and all their triumphs were won over each other, and all their sufferings were endured at each other's hands."

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Alas! that this beautiful yet affecting representation should in any measure apply to the parties who have struggled with each other in the christian church; and that a stranger from another world, should, upon studying the page of ecclesiastical history, and surveying the portraits of our theologians, polemics, authors, and preachers who there confront each other, be compelled to endure the same painful surprise, and to indulge in the same sorrowful reflections. True it is, and it is some relief to make the concession, that in this ease the selfishness of party is not so unmixed, nor the defect of right principle so great, while, at the same time, there is undoubtedly a more sincere regard to the common object which all profess to seek; but still, after every abatement has been made, there remains far too dire a resemblance for the credit of religion or the honour of her sons.

Under the distress occasioned by this unseemly spectacle, there are two sources of consolation: First, the delightful fact, that the true church, the invisible community, is really and indivisibly one. Amidst all this division and disruption, beneath these angry and contentious elements, there is an essential unity, which, though limited to no age, confined to no country, restrained to no party, and seen in its entirety by no eye but that which is omniscient, really and always exists; a unity which nothing can impair, and which, while it is ever gathering up into itself the redeemed of the Lord, of every age, country, and communion, equally rejects the unregenerate of them all. God, in the methods of his grace, and the dispensations of his providence, by plans incomprehensible, and methods inscrutable to us, is ever working out the archetypal idea of the unity of his

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church, as it existed from eternity in his own infinite and unerring mind; and as nothing can disturb him in his operations, so nothing can defeat him in his design; and from all the seemingly heterogeneous and discordant elements of the various religious parties, he will no doubt at length bring out his own glorious church, having neither rent, blemish, spot, nor any such thing. All true believers admit that they are one in Christ. "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord', one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." There is and can be but one church, even as there is but one head of the church. The Lord Jesus Christ came "to gather together in one all things in himself, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him." He is the one head, of which all believers are the members; the one vine, of which they are the branches; and thus all are members one of another. Divide as they may, into separate, visible communions, they cannot break away from the fellowship of the one invisible communion of saints; into whatever number of distinct churches they may arrange themselves, they are fellow members of the holy catholic church; and they feel this, and rejoice in it, in their holier and happier moments, when from the exercise of that faith which unites them to Christ there arises a love which, too fervent and expansive to be confined within the narrow limits of their own party, bursts through all sectarian barriers, and flows in one mighty stream of holy sympathy to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. The renewed heart cannot be shut up within any bounds narrower than the amplitude of the universal church. Exulting in the idea of belonging to a family circle in the universe, of

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which God is the only centre and parent, and which has no members or relations of remoter consanguinity than children, it overlooks the distinction of time, country, and colour, and searching among all countries and all churches for its objects, feels that it is never satisfied till it has discovered and embraced all that in the same spirit as its own can cry, 'Abba, Father.' Every real Christian therefore, is, and must be, united to all other real Christians, and has that in his nature, which, though obstructed and counteracted by opposing influences, struggles to make that union palpable and visible. This is delightful; we are members of each other in spite of opinions and reasonings, and can separate from one another only by separating from Christ. This infrangible unity, yet alas! invisible to mortal eye, shall one day be seen, when all the non-essential, though not altogether unimportant, circumstances of the church, in matters of ceremony and of government, having fallen away from her heavenly form, as so much earthly and worn-out or needless attire, she shall be seen in her own inimitable, imperishable, and divine beauty, as having the glory of God.

But a second source of consolation under the divisions and distractions of the church of Christ is found in the attempts which are now being made to heal them, and the effusion of the Spirit in which we would fain believe these attempts have originated. True it is, that the voices which are calling for union and peace, are but as whispers amidst the roar of artillery, or the thunders of the heavens; still it is something that they are sent forth, however feeble their testimony may seem to be, and they are growing louder and more general, till at length, when these fearful explosions shall have spent their violence,

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the still small voice alone shall be heard, and the reign of love and gentleness commence.

In no part of Christendom are the divisions of christians more numerous, or the spirit of party more virulent, than in England. How fierce is the controversy now raging within the church of England, between the evangelicals and the tractarians! Puseyism has effected a fearful schism, and the rent is growing wider and wider; while both parties, notwithstanding their determined hostility to each other, are combined against the non-conformists of all parties. Independents and baptists are carrying on their interminable warfare with each other on the subjects and mode of the initiatory ordinance of Christianity; while both parties have grown, I am afraid, somewhat angry with each other of late. The methodists are composed of various sections of very unequal strength, and by no means actuated towards each other by the most friendly or amiable feeling. A new sect, professing to disclaim all sects, though as sectarian in its spirit as any other, has lately risen amongst us, with the high-sounding but hopeless ambition of swallowing up all denominations in the endearing name of "brethren;" thus usurping that title, and designing to withhold it from others.

But apart from actual contention, and even among those who have least of party animosity towards others, how little is there of christian union! The peace which should exist between christians was never intended to be an armed neutrality. It is not enough that there is no direct enmity; there ought to be love. Nor is it sufficient that there is no fighting; for there ought to be fellowship. We should be brethren, and not strangers, much less enemies. But it is consolatory to know that a desire is

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felt, and that efforts are being made, to bring about a closer union among these contending parties, or among as many of them as can be persuaded to enter into the scheme. An inquiry is coming forth from many quarters at once, "Why cannot we be one? Is there no spot to be found, no means to be devised, by which we can come nearer to each other? Shall the divider of the brethren ever triumph in the success of his schemes? Shall the infidel always point the finger of scorn to the church of Christ, possessed, and rent and torn by the unclean spirit of sectarianism? Is there not faith enough left among us to have this demon cast out?" Happily these inquiries are engaging the attention of holy and reflecting minds in all parties of the church; and blessed results may confidently be expected to follow, though we may not yet be able to define the shape they will assume, nor the issues to which they will grow.

All who stand prominently forward in the promotion of any scheme of agreement, ought to be prepared to state with precision and clearness, what kind of unity it is they seek to establish, and for what purposes it should be formed. What we want, then, is a formal, visible union of parties, an approximation to each other, of which not only our own hearts shall be conscious by a perceptible decay of our prejudices and a growth of love, but which shall be apparent to others by some means of which they shall be able to take cognizance. It is not merely, (though this is a part of our design,) that as ministers and as christians we should cultivate more assiduously the obligations of brotherly love; but that by some kind of agreement, organization, or means of public intercourse, we should give visibility to this state of our hearts towards each other.

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Without this, we fail to let our light shine before men as it should do. The diffused rays of love scattered abroad in the civilities and courtesies of life, are too faint to be seen, or at any rate to be seen in the intensity and force which they would gain when collected into the focal point of a public organisation. If we do not meet in public in some way, either because we will not, or cannot, the world will be slow to credit our professions of secret, though it may be, sincere love. Secret love is always suspicious, and is virtually prohibited by the precepts of the New Testament, which are given to regulate our intercourse with each other: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This language of our divine Lord seems to require a visible union; and in the present state of Christendom, we cannot have visibility without organisation or public intercourse of some kind. I need scarcely say, that the visibility we seek bears no analogy to that contended for by popery, by which the church is made to form one vast society, one mighty pyramid, of which the base is laid in all nations, the officers of which are innumerable, and distinguished by various degrees and gradations of authority, culminating in an infallible human head. Nor do we aim at amalgamating all denominations into one. This could only be done by a sacrifice of principle which we are not prepared, and ought not to be willing, to make. The scheme that would be wide enough to comprehend all, can in fact be satisfactory to none, and would involve a compromise which a due regard to truth should not allow us to make. The wisdom that comes from above is first pure. It is the union of many independent bodies, still remaining independent, and not the

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merging of all in one that we advocate. In fact, it is union, not the absorption of all into one.

There are two terms used very commonly, and sometimes convertibly, which are by no means synonymous, at least in the conventional meaning which is attached to them. I mean, denominational and sectarian. The former is employed as simply indicating certain peculiarities of opinion, and in this sense implies nothing wrong; but the latter is generally used to express the uncharitable spirit with which those peculiarities are maintained and professed. Denominational distinctions must exist as long as differences of opinions exist; for, in fact, they are nothing more than the names of those opinions; but the sectarian spirit should not, and need not, exist at all. I admit, that with hearts so imperfect as ours, it is somewhat difficult to be denominational without being sectarian; but this temptation to uncharitableness, so rarely and so partially overcome, is not so much to be traced to the names we bear, as to the pride and passion with which they are borne. Nor is it the existence of denominations as such that has scandalized the infidel and the man of the world, but the sectarian and uncharitable spirit with which they have been kept up; for if, on the ground of preferences and shades of opinion common to many christians, different collective bodies arise in the church and hold a permanent existence, nothing takes place in religion, which does not take place among men naturally and even beneficially in relation to every matter of great and common concern, such as law, government, science, or education. And why need the distinctive existence of such bodies in the church form a barrier to their harmonious intercourse and co-operation, any more than is the case with the separate



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bodies into which, the learned divide themselves? When a community of christians assumes an air of infallibility, or denies to others the same liberty of forming their opinions which it has exercised for itself; or so exalts its peculiar opinions as to overshadow the essential points on which all christians are one; or looks with envy, jealousy, and all uncharitableness on other denominations; there is the odious element of sectarianism, forming in hideous encrustations around denominational peculiarities. It is well to understand the true barrier to union as well as the true basis of it; and it is not denominationalism but sectarianism. What good would be effected by abandoning the names of opinions as long as we retained the sectarianism they engendered, and what harm will they do if this sectarianism be renounced?

I am far from denying that denominational terms have not been injuriously employed to alienate the hearts of professing christians from each other; but this is the abuse of them, and not their legitimate purpose, which is simply to indicate opinions. And in consequence of this too frequent abuse of them to all the worst tendencies of sectarianism, I long and pray for the time when they shall be no longer necessary, because believers shall be of one mind; or when they shall be maintained in perfect forbearance through the increase of the spirit of love. Let it, however, be inquired, when denominational distinctions are in one view considered as the result of human corruption, and in another the cause of its increase, whether it is not an evil which God has overruled for the greater good and purity of the church upon the whole? Checks and stimulants have been thus reciprocally applied; a rivalry is set up

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which when purified from malignity is eminently beneficial to all parties; a tendency to stagnation is counteracted; and thus in the order of Providence till the glory of the millennial age shall arrive, the combined operations of different denominations are bringing on a purer and happier consummation than could, in our present circumstances of imperfection, be attained by any formal, nominal, and external uniformity. Hence we see what is our duty, and lies within the horizon of our hope and therefore within the scope of our efforts, and thus instructed we shall learn not to attempt, as a direct and proximate object, to amalgamate our denominations, but to defecate them, as far as possible, of sectarianism; to hold our opinions in the unity of the Spirit, which is the bond of peace; to forbear one another in love; and by the severe and difficult exercise of charity, which consists in thinking differently yet feeling alike, to prepare the members of each denomination for that blessed world, where contemplating truth in the same clear light we shall see eye to eye, and regarding it with the same pure affection, all ground and therefore all possibility of mutual condemnation will be removed, and] in death we shall love each other with a perfect and everlasting love.

We do not forget, much less attempt to deny, that all attempts to bring christians into a closer public and visible approximation to each other, which are not attended with equal solicitude and effort to draw their minds and hearts closer together, are chimerical and ridiculous. We want not merely the show but the reality of union; a real union made visible; a junction of parties, based upon a junction of hearts. It is therefore clear that each section has much to do within

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itself, to exclude from it the repellent errors of prejudice and bigotry, and to increase its attractive power, its love. But still, as the two act and re-act upon each other, as private efforts to make ourselves more cohesive prepare us for public associations, and public associations dispose us more cordially to carry on our separate labours for a more catholic spirit, it is well to pursue them both together. With such measure of love as we now have let us unite; and that very union will tend to the increase of our love, by bringing its proper objects more prominently and more frequently before us.

In viewing the subject of christian union with reference to England, I shall demonstrate that, desirable and important as union is for every part of Christendom, it is pre-eminently so for this kingdom, on the following accounts.

1. Our national greatness gives extraordinary publicity to our conduct, and proportionate weight to our example. I neither make nor intend any invidious comparison of this country with any other member of the imperial empire; but it is claiming no more than will be readily conceded, when I speak of England as the greatest and most influential portion of the united kingdom. With a population of eighteen millions, and a commerce whose sails whiten every sea and land its merchandise on every shore; great in learning, science, and the arts; terrible in power, and generous in spirit; she is feared by many, envied by more, and respected by all. Her colonies are infant nations; her language is likely to become the chief medium of intercourse to the civilised world; and her institutions will be transplanted from the equator to the poles. How much, therefore, is it to

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be desiderated that such a nation should set to all others an example of christian union? Blessed with liberty, and tenaciously fond of it, how desirable is it that we should prove that the most perfect freedom is compatible with the purest and most comprehensive charity; that the diversity of our creeds does not destroy the unity of our religious brotherhood, nor impair the strength of our national bond? From what country on earth will such a lesson go forth with equal emphasis and force as from this? It seems our very calling. Providence surely has placed us on this pinnacle for this among other purposes, to be a religious Pharos to the world. How high and sacred an honour would it be if we could say to all the bigoted and intolerant nations of the globe, "Look on us, and see that the most unrestricted liberty leads neither to anarchy nor to infidelity; for while we hold fast each his own views of truth, we yet hold the truth in love!" How blessed a report would it be to go forth from hence, that in England, free England, great and mighty England, the different denominations of professing christians had agreed together to retain their principles, but to abandon their prejudices, and had determined to subscribe to the apostle's declaration, that of the christian graces the most eminent is charity!

And is it expecting too much to anticipate that such a union would bring about more political approximation of parties, and make our country greater and mightier in its moral influence than it is already? At any rate, its tendency, and perhaps its influence, would be to check the repellent action, the centrifugal force of political animosities. It is the intention of God that his church should exert a beneficial influ-

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ence, apart from what is directly religious, upon the nations in which it is placed, and be upon them as dew, and among them as salt. In a free country like ours, where differences of opinion on all points of politics must exist, party spirit of the most bitter and virulent kind is continually generated and sustained. And cannot the politician plead in his defence the rancour of the professing christian and the polemical divine? Is contention less fierce on the arena of religion than on that of politics? Are the wranglers in one less pugnacious than the wranglers in the other? Christian union, did it extensively prevail, would not only set a bright and beautiful example to the men of the world, of differences in lesser matters and agreement in greater ones, but inasmuch as religious bodies are characterised by prevailing political opinions, religion would soften the asperity of discordant sentiments in secular matters, and prepare men to-make concessions of their prejudices in one thing, even as they had made them in another. The man with whom I am in the habit of meeting and praying in the convocation of saints, though in some points of religion I differ from him, I shall be likely to meet also as a citizen without a particle of venom, though there also I am at issue with him on some question of public interest. How momentous it is that the church should hold out the law and the example of union to the world, and by helping to soothe and quiet and tame the furious spirit of political partisanship, should thus consolidate the strength of the empire, and make this great nation still mightier than she is already!

2. The importance of union among evangelical protestants in England, will be still more apparent, if we consider the potency, the subtlety, and the strength of

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the foes by which their common principles and interests are assaulted. True it is that our country is not the exclusive object of popery; for her field is the world, and most earnestly and industriously is she going forth to cultivate it; but it is her supreme object, and that by the accomplishment of which she hopes to vanquish and possess the rest. Ever since the Reformation, England has been the chief bulwark against the endeavours of "the man of sin," to regain his lost dominion. Hence no object lies so near the hearts of all Romanists, none enters so deeply into the policy of the Vatican, none engages so much the prayers of its devotees, or the zeal of its ambitious ecclesiastics, as the re-annexation of this nation to the see of Rome. We need not be thrown into a paroxysm of dismay by the subtle arts and prodigious efforts of the papists; this would be a cowardice and distrust unworthy of our cause. But, on the other hand, we ought to be neither ignorant nor indifferent when their schools and colleges, their chapels and cathedrals, their monasteries and convents, are everywhere increasing. England is now assailed by the slow approaches of a siege, and though the troops at present may seem comparatively few, and the lines of circumvallation distant, yet the attacking parties are full of stratagem and courage, and are elated with hope. The reunion of Protestant christians would fill them with dismay, and be a death-blow to their policy.

Nor is it popery alone that endangers the moral and spiritual interests of our country; but puseyism, its legitimate offspring, is still more threatening. This bantling of Rome, though without acknowledging its parentage, bears too much of its mother's image, and is animated by too much of her spirit, to leave its pedi-

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gree for one moment in doubt; and amidst that mother's smiles, caresses, and blessings, is obviously going forth to do her work, and to promote her interests. England be it remembered is not the only sphere of the Oxford heresy, but it is the widest and the most hopeful one. It is the central fountain from which the poisonous streams are flowing forth to our remotest colonies. Our cities, our towns, and our villages are full of it, or are on the way to become so. Hundreds of young academics, flushed with all the high notions, the spiritual pride, and the imposing pretensions of that second-hand popery, are swarming forth yearly, eager to try their priestly skill in regenerating souls and forgiving sins by their sacerdotal manipulations; and no less eager to extinguish the light of the Reformation, to silence the preaching of its doctrines, to break up the churches founded on its principles, and to bring the whole multitude of the people under their priestly sway and soul-destroying doctrines. Nonconformists of every denomination, as well all the bodies of presbyterians in the north, as the methodists and dissenters in the south; all in fact, who have not the benefit of that enormous ecclesiastical figment, apostolical succession, you are already the devoted victims of this damnatory and ruthless spirit: the validity of your ministry is denied; the constitution of your churches is denounced; the safety of your souls by Christ is denied; and, one after another, individuals as well as churches, you are to be rooted out. This whole land, but for the resistance offered by the evangelical party in the church of England, and the still more extensive and powerful opposition of the various bodies of nonconformists, is in danger of being inundated with

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a flood of superstition almost as foul as that which 'the great dragon' is represented in the Book of the Apocalypse as casting out of his mouth, to drown the woman who was the object of his rage. Nothing is too arrogant in power, or too insolent in pride, to be claimed; nothing in the way of ecclesiastical tyranny too monstrous or absurd to be asserted; nothing in the form of priestly ceremonial too ridiculous or puerile to be prescribed, as if it were the object of the infatuated tractarians, and their coadjutors, the high churchmen, by labouring to subvert the constitution on the one hand, and to put out the lights of protestantism on the other; to reunite all classes of freemen, and all denominations of evangelical christians, against their daring aggressions. What dismay and consternation would be circulated through Christendom if these designs should seem to be of even probable accomplishment! I can imagine that the eyes of all foreign protestant nations are turned at this moment with intense anxiety to England; that our colonies in all parts of the world are joining in the painful suspense; that the New World on the other side of the Atlantic sympathises in the deep solicitude, while the conflict is going on here for the vital interests of protestanism; that all christian ministers from the various parts of Christendom, and all christian missionaries from the remoter fields of paganism, are watching the conflict with palpitating hearts; and that even the spirits of departed reformers and martyrs in glory are looking down with sympathy and deepest interest upon this modern battlefield of the Reformation. Oh, should it be seen from afar, as well as nearer home, that the strife was becoming doubtful; that the standard of the cross was



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being lowered before that of the crucifix; that the troops which had been accustomed to gather round the former had become wavering through fear, or weak through desertion, and that their hope of victory was growing weaker; how great would be the alarm that would go forth from this country to every nook and corner, yea, to every sound heart, in protestant Christendom! "If England be lost to the Reformation," would be the universal cry, "we cannot but tremble for the ark." To prevent a catastrophe so dire, to stop everything that threatens to bring it about, to check the progress of attempts which are being made to realise the most blissful vision of the "man of sin," and gratify his most fondly cherished hopes, let all evangelical protestants come into a closer confederacy; let them make common cause of their common principles; let them fraternise to the uttermost; let them countenance, encourage, and cheer each other on. Let the news go forth upon the wings of the wind, and be heard in every land, that the sons of protestant, enlightened England, have entered into a covenant of love and amity with each other, and that England has confederated with Scotland. Let Rome hear it, and be dismayed, that the spirit of unity is spreading through that land which has been most divided and alienated. Let it be seen by new zeal for our principles, manifested in the form of real and hearty union, that whatever symptoms of disease may appear on the surface of this great nation here and there, its heart, which may almost be called the heart of protestantism, is sound, and still beats in the healthy pulsations of an intelligent, yet charitable zeal: that it is as ardent and as strong as ever in the cause of religious liberty, as deter-

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mined as ever in its detestation of ecclesiastical despotism. Our appeal, therefore, is made to all evangelical protestants; Is it not time to unite? Does not your situation require it? Strike hands, then, in a covenant of love and friendship, and form a holy league, aggressive and defensive, against a system which is aiming to destroy you utterly, that it may be left at liberty to pursue its unobstructed course through the world, the consummation of which would be reached in overthrowing evangelical religion, and planting everywhere a baleful superstition in its place.

While popery and puseyism are attacking the people of this land in one direction, infidelity is assailing them in another. Fearful is its success among our better educated operatives, by whom the various forms of unbelief are eagerly embraced. Scepticism has of late years grown somewhat condescending: leaving the heights of society as the chief scene of its labours and its hopes, it has descended into the valleys to solicit the suffrages of the poor, and to win over the masses of the people to its standard. Such converts are to be gained not so much by the subtleties of logic and abstractions of metaphysics, as by appeals to facts, and the use of popular sophisms; and none is more adapted to their purpose, or more frequently employed and found successful, than the divisions and the discords of the christian world; and yet, as I have already remarked, it is not so much the differences of opinion among christians that forms the infidel's argument against our holy religion, as the sectarian bitterness, the spirit of partisanship, with which they are maintained. It is upon the stone of stumbling cast in his way by the bigotry, hatred, and uncharitableness of the different sects of

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professors, that he sharpens his sword and points his arrows for his impious warfare against the faith. Union among christians would go far to render him powerless, by depriving him of his main argument, as well as by presenting a spectacle which he would be both afraid and ashamed to assail. The taunt so common and so cutting, "Agree among yourselves before you ask me to join you," would be taken from his lips, and the ancient commendation upon christians, now used by him only in irony and derision, "See how these christians love one another," would be restored to its original meaning and application, and he would be compelled to admit its truth and admire its beauty. He knows that whatever fellowship of iniquity and of mischief there may be among infidels, there is no communion of love; and let him only see this unity of spirit and bond of peace restored to the church, and his objections would vanish, even if his heart remained cold and unrenewed.

3. But there is another consideration, arising out of the circumstances of this country, which renders it imperative upon its religious population to come into a closer association with each other; and that is the great work of Christian Missions to which they are called. Here I would premise that this is not peculiar to England; Scotland, Ireland, and Wales are all comprehended with us in this work of the Lord, but on account of the more numerous population and greater wealth of this nation, the largest share by far of this grand enterprise devolves upon us. Viewed only as a distinction put upon us, and an honour we are called to enjoy, it is a rich and noble one; but this is light compared with it as a most solemn responsibility to seek the world's conversion to Christ. How anxious, even to fear and

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trembling, ought we to be, that nothing should be allowed either to disqualify us for the work or to hinder our success! What a jealousy should we exercise over ourselves, lest a commission so sacred and so momentous should be intrusted to us, for which, through want of due care or the right spirit, we should be found unprepared! How should we deprecate everything which would, in the least degree, weaken our efforts in restoring a revolted world to «God! Now, it requires no great skill to prove, nor sagacity to perceive, how much our divisions and alienation must have this effect. They tend to keep alive the spirit of party, and to corrupt our zeal; to make us more concerned to advance our own cause than that of the Redeemer; more anxious to diffuse our peculiarities than the common salvation. Our views are contracted, our spirit is restrained, our aim is lowered. We are in danger of losing the nobleness and amplitude of the true missionary spirit, and of sinking down into the littleness of party. The lofty inspiration of the hope of converting the world to Christ, gives way to the lower impulse of differences about peculiar forms of ecclesiastical polity, or of sacramental administration. And, after all, what are forms of church government, or modes of sacramental administration, as a means of converting the heathen, compared with the gospel of our common salvation? Be it so, that they may be as the bottle that carries the medicine, the casket that bears the jewel, the pole that lifts up the brazen serpent; this is the highest importance with which they can be invested. And yet, is there not a danger, as long as we are kept asunder by such matters, of transferring our zeal from the greater to the lesser object of our pursuit? It is

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not by Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Independency, or Methodism, but by the faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ, "That the wilderness and the solitary place will be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose." The empire of darkness will yield to no other name than that of Jesus, and to no other power than to that of his cross.

Nor is this all; for it is not merely that our spirit does not contain all the elements of greatness, and means of power, which the work requires, but we are apt to allow something that is positively wrong to creep in and to distemper our zeal. I mean those petty rivalries and jealousies which are the result of sectarian feeling. Indifference would be criminal; but how much more envy! We are too much like soldiers who in attacking a foe, fight in regiments and brigades, but not as an army; each seeking its own success and renown, and each jealous of the other, without any general combination and generous feeling. This not only enfeebles us, but is displeasing to God, who in consequence withholds his blessing; and since we are so much concerned for ourselves and so little for him, leaves us to our own unaided efforts. I admit that there are exceptions to this, and not a few; men of catholic feeling, who look upon the whole missionary cause as their own, by whomsoever maintained; who as cordially rejoice in the success, and as deeply lament the failures of other missions as they do those of their own; to whom it would seem a restraint upon their sympathies and their zeal which they could not endure, to shut them up within the limits of their own denomination; and who can find scope for their prayers and their sensibilities only in the amplitude of the whole field of

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missions: but with the bulk, I am afraid, it is not so; the partition walls within which they dwell confine their missionary spirit; their zeal and interest are measured by the limits of their denomination, and their banner is more conspicuous by the emblazonment of the peculiarity which distinguishes them, than by that "cross of Christ," in which all should first and supremely glory. Our missionary prayer meetings, and our missionary platforms, ought to be representations of the whole missionary body. Our various societies should be regarded only as so many inevitable subdivisions of the same general executive, employed in accomplishing the same great object, (though in different departments of action, and by somewhat different means;) and all actuated by our common views of the ultimate result. But this can never be, while so much sectarianism remains; and instead of this oneness of object and interest, the different institutions will appear to others, and be felt by themselves, to be so many rival companies, each pursuing its own end, to the neglect, if not to the depreciation, of the rest. We must have of course our separate organizations, but we ought at the same time to have a catholic and comprehensive feeling.

I cannot help thinking there is something that hinders the communication of the Divine Spirit, some stone at the well's mouth which needs to be rolled away before the refreshing stream can flow forth. I am not blind to the success which in many parts of the world has followed our missionary operations. I am not forgetful of the glorious aggregate of usefulness which, when all the items are carried into the account, and the total is summed up, appears to our delighted mind. I do not need to be reminded that, when first difficulties

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are removed, our progress may be expected to be more rapid. But with all this, I am still led to the conclusion, that after millions of property have been expended, thousands of lives have been sacrificed, and half a century consumed, much more might have been expected, and would have been accomplished, had the temper and spirit of the church of Christ been what it ought to have been. A new dispensation has come upon us, and we have not made ourselves ready for it. God has called us to a high and holy enterprise against heathenism, and we have forgotten that "this kind goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer." The church is not yet purified and fitted for her great work of converting the world to Christ. She must have more of the spirit of faith, and prayer, and holiness, and especially of love. Without this, it has not the mind of Christ. Abstract truth, without love, identify it as we may with our several opinions, proves in operation but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. It cannot meet the hearts of sinners, because it has not first clothed itself in the garb of love, and has not essayed its high duties in the all-moving, all-comprehending spirit of Him who is love. A divided alienated church cannot convert the world to Christ. God will not employ her; she must come to a better mind before she is an instrument which he delights to honour. It is Satan's object to keep us separated at home, that he may reign unmolested abroad. His strongholds there are not in danger, so long as we are not united here. A new spirit would be infused into the great missionary enterprise; a purer zeal would be caught by our missionaries, who ever carry abroad the temper which prevails at home; a more intense spirit of believing prayer would be

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stirred up in the hearts of the faithful, by a closer approximation of christians to each other. We must lay aside our envies and our jealousies, our suspicion and distrust, our uncharitableness and evil speaking, if we would have God's blessing upon us. Sectarian zeal, like the struggles of a man in a delirium, may be more violent; but the labour of love, and the work of faith, like the moderate and well-directed energies of sound health, will be more efficient. Christian union will make us neither timid nor weak; but it will tend greatly to sustain "the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind." We shall all be prepared to go forth with greater strength, and joy, and confidence, to our separate labours, by the comfort of love and the fellowship of the Spirit, just as labourers on the same farm more cheerfully depart to their different and solitary fields of action, by uniting at intervals in the home of their common employer, and feeling that they are all working for him. How much more interest should we feel in each other's success or failures; how tender should be our sympathies; how cordial should be our joy! The God of love, and the giver of concord, would then delight to behold us reflecting his own image, and drinking into his own Spirit, and would pour out his blessing upon our efforts. The effects of our union would be felt in every part of the earth, and the approach of the millennium accelerated. Let us not, then, be wholly occupied in surveying the desolations of the distant regions and dreary wilds of paganism, but turn our attention more to Christendom; for a united church must precede, and will soon introduce, a converted world.

I shall now give a short historical survey of the prin-



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cipal attempts that have been made in England to bring about a union of christians; in order by pointing out their failures and mistakes still more clearly to show what kind of confederation may be successful, and should be sought. English christians have not been more slow than others to perceive, or more backward to acknowledge, the desirableness and importance of a closer approximation than has hitherto existed of the various members of the body of Christ; and if the object of their wishes has hitherto eluded their pursuit, and is still a pleasure of hope rather than of fruition, the repetition, and especially the perseverance of the effort, affords some ground to expect that it will be yet accomplished.

The Act of Uniformity, as it is called, which was passed in the first year of Elizabeth, and reconfirmed at the Restoration, can scarcely be taken into the account, since this was not intended to unite all parties, but to suppress all but one, and to produce, under the compulsion of pains and penalties, an external agreement in religious profession and practice, rather than any actual spiritual fellowship. It was the great popish blunder (adopted by protestantism, and continued ever since,) of confounding christian unity with external and ceremonial uniformity. The fellowship of the church of Christ is not that of a company of slaves-, manacled together by the iron chains of legal enactments, and moving under the frowning aspect and threatening lash of an inexorable slave-driver; but the affectionate and confidential intercourse, the spontaneous sympathy and social impulse of free men and free minds, united at their own choice, upon common principles, and for common objects, yet perhaps all the while differing from

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each other, and allowing each other to differ, on minor points. Acts of uniformity may prohibit the expression of differences of opinion, but cannot prevent them; may unite men in bodily exercises, but they never can become the links of love, the chords of the heart. Hence they constantly place in juxtaposition the most heterogeneous and discordant elements. Still, the Act of Uniformity was a confession of the desirableness of union, though manifesting ignorance both of its nature and the way to obtain it; and it failed even in gaining what it sought, as all persecution which stops at any thing short of actual extermination ever must.

An attempt was made some time after, far more in the spirit of the gospel, by that exemplary prelate archbishop Usher, whom we delight to honour, as one of the brightest ornaments that ever graced the episcopal bench. Extremely moderate in all his ecclesiastical opinions, and occupying a position mid-way, if such can be found, between episcopacy and presbyterianism, he made an attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the two bodies by which those systems were maintained. His scheme was to reduce episcopal authority and jurisdiction so far as to require in every case the co-operation of a synod. The archbishop made his attempt towards the close of the civil war, when Charles was a prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, and he proposed it both to the parliament and the king. However strongly the heart of this good bishop was set upon this labour of love and work of peace, it met with no support, and utterly failed. It is quite unnecessary to enter into its details, but it is important to remark upon its general design, that it was a system of amalgamation; each party was to concede something in order to their ceasing to exist

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as separate and hostile bodies, and to their becoming, in all respects, one as to government. Usher held by the idea of uniformity, and never dreamt of each body retaining its separate existence, laws, and usages, and only being brought into some visible union, and living habitually in the spirit of brotherhood. [See also the Parliamentary History, ix. p. 379.]

Soon after the Restoration some distinguished members of the church of England, among whom were the Lord Keeper Bridgman, Chief Justice Hale and others, lamenting the divisions among protestants, and dreading the still great power of popery, set about a scheme of comprehension, which, by removing from the services of the church of England the parts mostly objected to by nonconformists, should bring them back into the establishment. Overtures were made and negotiations entered into for this purpose, by bishops Morley and Ward and dean Tillotson, on the part of the church of England; and Baxter, Pool and Bates on the part of the nonconformists. This idea had first occurred to the presbyterians, who by a deputation presented an address to the king in person for that purpose; but their own proposal, as well as the attempts of Bridgman and Hale, were rejected by the high-church party, and no relaxation in the forms of conformity was allowed. Similar attempts were renewed some years afterwards, and with like results. Stillingfleet, before his Catholicism had been corrupted and destroyed by a mitre, entered warmly into the comprehension scheme, and published in support of it his "Irenicum;" but, (alas for the consistency of Stillingfleet and the honour of his order!) after his elevation to the episcopal bench as bishop of "Worcester, he retracted his book, more perhaps out

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of compliment to the prejudices of the high church party, than from his own convictions or a regard to his own reputation.

The nonconformists, whom it has ever been the object and delight of their opponents to represent as a set of turbulent schismatics, had from the time of the Restoration expressed a desire to continue in union with the church of England, provided their conscientious scruples and objections could be met in a spirit of forbearance. Among them was John Howe; than whom a more noble or serene, a more holy or lofty spirit, has not arisen in later ages to throw its lustre on the church of God. Howe had entered, as it might have been expected from his pacific and gentle mind he would do, with great ardour into the comprehension scheme. In furtherance of it he preached and printed a sermon of incomparable excellence, entitled "Union among Protestants;" and well would it serve the cause of charity and concord, if this admirable discourse were printed in a cheap form and widely circulated. After the Revolution, and when, by the Act of Toleration, the nonconformists had liberty to meet confer and appear in public, they began to think of the subject of christian union. They had hitherto existed as two separate bodies, the Presbyterians and Independents; but conferences were now held to inquire into the possibility and desirableness of their becoming one. To this they were probably in some measure induced by the influence of Howe's sermon, and by a beautiful letter he published after the passing of the Act of Toleration; in which he showed, that he who had borne persecution with fortitude could now enjoy victory with moderation. No language of mean and malignant exultation dropped

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either from his lips or from his pen; and amidst the triumph of his principles and his party, his only solicitude was to heal the wounds which had festered so long, and to prevent the perpetuation of useless animosity. "Heads of agreement," as they were called, were now adopted by the two parties, Presbyterians and Independents, and they became formally one. In consequence of this agreement, they had stated meetings, both in London and in the country, for the advancement of their cause. The good effect, however, of this scheme is somewhat doubtful; and it is probable that Howe, who had a large share in the labours and hope of preparing it, was somewhat disappointed in the result. Perhaps had the parties still continued separate instead of actually coalescing, and have united as independent bodies for fraternal recognition and intercourse, there would have existed more of real unity than they had the happiness to find.

In modern times the same desire after union has shown itself in various ways and by different denominations of professing christians. In some counties, as in Bedford and Buckingham for instance, there are annual meetings of Baptists and Independents, at which a sermon is preached by a minister of each body, and agreeable intercourse is held by the members of their respective churches. And what are the monthly missionary prayer meetings held in our large towns, and composed of Baptists, Independents, Lady Huntingdon's connexion, and in some instances of Methodists also, but christian unions of a minor kind? Here is the germ of religious association made visible to the world, and when expanded and extended in other directions, and for other purposes, it would be what we seek. In Bir-

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mingham we have one of these united prayer meetings, at which ministers and members of four denominations are found blending their sympathies and sensibilities monthly at the throne of the Heavenly Majesty, and drawing closer and closer the bonds of christian fellowship. The public meeting, which is, usually a very large one, is preceded by a more private meeting of the ministers, who spend two or three hours in devotional exercises and religious conference.

The formation of some of our public societies, the London Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, and the Bible Society, are all so many christian unions, for single and specific objects indeed; but may they not be accounted as so many feelers put out by the church after a more excellent way; harbingers of an approaching era of a still more comprehensive and a maturer charity, and means of preparing the followers of Christ to be of one mind and of one heart?

The London Missionary Society was originally composed of a large number of episcopalians, as well as of various bodies of dissenters, and to this day it tenaciously holds by what is called its "catholic principle," of admitting and inviting the co-operation of all sections of the church; and although most of the members of the church of England have, since the extension of their own missionary society, left it, and it is now supported almost entirely by dissenters, its directors will not strike the union flag which floats over their mission-house and sends forth a note of invitation to all the followers of Christ to come and unite in the single, and simple, but sublime object of spreading an unsectarian and substantial Christianity.

The Religious Tract Society is one of the most beau-

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tiful specimens of christian union of which any country, or any age, can boast. It is supported with equal ardour by Churchmen Independents Baptists and Presbyterians, and its committee, composed of members of all those denominations, meet to conduct its affairs with such brotherly confidence and love that a discordant note has never been heard among them. This holy confederation is pouring forth a flood of light, not only over our own land, but to the very ends of the earth; and if any thing beyond union for union's sake were intended by the present movement, and a model for it had to be sought amongst our various institutions, it might be found in this invaluable society, which is in its very nature an association of christians of various opinions in minor matters, for the purpose of diffusing those evangelical sentiments in which they all agree. What can be conceived of more striking than a society which, by the united zeal of all orthodox denominations, has put into circulation nearly four hundred millions of religious publications, in each one of which vast aggregate, the method of a sinner's salvation is so stated, that if he never should see another book, or hear a sermon, he might know how to flee from "the wrath to come;" and yet, in not one of them can any of the minor points which distinguish christians from each other be discovered!

If I do not dilate on the British and Foreign Bible Society, it is not because I am insensible to the glory and success of that wonderful institution. A society that has sent forth more than sixteen million copies of the word of God, in more than a hundred and fifty languages, into nearly a hundred of which it had never been translated before; which has multiplied itself in all parts

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of Christendom, by leading to the establishment of similar institutions, needs no eulogium of mine: its own works praise it in the gates, and not only is its witness in almost every country upon earth, but its record is on high. And how has it been able to accomplish these mighty deeds, but by its catholic principle which furnishes ground where all denominations can unite without compromise? To me it appears the noblest, sublimest thought that ever entered the mind of man, to unite all denominations in the sole work of circulating the word of God. It seems the very consummation of one object of the Reformation, and the morning star of the millennium.

But to resume and pursue this historical sketch, it is to be noticed that the same desire after a closer approximation of christians has been expressed and made public by many of the clergy of the church of England. Some years since, that distinguished scholar, and noble and catholic man, the late Dr. Arnold, head-master of Rugby school, published a pamphlet on "Church Reform," in which he took up the long abandoned and impracticable idea of comprehension, and set forth a scheme for bringing all denominations of professing christians within the limits and provisions of the state church; a scheme which reflects much credit on his benevolence and his candour, if it does not upon his sagacity.

I have before me at this moment a far more feasible project, by another minister of the church of England, in a tract entitled, "The British Protestant Declaration," first published in the "Christian Observer," and afterwards printed for private circulation. This beautiful document, after showing the substantial agreement



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of all the reformed churches in the fundamental doctrines of divine truth, and in their renunciation of the Roman See, proposes the same plan of union which it has been the object of all the modern advocates of christian association to promote; and that is, such a recognition of common principles and common relations, as, while it leaves each separate body intact and independent, will unite them all in a fellowship of fraternal love, sympathy, confidence, and harmony. The object of such an approximation between the parties, is stated in the declaration to be their common defence against the aggressive movements of the papacy, and the immense importance of supporting the protestant cause. Much is it to be wished that the truly christian and protestant spirit and sentiments of this able document were universally held and expressed by all the ministers of the church of England, as well as by all those who dissent from it.

There is still another ornament, and a bright one too, not only of the English establishment, but of the holy catholic church; a man who is the common property of the whole christian community, and who, by his conduct, as well as by his writings, has proved himself the friend and the advocate of union, the Honourable and Reverend Baptist Wriothsley Noel. Several years ago he published his first tract, entitled, "The Unity of the Church," of which nearly forty thousand have been circulated, and which by the avidity with which it has been purchased, plainly proves how deep an interest has been felt on the subject by the religious public. Mr Noel has lately put forth a second tract, which he has designated "The doctrine of the word of God, respecting Union among Christians," and in it he has

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collected a vast amount of scripture testimony, arranged under different heads, on the subject of which he treats. And who has not read, and felt too, the exquisitely beautiful production of a minister, late of the other established church of our empire, but now of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which answers so well to its title, and which falls upon us as softly and as copiously as "The dew of Hermon?" This little pamphlet of the Rev. James Hamilton, minister of the Scotch church, Regent Square, London, has made its readers feel not only as if they could, but must, unite with their fellow-christians of every name. Perhaps it will not be out of place to notice also another effort to promote christian union, which was made by that catholic and public-spirited, as well as truly christian baronet, Sir Culling Eardley Smith, who in the year 1837 offered a premium of one hundred pounds for the best Essay on Schism; the arbitrators appointed to make the award having been the Rev. Baptist Noel, and the Rev. James Sherman, minister of Surrey chapel. This offer brought from the press two admirable volumes; one entitled "Schism as opposed to the unity of the church," by the Rev. Professor Hoppus, of the London university, which gained the prize; and the other by Dr. Harris, entitled "Union, or the divided church made one."

It will not be considered, I trust, any infraction of modesty, if, as a part of this general survey, I now introduce my own name and humble doings in the cause of union. Having been strongly impressed, during a season of private devotion, with the necessity and importance of more love harmony and peace, among the

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redeemed regenerated family of God, I ventured to bring forward the subject for consideration at the ensuing meeting of the Congregational Union for England and Wales. As the time was much occupied, I could only allude to it; but Dr. Leifchild, who was present, struck by the suggestion, requested me to take an opportunity to propose my views to the public more at large, and in detail. And I did so in a letter addressed to the Secretaries of the Congregational Union through the medium of the "Congregational Magazine." This letter attracted attention, and drew forth a recommendation of the plan, in the same periodical, from the esteemed minister at whose suggestion it was penned. I afterwards printed it in the form of a circular, and sent it to many ministers of various denominations both in England and in Scotland, and received numerous very gratifying replies, expressive of high satisfaction with the proposal, especially from many of the influential members of the Wesleyan body. The mind and heart of Dr. Leifchild were engaged in the subject, and he determined upon making the experiment of a meeting in the spacious scene of his labours at Craven Chapel. That meeting was held on the morning of 1st January, 1813, of which nothing higher or better could be said, than that it reminded all present of Watts's version of the 133d Psalm,

“Thus, on the heavenly hills,  
The saints are blest above;  
Where joy like morning dew distils.  
And all the air is love.”

Addresses were delivered by the Rev. Mr Bunting of the Wesleyan body, the Rev. James Hamilton of the

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Scotch church, and the Rev. Dr. Leifchild independent; and prayers were presented by ministers of three other denominations.

These gentlemen, with a few others belonging to the Congregational Union, to whom, and especially to its inestimable secretary, the Rev. Algernon Wells, the matter had been entrusted, called a meeting of ministers of different denominations, for conference upon the subject, at the Wesleyan Centenary Hall, the use of which was courteously granted for that purpose. At that meeting, which was characterised by the most christian feeling, a committee was appointed to ascertain what further steps could be taken, and what other measures could be adopted, for effecting the desired union, and to this committee Mr Wells, on behalf of the Congregational Union, surrendered the sacred trust. The result of their deliberations and determinations was the grand meeting at Exeter Hall, on the 1st of June, 1813, which was conducted upon the plan of the previous one held in Craven chapel. The Rev. Thomas Mortimer an episcopal clergyman, read one or two appropriate prayers from the liturgy of his church, the Rev. George Clayton an Independent, the Rev. Mr Latrobe of the Moravian body, and the Rev. Dr. Steane a Baptist, severally presented extempore prayer, between addresses delivered by the Rev. Drs. Leifchild Independent, Alder Wesleyan, Cox Baptist, Messrs Hamilton of the Scotch church, Baptist Noel of the church of England, and the author of this essay. Such was the intense anxiety of the public to be present, that twelve thousand tickets were issued, the dispenser of them choosing rather to leave it to those who obtained them to secure admission by early attendance, than to

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refuse any of the applicants. Of course, far more were excluded than could be admitted; and among the former were ministers of all sections of the church, some of whom had travelled far to be present on that solemn occasion. Never had that spacious building been so densely crowded, never so occupied or so honoured. On that ever-memorable morning it contained a fair representation of the holy catholic church, as assembled for the two-fold purpose of acknowledging and exhibiting their unity.

It was the most illustrious triumph of truth and love over sectarian prejudice and the selfishness of party that any age or any country had ever witnessed. What was said of the disciples at Jerusalem might be said of that vast congregation: 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.' Clergymen uttered the language of brotherly love; Dissenting ministers responded to the sentiments, language, and feelings of churchmen; while Methodists echoed the harmonies of both the others: and it is not too much to imagine, that angels, in listening to their own song ascending in chorus from the regions of sin, division, and discord, tuned their harps afresh, and again 'shouted with joy/ 'Glory to God; on earth peace, goodwill to men!' Since then, a sacramental service was held at Surrey chapel, on the 1st of January this year, at which all accredited persons, members of evangelical churches, were invited to attend; when the Rev. James Sherman, the esteemed and excellent minister of that spacious place, presided, and multitudes found, at the table of the Lord, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. What next may be done to promote this cause, it is not easy to say. God will direct.

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It is worthy of remark, and at the same time is matter of encouragement, as indicating the mind and will of God on the subject, that, as has been already remarked, it has been laid simultaneously upon many hearts, in different places and sections of the christian church. To the dissenters in England it affords matter of joy and thankfulness, to perceive that their brethren of the free presbyterian church of Scotland, while struggling to throw off the yoke, and break the fetters, of state bondage, and achieving the spiritual independence of their church, are cordially disposed to enter into friendly and fraternal intercourse with their brethren of the Voluntary churches, both in the north and in the south; and well prepared are those brethren in general cordially and confidently to reciprocate every sentiment of affection, and every offer of intercourse.

We have witnessed with delight the truly catholic scheme, proposed (I believe by Dr. Candlish,) to the commission of the General Assembly, before the disruption, and the enlightened determination to rescind the act of interdict that excluded dissenters from the pulpits of the Scottish establishment. Everything that has transpired in the spirit and conduct of that noble band of witnesses for the spiritual rights of the church, who have lately given so public and emphatic a testimony to the supremacy of Christ in his kingdom, and to the power of conscience over all that is sordid and selfish, encourages a hope that the bands of union are about to be drawn closer round the body of the faithful. Having first turned to the state, which would have enslaved them, and cried, "Separation," they then turned to the churches, who, though differing from them on the subject of establishments, were prepared to hail them

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as brethren, and with a voice as loud and as firm, uttered the word "Union." Those churches have welcomed them to their houses and their pulpits, and contributed to their building and endowment funds; and thus, it is to be hoped, the basis of a cordial and constant confederation is laid, which the remaining differences of opinion on church polity shall never be allowed to rupture or disturb.

Let me now advance to take a review of the religious parties in England, with which it may be desired and expected that union should be formed. In searching for these, I cannot widen the circle of fellowship beyond the line of orthodox doctrine. Seeking, as we do, a christian union, and not merely a civil association, we can confederate only with those who agree with us in what may be called substantial Christianity, or saving truth. It is not protestantism, in the aspect of its civil relations merely, that is the basis of the fraternization which we seek; but in its great fundamental religious truths, the justification of the sinner by faith, and the regeneration of his heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The agreement among christians that we desire, is such as is founded on those doctrines which make them christians; it is the faith in which salvation lies, and which has been considered as the orthodoxy of all protestant churches. Beyond these we cannot go; it would be to defeat our purpose, and to make our association wider than what we wish it to be. Substantial Christianity is a sufficient basis, and is in fact the only right basis, of christian union. By substantial Christianity is meant that sum of revealed truth which is essential to individual salvation; or, in other words, the reception of which is practically essential to the progress and

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universal triumph of the kingdom of God on the earth. And it is a profitable, joyful, love-inspiring, peace-promoting employment, to analyse the creeds and confessions of the established and unestablished churches of the Reformation; to compare the articles of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independency, and see their agreement in all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel in saving truth, in substantial Christianity.

The prevailing body in this country is, of course, the church of England. It would be considered as quite contrary to her principles to enter into any kind of association or fellowship with the various communities that have separated from her ranks; the absorption of them all into herself is the only kind of junction which would be hearkened to for a moment. Regarding all who have seceded from her communion in something of the light of rebels, she disdains to enter into any sort of negotiation with them, and aims to reduce them all into entire subjection. The present condition of the English established church is remarkably critical and portentous. With nominal and external uniformity, it has no real internal unity. It is divided into three parties, the tractarians, the high churchmen or old orthodox party, and the evangelicals. It is obvious that no accession to any scheme of catholic union can be looked for or desired from either of the two former; in their estimation it would be like loyal men associating with rebels. Inflexible in their claims, based upon a personal and official succession from the apostles, to be the sole and exclusive dispensers of divine grace, they look with ineffable contempt upon the men who, whether Presbyterians, Independents, or Methodists, propose to stand side by side with them in a holy league.



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I am afraid that little is to be expected, in the way of visible union, from the evangelical portion of the national establishment. It was, indeed, a painful proof of the reluctance of the evangelical clergy to be seen in any association whatever with dissenters beyond the platform of a Bible Society, that only two could be found to take any part in the proceedings of the great meeting at Exeter Hall on the first of June last year.\* Many, we believe, are united with us in spirit and in prayer, confide in our sincere and simple attachment to the gospel of Christ, and wish well to our religious labours, who, for reasons which they think they can justify to themselves, do not deem it expedient to join in any scheme of visible association with us. I have no doubt of the purity of their motives, and the conscientiousness of their conduct, and of their being convinced that they can better serve their own church, and our common Christianity, by standing aloof from any scheme of catholic union, and therefore I feel that I have as little right as I have inclination, to act the part of a censor, or to use the language of condemnation; but no one, I trust, will blame me for expressing my regret at the fact. For such men I cherish a pure and ardent affection; and whether in visible confederation with them or not, will continue to pray for them and love them, although they will let me do it only in secret. Their very excellences, so great and so obvious, make me regret the more, that any sentiment of their own, or any view of the confederation of others, should prevent them from coming into visible christian union with their brethren of the various protestant communions. The

\* This, be it remarked, was before the formation of the Anti-state Church Conference.

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invisible yet still real union of all true christians they do not deny, and they are as willing and as able as any others to enter cordially into the fellowship of the holy church universal.

I advert next, and with joy and hope, to the large and influential body of Wesleyan Methodists. Differing as I do in some matters, both of doctrine and discipline, from this community, I bear willing testimony to their well-earned and well-directed influence over multitudes of the population of this country. With an ardour that never cools, an activity that never tires, and a polity that finds both place and work for almost every member of their body, they have spread themselves over the land, and are to be found carrying the light of salvation into every nook and corner of the kingdom. If, in the opinion of some, their zeal partakes rather more of the *esprit de corps*, and savours rather more of methodism than is desirable, no one can deny that they have carried the lamp of life into thousands of villages and myriads of hovels, which but for their efforts would have been shrouded in the gloomy shadow of spiritual death. Bearing in remembrance the words of our divine Lord, that "the poor have the gospel preached to them," they have made the lowly and desolate vale of poverty to be vocal with the song of salvation, and covered with the beauties of holiness regions once hideous with the deformities of vice. Let me not, however, be supposed to insinuate that the poor only are found in their communion: their splendid chapels and literary institutions, the annual income of their missionary society, and the nearly quarter of a million sterling raised for the centenary fund tell a different tale. No union could be formed with

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effect, and none should be attempted in England, which did not include, and whose principles did not invite, this powerful and influential body of professing christians, and there is growing evidence that they are prepared to enter into any plan of fellowship that will not involve a compromise of their denominational principles or practices. For reasons which to them no doubt have appeared satisfactory, they have been thought, only perhaps because they have never been properly invited to associate with others, to have been too exclusive, and somewhat coy and retiring with relation to other bodies. Possessing among themselves the most complete practical system of polity in existence, which is worked with great power, and, upon the whole, with surprising harmony, they have felt no need, and therefore little desire, of association with other denominations. Influenced for a long time by the example and the injunctions of their illustrious founder, and courted and flattered by episcopalians, they have, till lately, cherished, from policy as well as respect, a greater deference towards the church of England than any of the other bodies of nonconformists. Taught, however, by events that have lately occurred, especially by the rise and spread of Puseyism, which has assailed them with a spirit no less virulent and contemptuous than that which is directed towards other seceders from the establishment, they see that neither their numbers, nor their piety, nor their respectability, can conciliate the favour, or mitigate the hostility of the dominant party of the Anglican church, and are, therefore, more prepared than before to confederate publicly with dissenters. They have now assumed the name and the position of a distinct and nonconforming church, and have nobly de-

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clared, by their series of tracts, that if Puseyism is to be the accredited interpretation of the Anglican establishment, they can hold no fellowship, and remain in no terms of amity with it. Puseyism is too arrogant and too independent, to hold in respect any body, however numerous or however useful, that is not found within the magic circle of episcopacy, and is not connected with it by the link of apostolic succession. The theological differences of the Wesleyans, and other evangelical bodies, ought to be no obstacle in the way of union. Calvinism and Arminianism have many points of dissimilarity, the great importance of which I, as a decided though moderate Calvinist, would not for a moment deny, but they have still more important points of agreement. No man will venture to put the doctrines of election and the perseverance of the saints upon a level, as to their bearing upon personal salvation and holy character, with justification by faith and the regeneration of the heart by the Spirit of God. Surely any christian might strike out from each creed all the peculiarities of both, and find enough left to afford ample scope for his religious sympathies, and sufficient ground for such christian union as neither asks these parties to break up their respective systems, nor to abjure the peculiar opinions upon which these systems are founded, but merely to acknowledge each other as brethren in Christ, and as far as may be, to act together for common interests. What Calvinist can have read the beautiful address, I may call it confession of faith, of the Rev. William Bunting, delivered at the first union meeting in Craven chapel without saying, "If this be Arminianism or Methodism, I see nothing which should prevent me from associating with such an Arminian?" I, for one,

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will never advocate any christian union which shall not be open to the Wesleyan body. The idea of refusing to stand in visible association with such men as the apostolic Wesley, and the seraphic Fletcher, were they now alive, (and they live in some of their successors,) is so repugnant to my notions of what I owe to the holy catholic church, and the communion of saints, that I cannot for a moment entertain the idea. Besides, so far as England is concerned, we are committed to each other. The original purpose included the methodists; they have been with us and we with them, in all the preliminary steps; one of their most esteemed ministers took part in the proceedings of our first meeting, and another took an equally conspicuous part in our second. Here, then, in England, it is too late for Calvinists and Arminians to find out that they cannot unite, for they are united; and may the bond of that union be drawn closer and closer around them! But besides the larger body of the Wesleyan methodists, there are others, by no means inconsiderable either for numbers or usefulness, which it might be desirable to see included in this fellowship. The exercise of a little christian forbearance, and a disposition to forget the past in the contemplation of the prospects that are opening in the future, will smooth the way, it is hoped, for all that is sought for in reference to these, in our scheme of union, which is merely the recognition of each other as brethren in Christ, without declaring our approval of all that is theoretic or practical in the parties associated.

Next come the various bodies of protestant evangelical dissenters. Of my own denomination, the Independents or Congregationalists, I can speak with

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confidence. Independents though they be, their independency is not of that repellent kind which makes them essentially and incurably anti-social., They are not bigots to isolation. They have, I am happy to think, not only the attraction of cohesion to bind them to each other, but the attraction of gravitation to draw them to a common centre. Nothing could be a more convincing *prima facie* argument to convince me that my system of ecclesiastical polity, whatever it was, was unscriptural, than the perception that it did not allow me consistently to associate with christians of other denominations. I never could persuade myself that any system, be it what it might, could be a scriptural one, which threw a bar across my path, and prevented me from visibly joining my fellow christians in acts of fraternal intercourse; or which impeded the answer of the Saviour's prayer for the oneness of his disciples, and which, by thus hindering the completeness of the evidence of his divine mission, tended to keep the world in a state of unbelief.

The Baptists, from their numbers, their respectability, their piety, and their zeal both for home and foreign missions, are entitled to most respectful and affectionate mention. The denomination, which once enjoyed the labours, and still enshrines the memory, of such men as Hall, Fuller, Foster, and Ryland, and which could boast of such venerated names as those of Carey, Marshman, and Ward, among their missionaries abroad, to say nothing of the numbers that still live and labour for the cause of Christ and our holy religion, is eminently entitled to consideration when looking round for the materials of christian union. The denomination which has done as much nearly as all others together, to furnish by their translations of the Scriptures the ele-

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ments of life, and the lamp of salvation, to the teeming nations of Hindustan, may well be coveted by us all as an integral member of our great confederation. One with all orthodox denominations in their views of christian doctrine, and separated from the Independents only by their peculiarity on the subject of baptism, what hinders their uniting with others, or others with them? Considerable changes have come over their body of late on the subject of sacramental communion with other christians who differ from them on the subject of baptism, effected, it may be presumed, by the labours of Mr Hall. The controversial pamphlets of that extraordinary man have infused a more liberal spirit into many of the churches of his denomination, who, led on by his mighty shade, have more closely examined the subject, and have arrived at his conclusion, that whom Christ has received we are bound to receive also. Mixed communion churches, as they are called, which allow of fellowship between Baptists and Independents in the Lord's supper, are, it is believed, increasing in the body; and in many instances, this principle is held by the pastor, though as yet opposed by the church. Towards their brethren of other sections of the church, the Baptists have ever shown, in all respects but this one of communion in the Lord's supper, the most friendly, cordial, and fraternal disposition. They and the Independents have been more closely united by joint prayer meetings, and exchange of pulpit services, than any two bodies besides in the christian world. Sorry should I be if any thing were to arise to interrupt the harmony ever happily subsisting between them and us; and, with these feelings, I have observed with apprehension, certain indications in some quarters of a little increase of

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the asperity with which the baptismal controversy is carried on. It is not to be asked, and if it were, it is not to be granted, that the combatants should retire from the field, sheathe their swords, and "hang the trumpet in the hall," for no peace can be made with error; but, then, let there not be an overweening importance attached to the points in dispute, and let the controversy be conducted according to all the rules of honourable warfare, in the spirit of christian charity, and without the assumption of infallibility.

What is denominated Lady Huntingdon's Connection comes too near the Independents in their discipline, while in doctrine they are one, to require a distinct and separate consideration. With a college, now under the presidency of the eloquent author of "Mammon," and "the Great Commission," who, among his other and widely-circulated works, has given us a beautiful treatise on christian union, it may be fully expected that this denomination, as it may become more useful and more extensively diffused, will cherish still more warmly, and promote more extensively the principle of association. Nothing, it may be confidently anticipated, will be wanting on the part of Dr. Harris, either in the sphere of his duties as a professor, or in the way of the great influence he can exercise both from the pulpit and the press, to work out his own idea, and make the "divided church one."

Such are the materials for union furnished by this country; and surely none can say it is a hope too sanguine to be entertained, a conception too flattering to be realised; that from them there may be gathered such a visible association of christians as shall convince the world, that amidst circumstantial differences there is



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substantial agreement, and that beneath the troubled and billowy surface of the ocean of religious opinion, there is still commingling an immeasurable depth of quiet water, which no storm can reach or disturb? Is it the mere speculation of a fervid, though charitable imagination, a mere bubble, which, though inflated with the breath of love, and reflecting the beautiful colours of the bow of peace, is still nothing but a bubble, that must of necessity burst when touched by the finger of experiment? Shall we allow ourselves to think that these various communities of professing christians, though all professing to be gathered round the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be feeling the centripetal force of its all-attractive influence, have yet so much of mutual repulsion, that they cannot in any form, and to any extent, cohere? Shall it be told to this world, perhaps to others too, that there is more in matters of church government and religious ceremony, or outward symbols, to keep us apart, than there is in the adorable Trinity, the character of God, the covenant of grace, the scheme of our Saviour's mediation, the justification of the sinner by faith, the regeneration of the heart by the operation and baptism of the Spirit, the adoption of believers into the family of God, and the prospect of one heaven of holiness, happiness, and love, as to all which verities we are agreed, to cement us at any time, or any purpose, into one body? And what makes the matter more surprising is that we profess to be one in Christ, we profess to acknowledge each other, and even to love each other secretly. Are we then ashamed of our common relationship? Shall we blush to come out of our seclusion, to step over the line of our separation, and confess one another before men? Can it be pleas-

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ing to our common Father to see his children thus shutting themselves up in their separate rooms in the great house of the holy catholic church, and never coming into one common hall to own their relationship and indulge their affection? Will the fear of sanctioning what we deem wrong in our brethren justify this alienation? But substantial union does not imply universal approbation.

Difficulties, I admit, though I hope not insuperable ones, lie in the way. It will be difficult, in some cases, to say what parties shall be admitted to the union; and the jealousies, prejudices, or enmities of some bodies may obstruct the admission of others to which the great majority may feel no objection; or there may be denominations so irregular and peculiar, as to make the rest doubt the propriety of countenance being given to them by any association with them. It will be difficult to determine whether any thing further than mere recognition of each other, and more extended intercourse, should be attempted, or whether a common object of co-operation should be sought for; and if so, what that object should be? It will be difficult to allay the jealousies and conciliate the favour of the more strict, or, at any rate, the more cautious members of the different bodies, and some of them perhaps may be very influential. It will be difficult to give satisfaction to all parties in the progress of the cause, to avoid furnishing occasions of discontent and disruption, and thus, by the very attempts to promote union, to be unwittingly the cause of widening old breaches, and making new ones. Other difficulties may be foreseen, or may soon start forth. But what good cause was ever without them? What great object was ever accomplished without opposition? None greater than are

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ordinarily met with will be found here, and none but what, with prudence, caution, and especially by God's blessing, we may reasonably hope will be ultimately surmounted.

On the other hand, signs of encouragement are not wanting. Here and there along the dark horizon of party prejudice, lights, though yet but glimmering and scattered are kindling, which the eye of hope should not be slow to perceive and follow. The disruption of the Scottish establishment, though in one view it may seem to furnish another cause of discord, by adding one more to the divisions which already exist, yet in another aspect, is eminently favourable to christian union, by setting free from the trammels of state domination five hundred ministers of Christ and their flocks, who, in their former condition, were neither so willing nor so able to associate with others, but are now employing their newly-acquired liberty to form fraternal confederations with their brethren of other denominations. Local and partial divisions will, in this case, aid the cause of general association, by liberating large masses which will become free to enter into new combinations. The influence of this great event upon the South remains yet to be seen. That such a convulsion and disruption should have no influence beyond their own immediate neighbourhood or their own kingdom, is next to impossible. The shock has been felt in this country, and may tend to open the eyes of the good men of the Episcopalian establishment, and prepare many of them, if not for leaving their own church, yet for uniting with the members of others. It may have made no stir upon the surface of our English national church; but what incipient and concealed

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movement it may have originated in the minds of observing and deep-thinking men, is not for any one to say. Hundreds of far-seeing and reflecting intellects may be surveying it from their own private posts of observation in their closets and studies, and indulging in processes of thought, which are preparing them, unconsciously perhaps to themselves, for some change which shall bring them into closer union with their christian brethren of other bodies. The great amount of piety which exists in the church of England, but which is now pent up, and compressed by the exclusiveness of their own ecclesiastical polity, will not, cannot, always endure this state of isolation, but with an expansive force ever increasing, and aided by what has occurred in the north, will one day burst its barriers, and seek the visible fellowship of the universal church.

Another hopeful sign, and it has been already more than once adverted to, is the simultaneous desire after union which has risen up in many quarters, and the efforts which have been commenced to obtain it. Whence is it; from heaven, or of men? Is it a device of Satan? Impossible! His policy is to divide and conquer. We cannot hesitate to believe that it is the work of God. The reader, perhaps, may deem it a fond conceit; but many of us cannot help comparing it to the first movement of the Saviour, when, awakening from his slumbers on the sea of Galilee, he prepared himself to hush the storm, and say to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still!"

Nor is it undeserving of special attention that the religious bodies which were supposed to be least susceptible of union among themselves, I mean those which maintain the independence of each separate church, are

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gradually becoming more united within their own respective communions. Both the Baptists and Independents are losing their jealousies of the union of churches, and acquiring a stronger disposition for denominational association. To some this may appear to be opposed to catholic fellowship; but it is not so. The law of our new nature, which makes the individual christian yearn for fellowship with others, makes one church desirous of union with others; and in its last and most perfect operation, makes one collection of churches desire fellowship with all other collections of churches. The love of union, whether, viewed as a principle or a taste, like other appetites, craves the largest possible measure of gratification; and in proportion as different bodies are closely associated among themselves, not upon denominational peculiarities only, but also upon the basis of doctrinal truth, the more are they prepared to unite on common grounds with each other. A family or a state at peace in harmony and well united within itself, is better prepared for union with other states or families, and more capable of it, than one which is altogether dissociated, and the various parts of which recognise nothing of a common nature and nothing of essential unity, but are jealous and suspicious of each other. The process preparatory for general union therefore is already going on, where more limited associations formed on right grounds are being vigorously supported.

But above all, the actual attempts which are being made are encouraging, however limited and feeble they may be. The subject is not only discussed in essays and enforced in sermons; is not only speculated upon in the study and in the closet; is not only matter

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of contemplation and desire; but is at length reduced to practice; the experiment has been made, first in Craven chapel, and afterwards upon a grander scale in Exeter Hall. For the first time in the history of the denominations, members of each of them have met, and sat, and sung, and prayed, and spoken together, in recognition of each other as brethren. It was a new thing in the earth, a sight on which, we may soberly assume, heaven looked down with joy, and which hell regarded with dismay. A proof was then furnished, of which the advocates of charity among christians will not be slow to avail themselves, not only that means and opportunities may be found for feeling, owning, and exhibiting the substantial oneness of the church, for the exercise of holy sympathy, and the mingling of common sensibilities, but that good men of all parties will be found also to avail themselves of future occasions for such blessed gatherings. A new responsibility has come upon us, in consequence of these meetings, inasmuch as it is now not matter of argument merely but of fact and of experience that visible union can be formed between christians of different denominations without the compromise of their cherished peculiarities. A darker cloud of reproach will now cover us all, if we do not follow up the work of reconciliation and intercommunion.

But, while England has scarcely any difficulties and obstacles in the way of union altogether peculiar to itself, it has some advantages which other parts of the empire do not possess, at any rate not in such abundance. The various bodies of professing christians have been already more in the habit of intercommunion for specific objects, and to a certain extent in this king-

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dorn, than elsewhere. Their public intercourse has been more frequent, by exchange of pulpits, by reciprocal service, by organised confederations for the defence of common rights, by fellowship in Bible society tract society and town mission operations, by united prayer-meetings, and fraternal associations. They are in the habit of meeting and of worshipping together to such extent, that some contend, enough of union, or at any rate as much as can be expected, is already realized. The fact I joyfully admit, though I dispute the inference. All that we have yet realised, done or enjoyed in this way, is a preparation, but only a preparation, for a further advance into the region of peace, a higher ascent into the element of love. If we have gone thus far, why cannot we move onward; if we have sipped the cup of communion, why not drink deeper of it? We have been training for union, for we are not strangers to each other. We have grown familiar with one another, not by report, but by observation and experience. We have become acquainted it may be with each other's failings, and have seen some matters to lament, but we have seen other, and perhaps greater things to admire. The space between us is not an unbroken ground, or an unbeaten track; on the contrary, there are pathways over it well trodden, where no grass grows; and why, therefore, should we not be formally and visibly associated? Why not agree that there shall be some midway spot where we shall occasionally meet and hold still closer communion than we now do?

The extent of our population, and the number of our large cities and towns, give us facilities and advantages for association of which we should be neither unwilling nor backward to avail ourselves. Ours is not only the

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age, but the country, of great cities; I do not allude merely to our metropolis, but still I may speak of it with great propriety, as being not only the nation, but the world, in miniature. No country on earth has such a city. It is the centre of the civilised and christianized earth. Among that mighty population, all sects, in all their abundance, are to be found, and found also with their usual portion of both good and bad qualities. It may be said, that whatever is done in London, is done upon a stage of which not only the nation, but the world is the audience. The words spoken upon that stage take wing and fly to the ends of the earth; the scenes there exhibited are contemplated, and the music there performed is heard, in a comparative sense, by the population of the globe. The man who talks at a public meeting there, may be figuratively said to be heard at the antipodes. No such publicity is given, by what is said and done in the provinces. Theirs is a limited circle compared to that of mighty London. Now what an advantage is this; what a vast help to everything good, and among other good things, to the promotion of christian union! How many men, and good men of all denominations too, may be convened, and united in prayer, deliberation, and action, upon one spot, in a few hours! What facilities for intercommunion of minds, and exchange of thought! What an apparatus for sending round the wide circle the electric spark of holy zeal! What noble confederations have been formed in London, what institutions have been born there, or, if born elsewhere, have been carried there to be nursed to manhood, and educated for action! What a concentration of light, and love, and zeal, is to be found there, throwing its focal splendour over the countries and the world!



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And then, in addition, we have villages that are as to population considerable towns, and towns that are larger than most of our cities. Our land is studded all over with these crowded haunts of human beings. We might divide it into scores of circles of territory, and find some large town or city as a centre for each. We have ample room for effective meetings, where the thing would not be done in a corner, or the light shine in a narrow place, but where those scenes of concord, love, and joy, would be witnessed by myriads, and the report of what was done be instantly talked of by pious multitudes. We could make the subject of christian union tell upon the vast masses of the population in a short time; and there where infidelity chiefly dwells and exerts its influence, (for it is a city and not a rural demon,) could weaken its force, by depriving it of its most powerful weapon. It is of immense importance that all moral means, (and christian union is one of them,) should be made to bear powerfully on our large towns. Jesus Christ commanded his gospel to be first preached at Jerusalem. His own ministry was devoted very much to large towns and cities; in his instructions to his disciples, he directed their attention principally to such localities; they were the theatres of the Holy Spirit's first and most illustrious achievements; in them the power of Satan is strongest; they furnish peculiar advantages for the promotion of religion; and they exert a special influence upon the country and the world. Hence everything should be done for their benefit, and among other things their christian population should be drawn closer together.

Nor can it be said, that we have not many towns and districts where a sufficient number of christians, of the

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various denominations that may be expected to enter into the scheme, could be collected so as to present an imposing aspect to the public. The Methodists, Baptists, and Independents are so widely spread over the country, that there is scarcely even a small town in which some of all these bodies are not to be found; and as to the large ones they abound in them in our manufacturing districts. What impressive scenes of union might be exhibited in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield, Bristol, York, Newcastle, Norwich, Bradford, and many other towns, where congregations of various religious bodies exist of considerable magnitude! The impression produced by numbers might be felt in all these localities, for numbers might be gathered there.

But it is not only the existence of the various denominations in England that gives to it a peculiar advantage for effective and impressive union, but their existence also in proportions so nearly equal as to numbers. It must be obvious, that, where one denomination so far preponderates over another as to render the smaller one hardly visible, their conjunction is scarcely seen, just as the flowing of a small rivulet into a mighty river is scarcely observable, and therefore little noticed; or as a star of the sixth magnitude is lost in a constellation where it is united with others of the first or second. In Scotland the predominant denominations are Presbyterians, and all others are comparatively-small. The same remark applies to Ireland as regards the bodies that may be expected to unite. In those kingdoms therefore, however desirable it may be for the various sects to be associated, it could not be done with the same good effect, or the same strong impression as in

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England, where the Methodists, the Baptists, and Independents, though not absolutely equal, yet approach equality. This circumstance checks the discouragement that a sense of weakness produces in the smaller body, which is apt to fear it would be regarded, in such an association, as a mere appurtenance to the other.

Nor does the proportion stop in mere numbers, but extends to gifts, graces, and respectability. I am, of course, speaking now of the various bodies of nonconformists. Each of these has ministers whom, in respect of talent, piety, and usefulness, it has no need to be afraid of bringing into comparison with those of other bodies. Each has places of convocation large and elegant; each possesses members of wealth and influence. None therefore has occasion to fear it will be lost in the greater magnitude, or be eclipsed by the brighter splendour, of the others. It is true, such fears ought not to exist at all; but it is well to see there is no ground for them. Let us not be slow to avail ourselves of such advantages, any more than dull to notice them. The children of this world, wiser in their generation than the children of light, are sagacious enough to perceive how all these things may be made conducive to their schemes. They have laid hold of our large towns as the chief scenes, and as affording the, fittest agents, and most numerous instruments of their operations, in the way of political, commercial, and scientific unions.

Let all these facts be taken into consideration, and it will appear that we want nothing in England but the disposition to exhibit to the whole earth, to the greatest advantage, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

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I come now to consider the means by which we may hope, and should endeavour, to promote the object of this volume.

That the desired union may be brought about, it should be taken up, not only by all parties, but by all persons. It must come upon the individual conscience of every christian, that it is his duty to promote it, according to his station and measure of influence. We ought not to sink ourselves, and our personal obligations, in the mass. It is every one's concern. All the great interests which are hindered by our divisions, or aided by our agreement, belong to each of us; the edification of the church, the credit of religion, and the moral improvement of the world. We must not stand gazing at this work, saying, "Who shall do it?" but must say, "Here is something for me to do." I am quite aware that it is the becoming duty of christian ministers to promote union; their responsibility in this, as well as in every other subject connected with true religion, is truly tremendous; and God will require this matter at their hands. It is they who kindle or quench the flames of contention; who strengthen or relax the bonds of union; who alienate or conciliate the affections of the brethren. The power of the pulpit and the influence of ministerial example are prodigious. If the pastors could be brought to associate the flocks would instantly follow; and it is a solemn and a serious consideration for those to whom the Saviour has granted an office of such influence, whether they can best discharge its duties by perpetuating or healing the wounds of the universal church. If the chord of charity were struck by a firm and skilful hand in the pulpit, from time to time, it would produce an instant vibration throughout the whole congregation; and the words of

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peace going from thence, would be returned in ready and joyful echoes by the listening hearers. The minister of religion cannot be fully acting out his duty as a servant of Christ unless he is a promoter of peace, and doing all he can to harmonise the discordant elements of the christian church. His ministry is emphatically one of reconciliation; and he has mistaken his commission if he be employing himself in any way that is opposed to this, or even if he be neglecting it. But christian union belongs not to ministers only, it should press upon the conscience of every one of their hearers. No man is doing his whole duty as a christian, who is doing nothing to repair the breaches in the walls of Zion. On the return of the Jews from captivity, it was thus the desolation of Jerusalem was removed; Nehemiah appointed officers and master builders; but, in addition to this, "the people had a mind to work;" and "we returned all of us to the wall," said the historian, "every one of us to his work." Let us, then, not wait for others, nor suspend our efforts till we can get them to co-operate with us, but let each denomination, each minister, each individual christian, commence the work of pacification, and the attempt to unite the people of Clod.

"Let us each do our part, so as we may be able to say, *Per me non stetit*; it was not my fault but christians had been more combined and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly christian, and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had not been a more powerful, lively, amiable, and awful thing. If the christian community moulder and decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, and ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand." Howe on Union among Protestants.

But as we shall not attempt to accomplish an object, which we do not covet, especially if it be attended with

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some difficulty, there must be a prevailing desire before there will be a general effort for it. Desire! and can any man, whose mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and whose heart is renewed by his grace, be without such desire? Will any one who surveys the distractions of the christian church, who sees the parties into which it is split, the virulence by which they are possessed, the angry controversies they maintain, the discredit they bring upon Christianity, the force they give to infidel objections, the gratification they afford to demons, the obstructions they throw in the way of the world's conversion, not desire the union of the church? Can any person pretend to the christian character, with the paralysis of such a cold and deadly indifference at his heart? "What! survey with indifference the divided state of that church, for which Christ gave his tears, his prayers, his blood, his life, to make it one, and yet pretend to piety! To see that church a battle-field which should be a sheepfold, and those members of it which should be feeding together as lambs fighting with each other as gladiators, and shed no tears for its divisions, cherish no desires for its union! Is the church, which is the centre of God's cares and counsels, the purchase of Christ's blood, no more to us than this? Had we seen even the seamless garment which once covered the sacred person of the Saviour rent and torn by violence, we could not have looked on the mutilated robe without emotion; and shall we see his spiritual body torn by faction, and disfigured by bigotry, and yet be indifferent to the melancholy spectacle? A person in such a state of mind as this, surely cannot be a lively stone "in the spiritual house," but a mere icicle hanging to its exterior.

And if to be indifferent to visible union is criminal,

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how much more so to be hostile to it? Opposition to any well-concocted scheme of union involves in it great responsibility. It must be left, of course, to every one's judgment to determine, whether any scheme presented for public approbation and support answers to that character or not; and no man can be blamed for not countenancing or even for opposing a plan, which appears to him to compromise any of the principles of divine truth, or to be nothing more than a visionary and impracticable speculation. But the hostility here condemned, is a disposition to rest satisfied with things as they are; a mind contented with the present relations and feelings of parties; a reluctance to do any thing to bring them nearer to each other, coupled with such an aversion to the very attempt as leads to a fastidious and somewhat contemptuous rejection of every plan that may be proposed for that object. Opponents, I regret to say, may be found, who, not satisfied with their own silent and individual rejection of the proffered olive-branch, use their influence to induce others also to abjure union on any other terms but those of perfect identity with themselves. Is it too much to ask such persons to place themselves in company with their divine Lord, and to follow him through all the scenes of his incarnation, for the purpose of asking from what action, or from what expression of his, they can feel authorised to treat with hostility, and to reject with scorn, the efforts that are being made to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between his disciples? Is it from his sermon upon the mount, when he poured his benedictions upon the peace-makers, and called them the children of God? Is it from his frequent rebukes to his too contentious followers? Is it from his conversa-

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tion with the woman of Samaria, and his labours on that occasion, among a people hated and shunned by his kindred? Is it from his inimitable parable of the good Samaritan? Is it from his reproof of the distempered zeal of his disciples, who would have stopped the man that cast out demons, because he followed not them? Is it from his forbearance with his apostles under their cloudy apprehensions of his doctrine and his will, their impure motives, and their defective sanctity? How wide the interval which separated his religious knowledge and attainments from those of his disciples, he the fountain of illumination, they encompassed with infirmities! But did he recede from them on that account? No: he drew closer the bond of union, imparted to them successive streams of influence, till he incorporated his spirit with theirs, and elevated them into a nearer resemblance to himself. Or, is hostility to union learned from that touching intercession al petition already referred to, when the agony of his labouring heart found relief in a burst of importunate supplication for the unity of his church? Will men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus in those scenes of his ministry, and have listened to the gracious words which there flowed from his lips, till we have caught his own spirit and have been moulded into his image, if we are not only indifferent, but opposed, to visible union? "Will such hostility identify us most closely and most obviously with him who came to make us all one in himself?

It is readily admitted that we should have fixed and definite ideas of the nature of the union which we conceive to be both desirable and attainable; and here I will acknowledge at once that it is desirable, if it were



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practicable, to obtain unity of religious sentiment even in those minor matters on which we are not now agreed, and to be of one mind as well as of one heart. I could never be brought like some to compare the differences of opinion among professing christians to the varied colours of the rainbow, as thus presenting an instance in the spiritual world, analogous to that striking phenomenon in the physical world, of beautiful variety with perfect harmony. This allusion may do well enough to adorn a speech upon a platform, and has often secured for the orator who employed it the applause of his admiring, but uncritical hearers. The analogy is in an important sense a false one. The different colours of the bow in the cloud, are all a part of creation; they are so to speak all natural truths, optical realities; no one colour being more or less true than another, but are all perfectly conformable to the great law of their production, all essential parts of the one pure element of light, having an original and common source. This cannot be said of our different religious opinions; these cannot all be true, inasmuch as they are opposed to each other. Truth is uniform, and error is multiform. Much error must therefore be in existence; which, of course, (as error is an evil,) it is desirable should be subdued, when it has accomplished the end for which it was permitted to enter, that the whole church may be subjected to the reign of unmixed truth.

“This, however, must be expected as the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints and angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious effusion of the Spirit of God, to produce that event. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire

to discover his mind, will hold a torch before us in our enquiries, and strangely illumine the path in which we are to tread. The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book, that, were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious and impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily issue in the forming of two or more separate communions. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead christians into a similar train of thinking; and being under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one communion would probably be productive of much mischief; it certainly would do no good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride acting upon indolence and fear." Mr Hall's *Strictures on Zeal without Innovation*.

While, therefore it is quite lawful and proper for us ever to keep before our minds, as the ultimate object of our desire and pursuit, an agreement in lesser matters as well as in greater ones; our proximate one is only such an association as shall include in it the exercise of a more intense brotherly love than at present exists, the public and formal recognition of each other as brethren on a basis mutually agreed upon, and, if possible, a co-operation in the furtherance of some common object, equally important to us all if such an one could be found. If the barriers that separate us into different communions shall ever be removed, so as to bring about a general coalition into one visible church, it will not be by a direct attack upon them, or any attempt to subvert them by the arm of power or the manœuvres of party; so neither will it be by calling upon those who are shut up within their separate enclosures by one simultaneous and general assault from within to demolish them, but by leaving them to crumble away under the influence of the Spirit of God upon the spread of truth and charity, and by so raising the importance of our common sentiments, that our peculiarities shall exist no longer;

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or if, in any degree, they shall still remain, it will be not as fortifications drawn along hostile frontiers, but as verdant pathways in the same beautiful garden; which if in one sense they divide the parts are in another the means of communication between them all.

All hope of close union that is not founded on a sincere and general determination to make the word of God the sole arbiter of our religious differences is vain and delusive. It has been by following other guides than this, the *ignes fatui* of human authority, that we have been led astray from each other and from the truth. Our divergence and division from each other have arisen from our leaving this common centre of religious sentiment; and there is no way of coming back to each other, but by coming back to this sole and supreme Judge in matters of doctrine, discipline, and practice. Chillingworth's immortal aphorism, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants," has been far more admired and applauded than it has been acted upon. When once that grave and weighty declaration shall be thoroughly understood, deeply felt, and universally acted upon, its effect in drawing christians closer to each other will be surprising. It is human authority that has to a very considerable extent separated the brethren, and that still keeps them apart. The names and systems of men stand in the way of union; just as the church at Corinth, instead of gathering in one body round their common Lord, was seen in separate divisions, severally clustering round the names of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas. The multitude have never searched the scriptures for themselves, and are therefore following in the track of their leaders; but when they shall turn from them to the lively oracles,

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and shall be found listening to their inspired and infallible responses, instead of prostrating their understandings before the creeds, catechisms, and articles of fallible men, they will be astonished to find how rapidly and how closely they can be made to approximate to each other. They will then discover that they have all more or less mistaken their way during the long night that has fallen upon them, and by the deceptive lights of human authority that have glimmered on their path. The entire submission of our minds to the teaching of the truth and its divine author, will be like the rising of the sun upon our wanderings, to conduct us all back to the right road.

Next to this is a due estimate, never yet perhaps correctly made notwithstanding all that has been said upon the subject, of the incomparable superiority of those points of doctrine in which we are agreed over those on which we differ; and connected with this, a disposition to make the former rather than the latter the topics of our habitual and delighted reflection. We hold in common truths of such surpassing magnitude, that our distinctive peculiarities dwindle down before them to almost invisible points. When gazing upon the cross of Christ, the amplitude of the covenant of grace, the method of justification, the work of the Spirit, the common adoption here, and the common glorification hereafter, we should feel, in regard to our distinctions, pretty much as two co-heirs of an immense estate which was bounded by the Alps, and was situated on their lovely slopes, would be of the different heights and accommodations of their respective dwellings; or as two travellers who were looking at the pyramids would of the different heights of the little eminences from which

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they viewed those stupendous masses. Give to church government all the importance that can be desired for it, and to the different opinions entertained of the subjects and mode of baptism all the value that belongs to them, (and it may be admitted that neither is small.) still, what are they as compared with the method of our justification and the means of our sanctification? If it be necessary to multiply comparisons, and it be lawful to compare the doctrines and discipline of Christianity to Nebuchadnezzar's image in his dream, would not the former appear as the head of gold and the breast of silver, while the latter would seem but as the legs and feet of iron and clay?

Let us all consider what it is that justifies, sanctifies, comforts, and in fact, saves us; what it is that is the satisfactory evidence of our salvation; what it is that unites us to Christ, and binds us to the heart of God; what it is that enables us to overcome the world, and to set our affections on things above; and we shall find it is not Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Independency, or Methodism. How little do these things avail us when guilt presses upon the conscience, or care corrodes the heart, or sorrow drives sleep from the eyes, or death deprives us of our friends, or the last enemy lays his cold hand upon our frame. Do we in such scenes and seasons betake ourselves to those lesser matters for comfort, or to the essential and glorious truths of our common salvation? It is because we are believers in Christ Jesus that we feel ourselves safe for eternity; and this safety we cannot but concede to our brethren of all orthodox sects, as truly and as confidently as we feel it for ourselves. Let us then keep within sight of the cross, by dwelling more upon the essential doctrines of the

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gospel; and look upon our brethren of other denominations, as assembled with us round that common centre of attraction, and partaking with us in all the gracious effects and eternally glorious results of that great sacrifice which is there presented to our view. There should be in us such an ineffable delight in the fundamental truths of Christianity, such an exaltation of their glory and importance, as would make us determined to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified. This would make us love with an unquenchable and truly fraternal affection all who partake with us in the same views. We should feel towards each other much as loyal regiments of soldiers do when gathering round the royal standard, who then forget the distinctive emblems of their own ensigns, and regard each other for their attachment to that one common emblem of their monarch's and their country's cause; or, to borrow a more sacred allusion, we, like the different tribes of Israel, arranged and marching through the wilderness under their respective banners, yet all collected round the ark of the covenant, should appear lovely and venerable in each other's estimation, on account of our proximity and attachment to that system of divine truth of which the Jewish propitiatory, with its shechinah and cherubims of glory, was but a type.

But we must go still further and higher, and prepare for closer union by more eminent piety. A cold and uninfluential orthodoxy, which leaves us still worldly and undevout, however it may give us an intellectual sympathy with each other, and lay the basis of a courteous and general esteem, will do but little in the way of drawing our hearts together, All who have written

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upon the subject of christian union agree in the opinion, that it is an increasing spirit of sincere and fervent piety that alone will be found equal to the work of subduing our prejudices, and conciliating our affections. The apostle's question, "From whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members," shows the cause of divisions, and suggests the nature of the remedy. The contentions in the church flow from the same source as those of the world. In our nature there are yet remains of corruption, mixed up with divine sentiments and holy affections; and thus, in every heart, there are principles of affinity and repulsion. Grace attracts grace, and corruption repels it: in proportion as grace prevails over corruption, it will be drawn towards its corresponding principle in other hearts; while, on the contrary, as corruption prevails over grace, it will make the less sanctified heart repellent and dissocial. Thus, as piety becomes more purified and strengthened, it will draw, and must of necessity draw, all classes of christians nearer to each other, until an external and visible unity, as well as an internal one, will be formed, and all its expected results will be accomplished. This attractive power of true piety is a law, the force of which has been already in some measure developed under various forms; and is a law which, when complete in its operation, will as surely bring round it all christian bodies, and keep them in harmonious movement, as the solar gravitation carries round in their cycles all the planetary orbs. The piety that draws us nearer to Christ, must draw us nearer to each other, as bodies that press closer to a common centre press closer at the same time to one another. The church is not yet holy enough for

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very close union. It is too worldly, selfish, and malignant in its spirit; and it is to this immoderate attachment to things secular and earthly, to a want of more ardent love to God, and of more reverence for truth, rather than to the obscurities of revelation, that we must impute the unhappy contentions among christians: maladies which nothing can correct, as already stated, but a deeper and more practical piety. Any curative process which does not go to purify and strengthen the spiritual constitution will be only the administration of palliatives; or at best will produce only an external appearance of convalescence, while the whole mass of the blood is impure and unhealthy. Heaven is perfectly harmonious because it is perfectly holy: there is no discord there because there is no depravity which can occasion a jarring note. If differences of opinion could exist there, they would occasion no bitterness of feeling, no alienation of heart, because perfect love casts out all wrath as well as all fear.

Not, however, that it is meant there should be no attempts after union till we have arrived at something like perfection, for then the church must give up all hope of approximation till the millennium. "Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." But let each christian, and especially every minister, seek a new baptism of the Spirit, and a larger measure of the mind of Christ; for in vain will the note of charity be struck, however loudly or publicly, if there be no chord of piety in the church to vibrate in unison to the music of that blissful sound. If as by miracle the discords were all to be hushed at once: yet if the great body of professing christians were no holier than they are now the harsh dissonance



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would soon be heard again. There can be no harmony from instruments whose strings are broken or relaxed, and such are our hearts. We must, therefore, begin with tuning them to a higher degree of piety, as the only preparative for the richer and the deeper symphonies of the redeemed church.

From this state of our hearts will spring up, as an essential element of religion, a larger measure of love. An inspired apostle has taught us, in a chapter that has been too little studied, and still less practised, that a religion of which love is not a prime ingredient, whatever else it may contain, is no religion at all. This is the soul of piety, "all else but her terrestrial attire, which she will lay aside when she passes the threshold of eternity." Our constant labour should be, not to add to the habiliments of which we shall then divest ourselves, but to separate from our spirits every temper and disposition which will not go with us to heaven, and to carry on our education for our Father's house above by progressively assimilating ourselves on earth to the mind and temper of the blessed immortals. There is no union worth the trouble of procuring it without sincere and cordial love between the parties as its cement; for however specious may be its appearance, from the variety, magnitude, or splendour of its component parts, it has an internal principle of disruption and decay, which will, sooner or later, reduce it to a heap of ruins. This love must be as wide in its compass as the circle which we propose for our union. To love only those of our own denomination, however intense may be our affection for that, so far from promoting the end we seek, resists and defeats it; instead of furthering union, it is the very cause of divisions; it is the root of bitterness,

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which grows not in the soil of charity but of selfishness, and has sprung up to bring forth the poisonous fruits of bigotry and all uncharitableness, whereby many have not only been defiled, but destroyed. Such a factious, schismatical love as that instead of collecting scatters; instead of embodying dissevers the church: and puts the greater part of its members beyond the pale of Christianity. What is wanted then is a spirit of impartial, universal, and invincible love, which acknowledges, values, and accepts the image and superscription of Christ stamped upon a truly renewed heart, whatever may be on the obverse side of the coin, a love which demands nothing else as a passport to its heart, and a warrant for the exercise of its regard, but the evidence of a "like precious faith" and "the common salvation;" and which, feeling that it would be an indignity to our divine Lord to have his attestation treated with suspicion till endorsed and accredited by the stamp of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, or Independency, generously exclaims, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

Men have been busy, in the eagerness of their misguided zeal, and the selfishness of their wicked hearts, to improve upon inspired wisdom, by inverting the apostolic order of the graces, and making love the last and the least of the three; nay their mischievous attempt has not stopped here, for in effect at least they have endeavoured to blot it out altogether, and to reduce religion from the divine triplicity that St Paul has given it, to a mere duality, and to make it consist exclusively of faith and hope. And since we are everywhere taught that religion is God's image in the soul of man, what does this come to, as the acme of its wickedness, but to

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rifle the divine character of love, its ineffable glory, and to make Jehovah simply a God of truth and justice? Leaving then the number and order of the graces as we find them in Scripture, and practically submitting to the truth of the apostolic declaration, that "the greatest of these is charity," let us sit down again at the feet of this inspired teacher, and, studying afresh the genius of Christianity as it is pourtrayed in his beautiful personification of it, let us put on charity which is the bond of perfectness; and thus attired be prepared for union with all our brethren. Is there then notwithstanding our differences a principle known, a principle attainable by us all, a principle which is an integral part of our religion, a principle which, if it were more cultivated and in full exercise, would subjugate all that is low, and selfish, and malevolent in our nature; and which, while it filled our own bosoms with peace, would give us peace with our fellow-christians of every name? There is. It is love, holy love, heavenly love, christian love. But where is it to be found? In the heart of God, in the bosom of Jesus, in the minds of angels, in the spirits of just men made perfect, and in the pages of the New Testament, we know: but where on earth shall we find it? It ought to be seen in beauty and in vigour in the church of Christ; that is built to be its mansion and its residence. But how little is it to be found in that its own and appropriated abode? How frequently is it driven away by the strifes, divisions, and clamours of other spirits, that have obtruded into its rightful home and rendered that which was intended to be the seat of uninterrupted peace, and of untroubled repose, a scene of noisy conflict and fierce contention? Let us all join our efforts to cast out the

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unclean spirits that have driven away love from her abode; and reinstating the heavenly tenant in her possession of it let us yield up our hearts to her holy and benignant sway.

Men have tried all kinds of methods, except the only right effectual and divinely appointed one, for gathering into union the broken and scattered fragments of the church, and for tuning to harmony its discordant voices. They have tried the compulsion of law, the power of logic, the persuasion of eloquence, the subscription of articles, the application of tests, the authority of tradition, and yet all these means have signally failed even to procure external uniformity as much as internal unity. Emperors and kings, popes and prelates, councils and convocations, cabinets and senates, divines and lawyers, have all employed their wits and exerted their hands in this great work of unity; and yet, whatever have been their schemes, and with whatever diligence they have been applied, however they may have appealed to the fears, the reason, or the cupidity of the opposing parties, they have all left the church as divided and inharmonious as they found it, and in the language of despair have confessed that union among christians was a state of things never to be expected in the present world. And yet there, upon the very surface of revelation, where every eye can see it, lies, and has lain for nearly eighteen centuries, a principle so simple that a child may understand it, which, if properly felt and judiciously applied, would have effected that which has ever been considered so necessary, and yet so difficult, "Forbearing one another in love." Divinely inspired, heaven descended, godlike sentence! How simple, yet how sublime! By what

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machination of Satan, by what cunning artifice of "the father of lies," by what operation of the deceitfulness of sin, or by what treachery of the desperately wicked heart of man, has the beauty of this precept been concealed, its force evaded, or its efficiency prevented? If there be one practical precept which we could wish to be printed in starry characters on the dark page of the nightly sky, written in sunbeams on the tablet of the earth, and uttered both night and day in voices from the heavens, that the attention of men might be irresistibly turned to it, and their hearts unavoidably impressed by it, this is the injunction; and yet, what greater clearness, or more importance, or higher authority, would all these methods of publication give to it, beyond what it already possesses as a portion of holy writ? "Forbearing one another in love." This one short precept universally obeyed would set all right, and reduce all to order. It might not at once reconcile all minds, but it would harmonise all hearts. It might not amalgamate all churches into an external uniformity, but it would combine them all in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. It might not hush the voice of controversy, but it would take from it the harsh dissonance of human passion, and cause it to speak in the mellifluous tones of divine charity.

But we may now justly ask by what mighty power this great consummation is to be brought about? Who can step forth, and with a voice that can not only command, but ensure obedience, say to the boisterous elements of human passion and religious prejudice, "Peace, be still?" This is the sole work of Him who gave order, beauty, and harmony to the primeval elements of our world. In vain do we make our appeal to the religious

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bodies themselves to come to a better state of feeling if we stop there. The storms that are still raging round the bark of the tempest-tossed church will no more yield to the voice of argument or persuasion from men, than would the winds and the waves of the sea of Galilee have submitted to the command of the affrighted disciples. What saved them? That which must save us if we are saved at all. They awoke the sleeping Saviour by the prayer of faith, and in answer to their importunate supplication, the calm supervened. He is still on board his weather-beaten vessel, and though not asleep, is waiting to be asked to put forth his tranquillising power. Let the whole church, having first deeply humbled itself for its sins of alienation, division, uncharitableness, and unbrotherly feeling, go to Him in the earnestness and in the prayer of faith for a fresh outpouring of his Spirit of light, love, holiness, and peace. He only waits to be asked, so to replenish us with his benediction, as to make Zion a quiet and peaceable habitation. It was when the harmonies of voices and of hearts ascended to heaven at the dedication of the temple that the cloud of the divine glory came and filled the house. It was when the disciples were met together in one place, and with one accord, to make their common supplications known, that the Spirit of God came down in coronals of fire upon their heads, and filled the place where they were sitting. The breath of prayer is the atmosphere in which the Spirit comes to hover over his church, and shed healing from his wings. That divine agent can set all things right. He can cause us to see and to feel alike; he can expel from our minds all error, from our hearts all pride, prejudice, and passion, and so

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fill us with meekness, love, and tender forbearance, that we shall be irresistibly drawn towards each other, and be enabled to bring about a union far better than the visible, formal one we now seek. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And now, O my country, which I love with a patriot's affection, and bless with a christian's prayer; for whose welfare, in part, I have written these pages, so unworthy to be associated with the productions of nobler minds and abler pens; may my efforts be accepted and blessed of God, to aid in rolling away the cloud of reproach that hides thy grandeur and eclipses thy glory. I am not insensible to thy greatness in power, in commerce, in wealth, in literature, in science, and the arts; and sometimes I feel the danger of undue exultation in the contemplation of thy majesty; yet is my ambition far more intense for thy moral and religious fame, now too fearfully affected and too humbly obscured and diminished by the party spirit so rife and so virulent among thy divided and alienated children. O come the day when thy awful form shall no longer reflect the lurid glare of fiery zeal for sectarian distinctions, but when thou shalt shine forth in the mild radiance of an ardent yet well-tempered concern for substantial Christianity; when thy commanding voice shall be heard to the ends of the earth, uttering the words not of bitter intolerance or priestly exclusiveness but of charity and forbearance; and when, by whatever is liberal in policy, thou shalt be a pattern to all countries of national generosity, and by whatsoever is associative and affectionate among thy different denominations of religion, be no less a pattern to them of christian

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union! May it be thy honour, and no brighter one can be allotted thee, to teach all countries and all ages that the most unrestricted religious liberty, though it gives full scope for diversities of opinion among christians, serves only to exhibit more clearly in its power, and more brightly in its glory, the cementing principle of their common Christianity! Amen.



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**APPENDIX.**

SINCE the foregoing essay was written, I have received a letter from my esteemed friend, Dr. Patton, a Presbyterian minister of New York, from which I give the subjoined extracts, premising that my correspondent was not led to the subject on which he writes by any knowledge of the present scheme, but by the state of things in his own country. Popery and its new ally, Anglo-Catholicism, are rapidly diffusing themselves over the United States. The American Protestant Episcopal Church is fast sinking under the spell of Tractarianism, notwithstanding the intelligent and zealous efforts of Dr M'Ilvain, bishop of Ohio, and some others of the clergy; and clerical assumptions, ill suited, if not actually dangerous, to the simplicity of a republican form of civil government and cast of general society, are now put forth in that land of democracy. Romanism, aided by a tide of emigration, consisting of thousands of Irish Papists, is making prodigious efforts to seize the great Western Valley, watered by the Mississippi, and which, at no distant time, must be the very heart of the United States. It is matter of little surprise, therefore, that the Protestant ministers of that country should survey this state of things with anxiety, not unattended with alarm, and should desiderate, for the defence of the principles of the Reformation, a general, close, and hearty union among its friends:

“The providence of God,” says Dr Patton, “is most singularly moving in the religious world. The Romanists and the Prelatists are becoming quite sympathetic, and unite in denouncing all but themselves as not belonging to the church; as being no ministers, and the like. This is producing stronger sympathy among the non-prelatic Christians, and a greater disposition to make common cause. It appears to me, that the time cannot be distant when it will be most

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proper to call a Convention of Delegates from all Evangelical Churches, to meet in London, for the purpose of setting forth the great essential truths in which they are agreed. I know of no object which would awaken deeper interest than such a Convention. It would command the attendance of some of the strongest men from all evangelical denominations; and the result would be, a statement of views which would have the most blessed effect. Such an invitation should with propriety come from your side of the water. But if you think it desirable to have certain men here unite, in such a case I have no doubt I could procure a goodly list of names to any paper you and your brethren might send over. Will you consult your brethren, perhaps of the Congregational union, as also such of other denominations as might unite in the matter. The Convention might be held in July of 1845, in London. Delegates could come from the Evangelical Churches of the Continent, of America, of Scotland, Ireland, etc. etc. etc. The document calling that meeting should be well drawn up, clearly setting forth the object of the Convention, as lifting up a standard against Papal and Prelatical arrogance and assumption, and embodying the great essential doctrines which are held in common by all consistent Protestants. Peculiarities of church order to be excluded. I am persuaded that such a Convention would meet with the hearty concurrence and co-operation of a vast multitude. It would exhibit to the world an amount of practical union among christians of which they little dream. It would greatly strengthen the hearts of God's people, and would promote a better state of feeling among the denominations. I trust, my dear brother, that you will act in this matter; and, before you are called home to your rest and your reward, strive to secure such a meeting. Open a correspondence with Dr Chalmers, Dr Wardlaw, and others of Scotland; with prominent men among the Baptist, Methodist, Moravian, and other denominations: Sir Culling Eardly Smith will go heart and soul with you. Now may our blessed Lord, who prayed that his disciples might be one, graciously guide you and others in this matter, and make you instruments of great good! Should a document be published on your side of the water, calling such a Convention, our ecclesiastical meetings would sanction it, and our religious papers would forward it. I name July as the time of meeting, as at that time our clergymen could more readily attend, and only be absent from home during the hot season, when they can be better spared. Our pious laymen also could then more readily leave their business. The Convention need not be together more than some ten days at most, but the result would be blessed for all future time."

The subject of this letter is of momentous consequence; it presents a splendid conception of the human mind; and I have thought this the best and most appropriate medium through which to exhibit it, for the contemplation and examination of other minds. The letter shows the earnestness of Dr Patton's solicitude to accomplish the object. The subject is not quite new to some of us; we have looked at it, and conferred about it; and with some it was a matter of regret, that it had not been tried, instead of the meeting last year at Exeter Hall. But perhaps it is an object that can be better approached, an end that can be more certainly arrived at, by slow and cautious steps than by one mighty stride or bound of the public mind. It was in my own view, though but vaguely apprehended, when I sent forth the circular that led to the meeting in Exeter Hall. The publication of this volume, and Dr Patton's letter, furnish an admirable opportunity for putting out feelers to try the public sentiment. Here, then, is the scheme; "A General Protestant Convention," not for amalgamating all Protestant bodies, but uniting them for the defence of their common Protestantism. Is it practicable? Is it desirable? Will it be practicably useful? Will it pay for the cost of money, time and labour that it will require. Will it check the efforts and the hopes of Popery? or, if not, will it confound and abash Puseyism? or, if not even this, will it give new life to Protestants, and new publicity, circulation, and power to their principles? Who can doubt it? But how should it be brought about? Whence shall the grand movement begin? "O thou who art light, and with whom is no darkness at all; Thou who art love, and delightest in everything like thyself, show us Thy will in this matter!"

## PROPOSAL FOR A GENERAL PROTESTANT EVANGELICAL UNION

(REFERRED TO IN THE FOREGOING ESSAY.)

TO THE SECRETARIES OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION.

DEAR BRETHREN,

You will probably recollect, that, in the few remarks I made at the late meeting of our body, I gave utterance to an opinion that it was both desirable and practicable to form an association, bearing the title which stands at the head of this paper, and for purposes which shall be stated in its contents; and that it is in the power, and would be for the honour of your committee to effect it. Owing to the press of business and the shortness of time, I had no opportunity then to explain and enforce my views; and I therefore now avail myself of the columns of our denominational organ of communication, to make you and your readers better acquainted with the object of my wishes.

It is unnecessary to dwell at any length on the present divided, and perhaps, I may add, distracted and alienated condition of the great protestant body; which in fact may be rather represented as a collection of *disjecta membra*, than as a body; and this remark applies with equal truth to the various communities which have separated from the two national establish-

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ments, as to their relations to each other, as well as to their relations to the churches from which they have alike conscientiously seceded. Holding in common, both as christians and as protestants, all fundamental doctrines, how little intercourse or visible communion do they hold with each other! Nay, is there at the present moment any mutual, public, palpable recognition of each other, as brethren in Christ, and as members one of another? Is not each section shut up within itself, and separated from all others, almost as entirely, as so many different, though perhaps friendly, trading establishments are; thus neglecting and forgetting our Lord's prayer for the unity of his church; allowing the spirit of sectarianism with its attendant evils to go on growing unchecked; rejecting a means of strengthening the whole; and furnishing to the foes around a vantage-ground for assailing all? It would be needless to dilate on the sagacity of our common enemies in perceiving this our weak point, or on their skill in availing themselves of it, in strengthening themselves, and attacking us. Infidels, papists, puseyites, and last, though in some respects not least, the Plymouth brethren, assail us with the charge of sectarianism. We are insultingly taunted with the sneer of "a house divided against itself," and the asseveration that we are so unlike and so hostile, such bigots for division, so infected with jealousy and the odium theologium, that we cannot unite; and that we have carried our protestantism so far as to abjure not only the notion of unity, but even the wish for it. "The brethren" are busy and successful in plying against us the assertion, that we have all of us lost both "the outward and visible sign and the inward and spiritual grace

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of brotherhood," though they are themselves the most sectarian body, except its name, in existence.

How desirable is it, then, at all times, and especially now, to do something for wiping out this stain and rolling away this reproach, and proving by some public demonstration, that we are, if not perfectly of one mind, yet of one heart; and that though we inhabit separate dwellings, each regulated by its own independent and uncontrolled domestic economy, we form one municipal corporation, and live in all the confidence and kind offices of good neighbourhood! What an argument would it snatch from our quadruple foes, if we could be seen by the world united by any legitimate bond, though it went no further, (and possibly that is as far as it could at present go,) than to acknowledge each other, the members as brethren, and the pastors as ministers of Christ, who recognise and love each other for the truth's sake that dwelleth in us. Is it not possible to exhibit in beautiful reality a union founded on the aphorism of Father Paul, which has been so often repeated on platforms to grace a speech at a Bible meeting, and so seldom remembered afterwards, "In things essential unity, in things indifferent liberty, and in all things charity!"

Of course, whatever union is brought about, it must be without compromise. We cannot enter into fellowship with persons of other sentiments, by sacrificing our own. The wisdom that cometh from above is "«first pure, then peaceable." And notwithstanding the present divided state of the protestant evangelical body, and the apparent tact and taste for separation, is there no yearning after union; no voices sounding abroad over the camps of the aliens the inquiry, "why cannot

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we be one;" no Noahs sending forth the dove over the troubled waters to search for the olive branch? Are not the christian elements in many, very many bosoms, rising into the ascendant above those of a sectarian nature? Are there not some upon their watch-towers in silent meditation, and holy observation, looking out upon the dark and stormy horizon to see from what quarter the signs of light and peace will show themselves? I am sure there are many.

To such, my honoured brethren, I submit through you, the following scheme for consideration and discussion.

#### PURPOSE AND OBJECT OF THE UNION.

If at present it could proceed no further, the mutual recognition as brethren in Christ of all who agree to the principles hereafter stated; and as ministers of Christ, godly men, who hold and preach those principles, by whatever forms of ordination they may have been introduced to their office.

#### PRINCIPLES OF UNION TO BE THE BASIS OF SUCH RECOGNITION.

##### 1. General and protestant principles.

The inspiration of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

The holy scriptures the sole and sufficient rule of faith in matters of religion, whether in relation to doctrine, morals, or worship.

The indefeasible right and incumbent duty of every man to read the scriptures, and to judge of their meaning, to the exclusion of all authoritative traditional interpretation of them whatever.

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## 2. Theological Principles.

The Trinity of co-equal persons in the Godhead.

The atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ by his sacrificial death.

The doctrine of salvation by grace.

The justification of the sinner by faith alone.

The indispensable necessity of regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit.

## FORM OF RECOGNITION.

We acknowledge, as true christians, and as our brethren in the Lord, all who believe and profess the foregoing principles, however they may differ in other matters, without approving any other opinions, either theological or ecclesiastical, with which those principles may be associated.

We also acknowledge as true and valid ministers of Christ, all who are partakers of the apostolic spirit, and are the preachers of the apostolic doctrine, by whatever form of ecclesiastical order they may have been introduced into their office.

We acknowledge it to be equally our duty and our privilege, to love as brethren, all who agree in the fundamental doctrines of Divine truth, whether they are or are not thus united with us; and while we conscientiously adhere to our distinctive denominational principles, and shall not cease to maintain defend and propagate them, we will endeavour no less conscientiously, to check the spirit of sectarianism, and to promote the diffusion of a spirit of charity.

## EXHIBITION AND OPERATION OF THE UNION.

At present, little or nothing can be done in the way of action, and nothing more than public recognition. For



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this latter purpose, a biennial or triennial meeting to be held at Exeter Hall, none to be admitted but accredited members of churches; the meeting to be of a devotional character, four or six ministers of different denominations, to deliver an address of a given length, on some subject bearing upon the occasion, and to present a short prayer: and for the sake of enlivening the meeting, a hymn or two to be sung.

PARTIES TO BE ADMITTED TO THE UNION.

Any that can agree to the basis laid down. The following may be expected: the whole body of Congregationalists in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland; the Baptists, Lady Huntingdon's connexion, the Calvinistic Methodists, the United Secession Churches in Scotland and England, the Moravians, perhaps the Synod of Ulster. And should a new secession take place from the church of Scotland, they also would probably join. Gladly should I see the Wesleyan body in such a union, and the pious clergy of the church of England.

NAME, PROTESTANT EVANGELICAL UNION.

Such, my brethren, is the scheme which I have formed in my own mind, as an object of my heart's desire. Be it that it is only a vision doomed to expire in the imagination in which it was conceived, it is at any rate an innocent, and to myself, a lovely one. I feel a gratification in having proposed it. I should have been unfaithful to my own convictions, and have repressed the yearnings of my heart and the monitions of my conscience, if I had not laid the project before you and the public, even as I have laid it before God. Could

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it be accomplished, how would it silence the sneers of infidelity, neutralize the arguments of papists, refute the objections of the Plymouth brethren, and strengthen and consolidate us all, against the arrogant assumptions of the puseyites! And while it would be a defence to us all against our foes, what a beneficial influence would it exert upon ourselves! Without weakening our attachment to truth, it would promote in us the spirit of love, and thus prepare us to come eventually to a closer agreement on the points which now separate us. Conceive what an impression would be produced upon the public mind, by such a scene as Exeter Hall would present in this holy fellowship of brethren, the long lost wonder of a united church would be restored, the echoes of the ancient exclamation would be awakened, and thousands of voices would again be heard to say, "See how these christians love one another." What a rebuke and a refutation, I repeat, would it give to the proud isolation of puseyism. The public, when they saw this arrogant and malignant spirit retiring within the schools of Oxford, to learn the ceremonial, and imbibe the intolerance and maledictory exclusiveness of its Roman master, would place in striking and beautiful contrast with it, the brightening and extending charity of other denominations, and in seeing them all come forth to such a noble fellowship of love, would be at no loss to determine, who were in possession of the true catholicity.

And who can tell, if the scheme could be commenced, when and where it would stop, or what the last circle of the widening undulation would touch or embrace? Might it not be hoped, or is it calculating too largely upon the charity of the present age, and anticipating

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too speedily the glories of the coming one, to expect, that christians of other countries, to earth's remotest bounds, would solicit to be admitted into "the holy league?" Shall papists have a bond of union that crosses mountains, oceans, and continents, and defying all barriers of nation, custom, language, and climate, comprehends within its mighty circumference the inhabitants of the poles and the equator, and protestants make no efforts to set up a mutual recognition which shall do the same?

Who shall make the trial? Who will contend for the honour of sending abroad the sound of union, and the invitation to unite, to the discordant elements of the protestant body? I propose it to you, my beloved brethren, to commence this work of faith, this labour of love; and may you not only enter upon it, but go through it with the patience of hope. You are the secretaries of a committee and of a body that delights to honour you; whose confidence and affectionate esteem you largely possess; and without wishing or intending any invidious comparison, you have one scribe among you, whose heart is so richly imbued with the spirit of love, whose mind is so skilful in all its ingenious and honourable devices, and withal, his pen so conversant with its mellifluous vocabulary, that it seems as if he were given us for the purpose of carrying on the blessed work of union in this divided world and equally divided church.

Confer, then, my brethren, upon the scheme, or any other and better one of a similar kind, for I am anxious only about the general principle, not about the details. If it be practicable, accomplish it: and if not, and one must still give up the hope of seeing the bow of many

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colours upon the cloud, and of hearing the still small voice succeeding the storm, let us at any rate pray that a wiser, holier, and happier age than our own may soon arrive, when what is impossible to us shall be possible to others, and the prayer of our Lord be answered, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on me through their word, 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."

I remain, dear brethren,

Your friend and brother,

J. A. JAMES.

Edgbaston, May 31st, 1842.

END OF THE FOURTEENTH VOLUME.

PRINTED BY HUDSON AND SON, BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM.