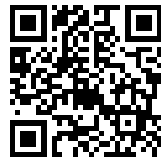

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THE HERESY
OF A
HUMAN PRIESTHOOD,
TRACED IN
LETTERS ON THE PRESENT STATE
OF THE
VISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY R. M. BEVERLEY.

FIRST FIVE THOUSAND
OF THE SECOND EDITION ENLARGED.

LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & Co., STATIONERS' COURT:
AND
J. DINNIS, PATERNOSTER-RROW.
MDCCCXXXIX.

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HUMAN PRIESTHOOD,
TRACED IN
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OF THE
VISIBLE CHURCH OF CHRIST,

ADDRESSED TO
JOHN ANGELL JAMES,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN BIRMINGHAM.

BY R. M. BEVERLEY. *A*

“ Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” Exod. xiv. 15.

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PHILP AND EVANS, PRINTERS, BRISTOL.



INTRODUCTION.

IF an attentive hearing, in those quarters where one is most anxious to convey instruction, is to be considered the test of a favourable reception of a book, I cannot boast much of the favor with which the first edition of these letters was greeted. They have, indeed, been much noticed, have been translated into the German language,* and republished in America; but, in England, the parties, for whose benefit I mainly wrote this little book, have viewed it as a mischievous present to the churches; a sort of Pandora's box, full of gifts of tumult and disorder, calculated to disturb the well-arranged repose of quiescent churches. Many an angry taunt, and many a bitter saying, might I record, of the non-conformist critics, who have been not a little exasperated, by the agitation of the question of the spiritual priesthood; which can never be mooted without causing a commotion, as long as there shall be any remnant of clerical distinctions amongst Christians.

This, however, is a subject, which can neither slumber nor sleep; neither Churchman nor Dissenter can prevent the further progress of the controversy: for, indeed, Christianity can never be fully developed, nor can the points of difference between Christ and Anti-Christ ever be fully settled, till the liberty of the ministry to all believers, and the ordination of the Holy Spirit to all the members of the mystical body, be fully understood, and freely admitted as valid and sufficient. This is the axe that strikes at the root of the tree of Popery, inexpugnable by any other instrument, but, by this, ultimately to be everted. To deny all distinction between clergy and laity, prohibits, *in limine*, the advance of any other papal argument; neither Pope nor Prelate can plant his feet where this is boldly held forth; it meets him with confutation and expulsion at the door of the sanctuary; and, by referring to the sole priesthood of the divine Head of the church—who assumes into union with himself all his people, and places them “with boldness and confidence” in “the holiest of all,” as “priests to God and their father”—renders it impossible for any “clergyman” to intrude into the fold of Christ, and to usurp functions, which his brethren, anointed with the Holy Ghost, may not perform, with an authenticity and validity fully equal to any that he can claim.

* Title of the German translation. ‘Briefe über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der sichtbaren Kirche Christi an John Angell James, Prediger zu Birmingham gerichtet, von R. M. Beverley. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Leipzig. Kirchner und Schwetschte.

But it is marvellous to see, how this important truth of the gospel has been neglected, and how Christians have, in almost all protestant denominations, set themselves to the work of consolidating such a form of church government, as should reduce the priesthood of the whole body to a naked theory, and make that a mere idea, abstracted from anything practical or tangible, which was intended to be a governing principle of the church upon earth.

The Congregational Dissenters are most concerned with the question; both because they profess to have seceded from Rome and Lambeth on scriptural grounds, and, to have secured to themselves an ecclesiastical polity free from the evils of their imperious predecessors. Certainly, we might, on a lower ground, embarrass the Congregational Dissenters, by requesting them to explain the monarchical form of their ministerial government; for, whatever may be their opinions of the ministerial office, this is certain, that they can not, and would not, endeavour to defend the monarchy of the ministry, by reference to the scriptures, or even to the well-known records of the first and second centuries of church history. Dr. Owen's opinion on the subject will be found in these letters; an opinion, which he held in unison with most of the authentic leaders of the congregational school; and, indeed, I do not know that a plurality of ministers has ever been denied, in theory at least, by any respectable writer of the congregational class. Nevertheless, all the Congregational Dissenters have, in practice, rejected the plurality of ministers, and have settled down into the monarchical form of government, without the pretence of an argument in favour of such an arrangement. Here, then, there is a practicable breach in their church government; and, here, we might enter with high triumph, and at once silence all further opposition: and, still more, we might successfully shew the real reason of their attachment to the monarchical government; we might reveal the *financial* secret, which explains the whole mystery; and we might most easily prove, that to introduce a plurality of ministers in the congregational churches, *according to the ideas of the ministry which now obtain amongst them*, would immediately explode their whole system, and reduce it to hopeless ruin. But, as this is a topic unpleasant to me to handle, I pass it over with this remark; that to uphold, that which is so valuable in the eyes of the Dissenters, a ministry "of talent," they are obliged to have recourse to that form of church government, which is standing out of a scriptural foundation, which rests on the sands, and not on the rock, and can have nothing to recommend it but expediency.

I choose, however, to take a higher ground. I do not merely plead for the plurality of ministers, but for the full and free acknowledgment of the liberty of ministry to the whole Church of God, by which all may be placed in that position "that all may prophesy, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. xiv. 31.) I

plead for the abrogation of that law, or, which amounts to the same thing, of that *fixed custom*, which commits the whole task of doctrine to a consecrated, to a *clerical* order, which has abolished the mutual exhortations of the church, and substituted, in lieu thereof, the laborious orations of scholastic rhetoricians. I plead for the plenary recognition of the church-privileges of all the people of God; that they may, if so disposed, preach the word (Acts viii. 4); that a saving faith in Christ may be admitted as proof of that anointing, which institutes into the evangelical priesthood—for no one can say that Jesus is his Lord but by the Holy Spirit—and that the rule of the Apostle may be revived and tolerated, “We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I have believed and therefore have I spoken, *we also believe and therefore speak.*” If the New Testament is to give us any light in these matters, this is plain, that the whole body of believers are, by it, regarded as exercising different ministrations: “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; for to one, is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gift of healing by the same spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophesy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will: for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ: for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” (1 Cor. xii.) This eminent passage proves the whole argument: that the Holy Spirit does baptize all believers into the body of Christ; that this union makes them all priests in the sanctuary, by virtue of union with him; and that the Holy Spirit imparts the gifts of ministration, according to the will of God, to each.

Again, it is written, “Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying.” Now, whatever may be said of the miraculous gifts to which there is here an allusion, this is certain, that these passages contemplate the whole church in action, *in ministration*; and it would be the extremity of daring to assert, that our modern, or rather popish, practice, of appropriating the ministry to one salaried individual, however pious, learned, and respectable, that individual may be, was known, or even thought of, in the æra when the New Testament was composed, under divine influence. Incidental directions are continually occurring in the scriptures, indicating, that the work of the ministry (*i. e.* the edification of the church by exhortation, experience, doctrine, warning, advice, faith, &c.) was with all believers: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God;” (1 Pet. iv. 10) “not forsaking the

assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but *exhorting one another.*" (Heb. x. 25) But whilst remarks like these are of frequent occurrence, there is no record of a fact, nor of anything like an incidental passing allusion, which can authorize even a resolute partizan to assert, that the order existing, in these days, existed in the days of the Apostles.

But here we descend into the arena with the usual arguments, advanced for the power, authority, and pre-eminence of the clergyman, whether he be called "Bishop, Priest, or Deacon," by Rome and Lambeth, or Minister, Pastor, or Superintendent, by all the Dissenters. Now, as all these parties have substantially, as it relates to the laity, the same cause to defend, it is not matter of surprise, to find them all supporting their common theory by precisely the same arguments. The Decretals, the Council of Trent, and the Chief Commentators of the Church of Rome, uphold their views of the clergy, with the same scriptural authority, that the *British Magazine* invokes, to build up the fabric of a Puseyistic clerisy; and this is the authority also, that fortifies the Presbyterian and Independent minister. There is, indeed, a wide difference in the extent of power, which the different sects require for their clergy; and Rome and Oxford superinduce the aid of tradition, to make their case still stronger; but all agree in quoting the same texts, for the establishment of the clerical order. These texts, of course, are generally known: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation:" "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." (Heb. xiii. 7, 17) "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake:" (Thess. v. 12, 13) and others of a similar import.

Now, in contemplating this question of early church government, we are too apt to bring to it our own ideas and practices, as a medium through which to view the subject. Our ideas and practices, unquestionably inherited from Rome, however they may be modified or re-cast, are all applicable to an external work only. The desire of most persons, who engage themselves in this inquiry, is to discover the exact degree of authority, which the Elders, or Rulers, or Bishops, of the church possessed; to know and define, with precision, all the laws and customs of church polity; to restore the discipline, and recover the canons of ecclesiastical regiment. Writers will tell you, that there was only one Bishop, and that he ruled the Priests; others, that there were no Priests, but many Elders, who were the same as Bishops; others, that there was one Bishop, above the rest, in every church; others, that the

brethren might elect, or might not elect, to clerical offices ; that the Deacons had this or that office, or this or that duty ; and divers other points of that sort, which have been investigated with laborious research, and sustained with contentious controversies of ecclesiastical animosity. But how comes it, if this indeed were the matter of inquiry, that the question is left undefined, uncertain, intangible, in scripture ? that church government is nowhere clearly described ? that we are constrained to make our discoveries as well as we can, by the very unsatisfactory help of passing allusions or incidental remarks ; and that that, which seems to be the very soul of modern division, and the life of all controversy, and the strength of all sects, should have no definite shape in the canon of the New Testament ?

The church government of the Mosaic Law is clear beyond dispute. There are not, in the Law, only here and there a few detached and questionable allusions, but whole chapters and books expressly on the subject : but in the Gospel, which is a more glorious ministration, which is a better, a clearer, a more lucid, a more life-giving system by far than the Law, the whole question of church government is never once fairly and directly handled ! How shall we account for this ? Simply by this explanation ; that our Lord Jesus Christ is the head himself of the church, and that he raises up whom he will, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, to edify the church according to his own purpose ; that he never wished his fold to be governed by a code of human laws and a book of canons, but that he did intend at the first, and, to the last, will effect that which he intended at the first, to rule by his spirit the church which he purchased with his own blood : " And all the churches shall know, that I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart."

When the Holy Spirit is imparted, then there will be seen the fruits of it, " love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ;" and, with such gifts as these, there will be no lack of church order. Oh, yes ! there will be Elders, and Teachers ; yea, there will be Bishops ; men of vast power, men of large prerogatives, and of a stringent dominion : their power will be that of love ; they will, with the mitre of meekness, and the pastoral staff of humbleness of mind, and with the knowledge of the deep things of God, and with the strength of prayer, lead the flock to still waters and green pastures, and keep them close under the eye of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. They will sit enthroned in the affections of their faithful brethren ; and, amidst the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people, they will rule with priestly sway. Who doubts it ? Who would deny it ? Who does not wish it should be so ? Dare we not trust the promise of the exalted Head of the church ? Are we unable to believe, that he will magnify his word above all his name, and that he will, according to his word, be with his people to the end of the world ?

and are we at all doubtful, that if we come together with one mind and with one spirit, having no other desire than to live and die for the glory of him who died for us, that he will raise up Pastors to take care of us, from amongst our anointed number; and that he will elicit all the various gifts of the brethren, for the different branches of edification and ministration? It argues a miserable impotency of faith, to substitute, for the appointment of the Holy Spirit, the appointment of a college, and a call of those who admire the orations of "the candidate." The candidate! What monstrous word is this? Whence came it? Did it fall down from the heathen skies with the statue of Jupiter; or did it rise up from beneath? A *candidate* for the pastoral office! What next? A contested election; a struggle between pew-holders and church-members; a scuffle with constables; a law suit; a schism; a bitter and ruinous quarrel! Or, it may be, "a candidate" for the episcopal office, at Downing-Street: a contention of the great nobles for the mitre; the ultimate triumph of one priest, and the rage and disappointment of another; ending with imposition of hands, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! Thus have they changed the glory of Israel, into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass; and thus do they tell us, not to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn!

But, in truth, that is very simple, which to many persons is a problem* of inextricable difficulty. The Governor of the church is, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, raising up spiritual men into those offices, which are for edification. Wherever there are gifts of teaching in the brethren, there they will, by that same grace by which faith was first imparted, be ultimately made manifest. Every man will stand in his proper position: each will fall into the ranks of the church, according to the order for which he is adapted: the grave, the prudent, the watchful, and preceptive character, will take his natural place for government; the brother, who has a gift of utterance, and who is well instructed in the scriptures, will become a teacher; some, by general superiority of understanding, will precede others; and some, by faith and patience, and some, by gift of prayer, will be in that place of trust in the church which is evidently theirs, without any ceremony of election, or imposition of hands. I contend not in the least against the authority of a Minister; for, indeed, to contend against it, would be to run into that absurdity proclaimed in the first sentence of the famous Rights of Man, "that

* 'On either hand there is great danger; because, by the depression of the ministers, there ensues a contempt of the word; but if they are immediately exalted, they will abuse their licence, and grow wanton against the Lord.' But this is the restraint imposed by Paul; he calls them *servants* of Christ, by which he intimates, that they ought to consider themselves as bound not to do their own work, but the work of the Lord who has engaged them, and that they are not placed over the Church to rule it with dominion, but must submit themselves to the mastery of Christ, in one word that they are *servants* and not *Lords*! Calvin on 1. Cor. iv. 1

all men are equal ;” than which, no moral falsehood can be more conspicuous. Men are not equal, by their natural constitution ; on the contrary, they are most unequal ; but, before God, they are all one in guilt, and one in the forgiveness of sins, and one by adoption into the mystical body of Christ ; and there is one Spirit, which anoints them all into the priesthood, and sanctifies their faculties, and calls them forth and demands them, according to their grades of value, for the edification of the church. Caius may have many qualifications for government or for teaching, either conjointly or distinctly, which Lucius has not ; and Caius may be generally regarded, for many reasons, as a leader amongst the believers ; then, certainly, Caius will become *επισκοπος* ; he will be overseer, he will be a ruler : and Lucius, a very dear brother, will take some other station, and be exceedingly valued by the church in his proper capacity. And thus it will come to pass, that, in the kingdom of love, Caius will be a Bishop ! and he will take the oversight of the hearts of the brethren, by ruling in their affections ; and his authority will be far greater, than if he were either armed with Acts of Parliament, to bridle in reluctant Rectors or friendless Curates, or than if he had received a call, out of a college, to preach talented sermons, and, too often, to struggle, all his unhappy days, with “ Lord-Deacons” and a discontented flock.

To me, it is obvious, that the Acts and the Epistles are written, with a view of church-government such as this ; a church-government, not of any fixed laws or defined polity, but avowedly under the direction of the Holy Spirit, ruling in the principle of love ; which, if it were understood and felt, would effectually settle all disputes about ecclesiastical regiment, and shew the valueless emptiness of all these interminable questions concerning the ministerial office, which have indeed filled many books, but have not advanced even the *external* question, one degree further than it was in the days of Luther and Calvin.

The law of church-government is infolded, in spiritual principles of general Christian conduct, and not in any canons or enactments of discipline ; and, in texts like these, we are to find the mystery : “ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit ; let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Gal. v. 25.) “ Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ : for if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself ; but let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another ; for every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.” (Gal. vi. 2-6.) “ Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour.” (Eph. v. 2.) “ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing

and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; *submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*" (Eph. v. 19-21.) "The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also a fellow-Elder: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; *yea, all of you be subject one to another*, and be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. v. 1-5.) "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye: and, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness: and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. iii. 12-15.) "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. xv. 14.) "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." (Rom. xv. 5-7.)

But then, it is said, there was solemn imposition of hands for the episcopal office, and Paul warned Timothy "not to neglect the gift that was in him, by prophecy, with laying on of the hands of the ministry." Just so. The Apostles could convey the Holy Spirit, by the imposition of hands, (Acts viii. 18), and they did so; but Paul laid his hands also on the twelve disciples at Ephesus, "and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." (Acts xix. 6.) Was this a consecration into the episcopal, or ordination into the ministerial, office? Let, however, that question pass for the present, that we may inquire, What is the meaning of imposition of hands in these our days? In the Church of England, its intention is avowed: on a given day, the Bishops are compelled, under the penalty of incurring a premonition, to lay their hands on the Bishop elect, named by the Crown; and to that person, the nominee of the Ministers, according to the Prayer-Book they communicate *the gift of the Holy Ghost, with power of remitting or retaining sins*; by which process they perpetuate, as they declare, the apostolical succession, the soul and the strength of their religion. But what is meant by this ceremony amongst the Dissenters? Will any of them presume to say that they convey the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands? But if it

is not for this purpose, for what is it? Certainly not in imitation of any practice recorded in scripture; for the Apostles never laid hands on the brethren, merely to perform a ceremony, without communicating a gift: and, indeed, if it were practised by the Dissenters, out of a scrupulous regard to scriptural authority, they would be consistent in their usage, and, by imposition of hands, would ordain their Deacons also; for thus it was with the first Deacons of the church (Acts vi. 6): but the Dissenting *Clergy* have now the exclusive benefit of this ceremony, whatever the benefit may be.

Let those, however, who find a mysterious seal of the ministry herein, turn to Acts xiii. 1-3, where they will find the whole church of Antioch, in obedience to the divine command, "separating Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto they were called," which was done by the imposition of hands. Was this a ministerial ordination? If so, then certainly Paul and Barnabas had, for a long time previously, officiated in the ministerial capacity without ordination; and in Antioch alone they had, for a whole year, "assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people" (Acts xi. 26); to say nothing of their manifold labours in other places.

In one word, then, the government of the church is formed within, and not from without; by the direction of God, and not by the laws of man; a spiritual, and not a legislative, system. But if Christians will not view it in this light, but will persist in considering it a question of antiquity and church history, then I know not how they can possibly avoid bowing their neck to the episcopal yoke, with all its weight, trappings, and harness: for if the ministry be a mere system of government, and a law of obedience, if it be not under the immediate superintendence of the head of the church, but a fixed polity, invented for the church in perpetuity, a code of rule, and a digest of discipline, then must we hearken to the doctors of the first æra, and ask advice of the Apostolical Fathers, and quail under the scoldings of Ignatius, the pupil of the Apostles, who has ranted in favour of the episcopal authority, in a style, better suited, one would think, to six or seven centuries further down in ecclesiastical history.* Ignatius was a hearer of John the Evangelist;

* 'Let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy Eucharist; for there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup, in the unity of his blood; one altar; as also there is one Bishop, together with his Presbytery and the Deacons, my fellow-servants: that so, whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to the will of God. I cried whilst I was among you, I spake with a loud voice, attend to the Bishop, and to the Presbytery, and to the Deacons. Now, some supposed that I spake this, as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But he is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from any man; but the Spirit spake, saying, on this wise, Do nothing without the Bishop.' (Ignatius Ep. Phil.) 'See that ye follow your Bishop, as Jesus Christ, the Father; and the Presbytery, as the apostles, and reverence the Deacons as the command of God. Let no man do

he had been close to the fountain-head of *tradition* ; but he spake not by the Spirit ; and, if he ruled as he wrote, assuredly he did not act by the Spirit. There is a gulf, broad and deep, between his epistles and those of the scriptural canon : nevertheless, since no authority, as to antiquity, can be more venerable than his, if we once renounce the immediate government of the Holy Spirit in the churches, then must we submit to the testimony of this most ancient writer, whose words are, in the antiquarian theory, all gold and precious stones, but, in the spiritual theory, hay and stubble, dirt and trash.

May we not, then, demand, seeing that the spiritual equality of all believers is not practically recognized, What are the advantages derived from upholding the existing state of things ? what benefits result from the pertinacious adherence to the clerical distinction ? We may wave the nice question of *the Priest* ; but that the clergy and the laity are perfectly distinct amongst the Congregationalists is notorious, and it is quite evident, that the laborious education for the ministry, the titular rank of the minister, the call, the ordination, the imposition of hands, the garb, the sole office of instruction, the indelible character, and divers other particularities, constitute the ministers *Clergymen* ; and that "the people," as all non-clerical believers are called, are entirely separate, in character and action, from the clergy. Has this system prospered ? Is it, generally speaking, in healthy vigour and activity ? Or is it, in the greater number of instances, debile and failing ? and is it betraying signs of evident caducity ? We are not to be blinded by some score, or fifty, or even a hundred, successful "interests," as they are called ; but we are to inspect the twelve hundred Dissenting churches of this country, and, on a fair and candid consideration of their actual state, to decide whether the clerical theory is successful. I do not pretend to possess the data for the decision ; but, judging from very general lamentations and acknowledgments, from quarters most friendly to the existing state of things, I suspect that we need not hesitate in reporting the system "deficient." I have no wish to enlarge on circumstances of this nature, and therefore forbear to add more here ; but I make an appeal to those, who are better acquainted with the practical working of dissent, to draw their own conclusions and make their own inferences.

In one point of view, however, dissent is certainly at a standstill ; I mean, in advancing the cause of the gospel against the Papal intrusion. The cause of this inertness is partly political ;

any thing of what belongs to the Church separately from the Bishop. Let that Eucharist be looked upon as well-established, which is either offered by the Bishop, or by him to whom the Bishop has given his consent. It is not lawful without the Bishop, either to baptize, or to celebrate the holy communion ; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing unto God, &c.' (ad. Smyrn.)

but it is partly also to be traced to the multifarious operations of the system, hereafter to be noticed. The Dissenters have placed themselves in a political situation, which, if it does not amount to a league with Popish agitators, is certainly not less than a friendly neutrality. Let me not be misunderstood: this does not regard the religion of the Papacy, but has exclusive reference to a political union against the Established Church. But this political union, incidentally and unintentionally condemns the Dissenters to silence, and restrains them in a culpable inactivity, at a period, when the most lively energies of Christian opposition are required, in defending the doctrines of the Reformation against the incursions of the Roman Catholic enemy. But, truly, there is a tangled web of intricacies in the political movements of English sects, at this present moment. The Oxford-Tract party, which now numbers several Prelates in its sect, and is daily increasing by new adhesions from the clergy in all parts of the kingdom, has, with astonishing audacity, resumed the principal tenets and superstitions of the Papacy. But though these priests have in most points a close affinity to Rome, and profoundly admire and reverence the Roman Catholic religion, yet are they most decidedly opposed to the Popish agitators, whom they would be glad to repress with the utmost penalties of legal justice; whilst the Dissenters, whose opinions are inimical to the Roman Catholic religion, are in a friendly understanding with these very agitators, whose avowed object is to establish, on a firm footing, that religion, of which the Dissenters were *once* the irreconcilable enemies. The visible regermination of Popery is now, indeed, truly alarming; but the Dissenters dare not, either in their avowed newspaper, or in their periodicals, or by any resolution or vote of their provincial or metropolitan unions, or by any other show of activity, lift up the standard against the armies of the beast, lest, in so doing, they should irritate those with whom they are united on political grounds.

But still, if this political influence did not exist, it is to be apprehended, that the leaders amongst the Dissenters would not be in a condition to oppose the inroads of Popery: for, Who are their leaders? Their *clergy*; and it is to be feared, that another question, of far more direct and personal interest to themselves, now engages their attention: the consolidation of their own authority, and the recognition of those prerogatives, to which they suppose themselves fully entitled by the fair deductions of the clerical theory. There is, just now, a decidedly *Ignatian* tendency amongst some Dissenting ministers. Sensible of the advantages of their ministerial education, and feeling themselves in no degree inferior to the best-instructed clergy of the establishment, and having been set apart by consecration into a clerical caste, separated moreover most distinctly from the Dissenting *laity*, it could scarcely be expected, that they should rest contented with the anomalous state of their clerical dominion, or

that they should view, otherwise than with deep disgust, the occasional outbreaks of popular licence within the congregational enclosures. Hence, they are endeavouring to circulate opinions, favourable to a large increase of clerical power; which, if it should be successful, would place them in a higher position with regard to the laity, than even the Presbyterian clergymen: for the Presbyterian must submit to the decisions of his clerical brethren in general assembly; but, in the Congregational system, each church is independent, and, therefore, the Congregational clergyman would govern, unchecked by appeal, in the convenient arrangement of an independent monarchy.

The proofs of this tendency are selected from the *Congregational Magazine*, which speaks the language of the leading ministers of the day, and may, unquestionably, be referred to as authentic evidence of their sentiments and opinions. The first number of the new series had a leading article on Ministerial Prerogative, and these are some of the sentences of that article: "Those already in the ministry, are especially under charge to attend to *the succession* of others in the sacred work; and are equally under duty and authority, both to prevent improper persons from intruding into it, and to *seek out, encourage, and advance*, suitable characters for it. The voice of the church MAY, with great propriety, be consulted [!]; but as a proper distribution of the duty of ministers and churches, is the introduction of the younger brothers into the *sacred office*, it would seem, that it is the part especially of the ministers, to judge of the qualifications and call of candidates to the ministry generally, *in the first instance*; and to oversee and provide for their suitable training for it; and then, of the people, to judge whether they will sanction and confirm what has proceeded thus far, by accepting to the ministerial and pastoral work amongst them, *those who have had the countenance of other pastors* in becoming candidates, and obtaining education for the work." (page 4.) The reverend writer of this paragraph has advanced the church government of his imagination far beyond the clerisy of the fifth century: even Chrysostom would have been amazed to hear this golden dream of the *Congregational Magazine*. But thus proceeds the reverend writer: "Christian ministers have authority to preside over the order, worship, and discipline of the churches; there is an administrative authority for carrying into effect *the whole will of Christ*, in the gathering and governing the churches: this must be a *presiding and executive authority*, and, for that, necessary provision is made by the Lord Jesus in the gospel ministry. It is the care of the people, to co-operate with and *sustain* their pastors in these important duties: in all *the concerns*, order, worship, and discipline, it is the part of ministers to *originate*, preside, and execute. Christian ministers are, by *divine appointment*, to receive accession to the church, and to exclude such as prove unworthy [this must be by some oracle known only to the

writer, for the authority referred to is not in scripture]. When a Pastor is once chosen, he is, by virtue of his office, the president, guide, and counsellor of the people, to conduct and execute all their spiritual affairs; the ministers must preside, propose, and put into execution; the people must *comply, concur, and exhort.*" (pp. 11, 12.) In other words, the minister is every thing:

"Jupiter est quocunqve vides, quocunqve movèris."

Further proof of the Ignatian tendency would be superfluous: leaving, therefore, these "*indicia tristissima cadentis ecclesie,*" I hasten on to shew, that opinions, such as these, are not of the kingdom of light; that they are retrogressive towards Popery; and indicate, that we have not advanced, but far receded, since the great Reformation. Luther most clearly taught the priesthood of all believers. In a letter to the Bohemians, he thus expressed himself: "A fine invention of the Papists truly, that a Priest is invested with an indelible character, of which no fault can deprive him! The Priest of the gospel ought to be chosen, elected, by the votes of the people, and then confirmed by the Bishop; that is to say, the first, the most venerable of the electors, places his hand on him that has been chosen. I should like to know whether Christ, the first Priest of the New Testament, stood in need of all the mummeries of episcopal ordination? or whether his Apostles and Disciples thought these things requisite? *All Christians are Priests; all may teach the word of God, administer baptism, consecrate bread and wine,* for Christ has said, 'Do ye this in memory of me.' All of us who are Christians, have the power of the keys. Christ said to his Apostles, who, after him, represented humanity entire, 'Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven.' But, to bind and loose, is nothing else than to preach and apply the gospel. To loose, is to announce that God has remitted the faults of the sinner; to bind, is to announce that sins are retained. The names which Priests ought to have, are 'Ministers, Deacons, Superintendents, Disposers.' If a minister is no longer faithful in his charge, he ought to be deposed. His brethren can excommunicate him, and place another minister in his place. *Preaching is the first office in the church.* Jesus Christ and Paul preached, but they did not baptize."

This is a blow at the root indeed. Luther here declares, that all believers are Priests; that all may preach; and all administer the sacraments; and that preaching is the first office in the church! Dr. Hook, and the Oxford Tractators, ought not to conceal this doctrine of Luther, when they assure us, that he was most anxious to separate as little as possible from the Church of Rome. Had Luther written expressly against the Oxford Tracts, he could not have given them a severer blow. In another of his works he thus overthrows "the church," as it is generally understood by all ignorant persons.

“They tell us,” says he, “that the Pope, the Bishops, and Priests, and all the population of the convents, form the spiritual or ecclesiastical estate; and that the princes, nobles, tradespeople, and peasants, form the secular estate, or are *the laity*. But all this is a fine fable: nevertheless, there is scarcely any one that does not believe it. *All Christians are of the spiritual estate*; the only difference amongst them is, that of the functions which they exercise. We all of us have one baptism, and one faith only; and it is that, which constitutes a spiritual man. The unction, the tonsure, the ordination, the consecration, which a Bishop or Pope impart, *may make a hypocrite, but never a spiritual man*. We are all of us consecrated Priests by baptism, as says St. Peter, ‘Ye are all a royal priesthood:’ although it does not belong to all to exercise the same functions; for no one can assume that which is common to all, without the will of the community. But if this consecration of God was not upon us, the unction of the Pope never could make a Priest. If ten brothers, sons of a King, having equal rights of heritage, should choose one of themselves to administer the royalties for the rest, they would all be Kings; nevertheless, there would be only one of them, who would administer their common power. So it is in the church of God. If some pious laymen were to be banished into a desert, and had not amongst them any one consecrated by a Bishop, and were to agree to choose one amongst themselves, *that person would be as truly a Priest, as if he had been consecrated by all the Bishops in the world*. It follows from this, that all Laymen and Priests, all Princes and Bishops, or, as is usually said, all the clergy and the laity, have nothing which distinguishes them except their functions. They are all of the same estate, although they have not all the same work to perform.”

From this passage, we have only to strike out the word Pope, to make every word applicable for the present hour. The popular language about “the clergy” and “the laity,” betrays the grossest ignorance of the first principles of the gospel.

In the Diet of Worms, Aleander, the Nuncio of the Pope, enumerated, amongst the sins of Luther, the following: “He sins against the church, *for he pretends that all Christians are Priests* :” and this was one of the heresies named in the bull, which Pope Leo X. issued against Luther. The priesthood of believers is, therefore, peculiarly a doctrine of the Reformation.

Melancthon has expressed himself to the same effect, on this vital subject; as, indeed, have several of the Lutheran Reformers.

In concluding these introductory remarks, let me impress upon the reader, that the prevailing subject of these letters, “The Heresy of a Human Priesthood,” though perhaps the most important that could engage the thoughts of a Christian, in his anxiety for the welfare of the church, is not of a nature to be generally understood. It is very easy to write against the Established Church, in a manner;

that shall compel the people both to listen and applaud ; for the disagreement of the Establishment with the gospel-pattern, is so palpable, so numerous and flagrant are its scandals, so large an infusion has it received of this world's corruptions, that it would be difficult not to write with force, in writing at all, on such a theme. Any one endowed with ordinary intellectual capacities, can weigh the Church of England in the gospel balances, and discover its deficiencies ; but when we leave the popular ground of the palpable facts of ecclesiastical disorder, to take the higher argument of the spiritual priesthood, and the priestly consecration of all the faithful by grace, we enter into a subject, which is full of difficulties for those, who have only an external perception of the truths of the gospel. The examination of this doctrine seems to require, at the very outset, that degree of knowledge, which we are told is not an attribute of the mind of man in a state of nature. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Whereas, if our task were to uphold a human priesthood, we should speak to every man's understanding, and appeal to every man's sensual cognition : or, if we were to contend for the abolition of *all* priesthood, human and spiritual, our doctrine would be intelligible, and, it is to be feared, not distasteful, to the Atheistic propensities of the multitude. But when we deny the human, in order to build up the spiritual priesthood, when we set forth the service and worship of faith, and the union of all the sons of God with the great High Priest of the true tabernacle, then are we talking of things, which the natural mind has neither seen nor felt, nor ever desired to see or know. Nevertheless, as this is a truth resulting from everything fundamental in the scheme of evangelical salvation, and as it is to be presumed, that every person, calling himself a Christian, professes to believe the scriptures, I must solicit any reader, to whom this doctrine may seem enigmatical, *to search the scriptures*, and chiefly with reference to these subjects ; the Levitical priesthood, sacrifices, and worship ; the prophecies relating to the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ ; the fulfilment of the law by his righteousness ; his eternal priesthood and intercession for the church ; the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers ; their mystical union with the head of the church ; and the total silence in the New Testament, on the subject of *a clergy*, amongst believers, as separated from *the laity*. Let these subjects be thoroughly examined ; and though their full value cannot be comprehended, without the assisting and illuminating grace of God, yet thus much may be understood, that, in the gospel, **A HUMAN PRIESTHOOD IS A GREAT HERESY** ; and he that has gained thus much, by a careful and unprejudiced study of the scriptures, is more than superficially instructed in evangelical institutes.

Finally : when it shall be generally understood, as I trust ere long it certainly will be, that a priesthood, a clergy, is no part of Christianity, then will the chief objection of its opponents be

silenced : for, whereas it is now most common, to connect all the crimes of ecclesiastical history with the Christian religion, and to consider the clergy as the church of Christ, and to attribute their enormities and disorders, whether of oppression, superstition, or avarice, to the influence of that religion, of which they declare themselves to be the only authorized interpreters, so, when it shall be known, that the clergy are no part of the church, but are wholly alien to the gospel, then may we indulge a lively hope, that one great cause of antipathy to Christianity may be removed, and that the religion of Jesus will appear in a new and attractive aspect to those, who have hitherto viewed it through the medium of the sacerdotal veil.

The appendices of the first edition of these letters, which related chiefly to slavery and the Caffre war, are not reprinted ; for new information relating to slavery, and as connected with professing Christians, is continually reaching us, and is to be found elsewhere. The Caffre war has been explained at length, in a book that made its appearance after the publication of the first edition of these letters ; and to that book, of which the title is, "The Wrongs of the Caffre Nation, by Justus," (Duncan, Paternoster-Row) I must refer my readers, who may wish to become acquainted with the deeply interesting subject of our colonial misrule, and also to understand the part that the Wesleyan Missionaries took in the sanguinary drama of the Caffre war.

The twenty-fourth letter, which stood the twenty-second in the first edition, will sufficiently explain the outlines of those transactions, which I do not wish to be erased from the records of ecclesiastical history.

Subsequent events, which have occurred in the West Indies, have confirmed me in my conviction, that the Wesleyan Missionaries, if not favourable to oppression, are fully disposed in peculiar circumstances, to connive at it, unless it should happen to bear hard upon their own interests, in which case, their resistance is as lively as could be desired. The *management* of this society, in all questions of this sort, is deeply to be deplored.

The Wesleyans have lately signalized themselves, by heaping up a great treasure upon earth ; but are they quite certain, that no thief will break through and steal ?

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LETTERS,

&c.

LETTER I.

An inquiry into the present state of the Church of Christ, must evidently be directed with a view to ascertain whether Christianity is advancing or receding; for the Church of Christ is of such a nature that, if it remains stationary, and is not constantly in progress, and continually enlarging the boundaries of its dominion, it must be considered in a state of feebleness and decline. In this respect it is totally unlike any institution or invention of men; for, if a kingdom or republic is in possession of an ancient territory, and is furnished with wholesome laws securing equal justice to the population, and not impeding the operations of trade and commerce, it would, in these days, be considered prosperous and thriving; and any plan of aggressive conquest, merely to gain a wider domain, would not only be deemed unwise and imprudent, but highly injurious to the stability of the state.

An addition of territory to a kingdom already large, is now justly considered dangerous policy, and the experience of history seems to prove that aggressive warfare, undertaken to remove the ancient landmarks of nations, though splendid in design, is ruinous in the execution. The English empire established in Hindostan, the vast extent of the Russian tyranny, and the wide limits of the North American Republic—limits which cupidity and ambition are constantly carrying forward—will, in the final catastrophe of this unjust system, convey lessons of moderation to other states not to be forgotten. The lesson has, indeed, been ever thundering in the ears of mankind from the fall of Sardanapalus down to the imprisonment of Napoleon, and, like thunderstorms, has been disregarded; but men are, at last, listening to reason, and are beginning to acknowledge that national moderation is the only wise, as it is the only honest, policy.

It is not so, however, with Christianity: the kingdom of the Prince of the Kings of the Earth must increase; it cannot be cooped up in any ancient limits; if it possessed all Europe with perfect sway, and there was to abide without making a further advance, it would be in a state of miserable decrepitude. The inheritance of Christ is far beyond the pillars of Hercules and the Hellespont; it extends to the aggregate of all heathen nations, "to the uttermost parts of the earth;" it claims every kingdom under heaven; "all people, nations, and languages are" its covenanted subjects; "all the ends of the earth shall fear him;" "every nation that

God has made shall worship him ; " all kings shall fall down before him ; " " he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

If, therefore, Christianity is at rest on the earth, we may not suppose that this rest is permanent : there is not an end to the work of the new creation, but a pause in the labours of the workman, the progress of which cannot be arrested till the whole plan shall be harmoniously perfected. The building must go on till the top stone be brought in with shouting of " grace, grace" unto it. Geologists assure us, that there had been many and long intermissions in the orderly completion of our globe, but the work never ceased till it was finished ; nor did the morning stars sing for joy till the Creator pronounced that his work was very good. We are living in moral confusion, and in the midst of many changes ; but the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ ; and this universal King shall rule in righteousness at last : and God shall pronounce that the moral as well as the physical world is " very good."

We know from ecclesiastical history that the progress of Christianity was soon arrested, though the success of its first efforts was almost miraculous. The mystery of iniquity had already begun to work in the days of the apostles ; offences had come according to the warning, for it was impossible that offences should not come ; and they went on increasing till visible and established Christianity became one of the direst visitations that ever afflicted the earth. The true church was driven into secret places. The Lord's people were few, and could be found with difficulty, whilst the worshippers of the beast were not to be counted for number. At one time, it might have been thought that Satan had established his throne of sin on a foundation not to be shaken, so that when our Lord said " now is the Prince of this world judged," he seemed to have spoken the word without a due knowledge of the awful power of his antagonist.

But the Good Shepherd knew all his sheep, and, though they were a little flock, he was continually with them in the wilderness ; nor could all the fury of the destroyer exterminate the hidden church. He heard the prayers and counted every drop of blood of his Elect ; he listened to their voice crying to him day and night, though he bore long with them, and at last drew forth the sword of the Spirit to take vengeance on Babylon. The Reformation brought in light into the world ; and light is the ruin of those who thrive in darkness. The Sun of Righteousness appeared above the horizon, and though clouds may have covered his glorious orb, yet still the light that is now in the world is from that source. We are not now " walking in the light of our own fire, and in the sparks that we ourselves have kindled ! "

Three centuries, however, have rolled on since the death of Luther ; and now, in the nineteenth century, can we say that " Christ is Lord of all ? " Alas ! though the midnight of superstition is broken up, what a woeful spectacle does the earth afford ! Popery or Atheism (and these blood-hounds always hunt for the souls of men in couples) in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Ireland, and many parts of Germany ; the Greek Church, and its foolish superstitions and profound ignorance, in the Russian empire ; Mahomedanism and idolatry in all the rest of the old world ; Popery in all South America, Popery in Canada, and Popery in parts of the United States : then, in England, a National Church, avowedly and notoriously a gentle modification of Popery, with a nation of nominal Christians wholly given to war, and upholding a vast standing army in time of peace : in the United States

of America, slavery retained, not only with toleration, but with zeal; while the whole continent of Africa may be considered a nursery of slavery, to supply the market of cruelty for the rest of the world.

The difficulties in the way of the kingdom of our Lord upon earth, seem at the present time immense; and, if we look upon them in any other light than of faith and spiritual trust in the promises of God, utterly and hopelessly insurmountable. And because carnal men do not in this light examine the moral and religious prospects of the world, they, therefore, entirely disbelieve the whole system of Christianity; for they, knowing what mighty things are promised and predicted in the scriptures concerning the kingdom of Christ, and seeing how little in reality has hitherto been done to the furtherance of these predictions, and how vast is the power of every Antichristian principle established in the world, and how feeble and minute are the means opposed to the dominant evil by the Church of Christ, do, without hesitation, conclude that the gospel and the prophecies are wild fables of oriental dreamers, and that all the hopes of a universal kingdom of righteousness are the frivolous expectations of visionary brains. Hence the carnal man considers the labours of missionaries the efforts of madmen; and there is nothing that does to the enemies of Christ appear more foolish, more preposterous, more laughably impossible, than the idea of bringing in all nations into the obedience of the faith.

But the opinions of those who are strangers to the power of Christ as a living head to the church, do not move us; for where there is no faith, and no spiritual illumination, it is impossible to understand the operations and the covenant of God the Redeemer. These *are*, however, understood by believers; who, because they know that Jehovah has always wrought with a high hand for his covenant, and has always shown his power most when his people are driven up in a corner to the brink of the Red Sea, with the waves before, and Pharaoh behind, are willing, in the greatest discouragement, to stand still and behold *his* salvation, which is as far above their means as heaven is above the earth. Now, though the discouragements are great in these our days, they are far less than they once were: the sun is above our horizon, as I have already said, though the clouds have veiled up his glory; and the light which we now have, though dim and obscure, is still such a light as we had not in the fifteenth century. He that has done so much for us, is a living God, and the light, by his command, will assuredly shine more and more unto the perfect day. The promises of the kingdom of Christ may be afar off; but we are persuaded of them, and we embrace them; and we dare not let them go, lest with them we should let go the gospel also.

It is, therefore, now our duty to enquire into the offences that are at present in the way, and to ascertain the means for removing them, that we may see what our prospect is for the coming time, and so be able to judge, by a careful inspection of appearances, in what respect we are nearer to the restitution of all things, than when that monster of iniquity Innocent III. sat on the throne of Christendom, shewing himself as God, and making himself drunk with the blood of the saints.

In managing this inquiry, I do not intend to advert to the evil that prevails amongst mankind, except as it stands in connexion with the operations of the church of Christ. I pass over the sins of heathen idolatry, and of the Mahomedan imposture, and propose only to examine those strong holds of iniquity with which the church of Christ comes into collision, not in her missionary efforts, but in her daily intercourse with the wicked world, in the intricacies of whose false wisdom I think her understanding is at

present somewhat entangled : for as the church is the depository of the strength of Christ with mankind ; as He has promised to be with her to the end of the world ; as He has sent unto her another and an abiding Paraclete to comfort and to lead her constantly into all truth ; as his victories are by the word of the gospel set forth by messengers whom He has appointed and blessed ; and as it is his will to get unto himself great glory, in the weakness and apparently unarmed nakedness of the armies which he commissions for his conquests ; it is to the church that we must turn our anxious attention, that we may discover what are her actual powers and privileges at this present time ; what are the marks of her debility or decay ; or what the signs of her reviving health, her returning energies, or her resuscitating vigour : and so be able to come to some sure conclusions, concerning the approach of that universal empire of righteousness, which our prayers are constantly invoking.

LETTER II.

THE priesthood of Christ constitutes the pre-eminence of the Christian Religion over all others; and this is not only a pre-eminence, but a peculiarity; for there is nothing like it in all the world besides. We know, by the gospel, that God was manifest in the flesh; that he took upon himself the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; for which reason he has been highly exalted, and has received a name above all others, that every knee might bow to him, both in heaven and in earth: and that every tongue might confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

This exaltation is in his priesthood; an exaltation which is great by *comparison*; for, whereas all antecedent priests and priesthoods were mortal, *He* lives for ever; He is an eternal high-priest; and as all the temples and churches of other priests are subject to decay, and never have lasted above a few centuries, his temple is in heaven itself; He has a special sanctuary which time and war and revolutions can never injure: and as other priests could only bless the people that came to see them, in some fixed and certain place, and so could reach but a very few of the inhabitants of the earth, He is, on the contrary, a Sun of Righteousness a blessing to all the world; the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; He is the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is with his people to the end of the world. Hence the tribes of the mystical Israel have a privilege unknown in every other religion, that the Great and Holy One of Israel, who took their nature upon him, and is now exalted on the throne of Omnipotence, is their Priest; their only Priest; "for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;" so that an assembly of worshipping Christians congregate to approach the throne of grace by the help of this priest, *and of none other*; and as the nature of the exalted Saviour is greater than the sinful nature of man, and as the heavens are more glorious than a building made of stone or brick, though decorated with gilding and painting; and as the splendour of Him, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, is greater than the magnificence of a prelate in his pontificals, so far is the spiritual worship of the church of Christ more noble, more beautiful, more divine, than the liturgy of those dreamers who sensualize their religion with the weak and beggarly elements of exploded types.

The prophecies are constantly directing the attention of Israel to this great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek: he was to sit as a priest on his throne and bear all the glory: he was to sit at the right hand of God, the place of power, till all his enemies became his footstool. The wicked woeful world, with all its crimes, idolatries, and bloodshed, its craft, cruelty, and desolation, was one day to be turned into a garden of delights, under the government of this royal priest. In short, the whole Scriptures are written to direct the attention of them that seek salvation, to this Holy One enthroned in glory, as the mediator of the whole world: and our Lord himself told us, that we ought to search the Scriptures, *because they testified of him.*

The first preaching of the gospel seemed to be based on the solemn words of the dying Saviour, "IT IS FINISHED;" words which were followed by the rending of the legal veil of the temple, and the perpetual condemnation of all Aaraonic institutions for ever. The early Christians, I mean those of the first century, never for a moment supposed that there was any priest remaining in the true service and worship of God, excepting Him only who had "entered in once into the holy place, and so had obtained eternal redemption for them." They never thought that the preachers and teachers of the gospel were priests; that they were an evangelical tribe of Brahmins who had taken place of the Levites; that of these new priests some were "Lords" over others, some "Arch Lords," some "Most Reverend," some "Right Reverend," some "Very Reverend"; but all, from the greatest to the least, *Reverend*: they never imagined that the body of believers were to be divided into two classes, one called "the clergy," and the others "the laity;" that the clergy were to be worshipped and paid by the laity; were to be men of education and leisure; a caste of separated Reverends, dressed in sable garments, and feeding the inferior "laity" with grace and pardon. This, I say, is no where intimated in the New Testament; not a syllable can be extracted from the Scriptures to prove the doctrine of clergy and laity; for the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles know only of teachers and preachers elected by the people, whilst all the Christian people, men and women, are reputed, in Holy Writ, the elect fraternity, the royal priesthood, crowned and anointed under Christ their common head.

Tradition, however, supplies the deficiency, and has taught us that the church very soon fell into oblivion of its privileges, and returned with avidity to those things which had been destroyed. In the second century, the elected teachers began to utter strange propositions of the priestly functions of the Gospel ministry, and in the third century, the pontifical heresy had made rapid advances to maturity.*

I take it there were six causes of this dreadful change:—1st. The strifes and schisms in the early churches, which seemed, in the perplexity they created, to call for the convenient remedy of a strong government, and made it desirable, as a matter of mere policy, to place power in the hands of a body of men, who might have a perpetual interest to suppress the popular and republican spirit. The bitter lamentations which Clement makes of the tumultuous state of the Corinthian church, and of the disrespect shewn by the Corinthians to their teachers, prove that the popular power was very soon felt to be an inconvenience, and that the leading teachers had an eye to the increase of the ministerial prerogatives.

2dly. The imperious and worldly spirit of some of the teachers, who wished to exercise lordship over their flocks, in proportion as their flocks seemed disposed to resist the introduction of such a lordship. If the epistles of Ignatius could be considered genuine, they might be quoted as an instance of the arrogant spirit of Popery, making its appearance even in the first century; but as no sound-minded critic could believe these epistles to be genuine, I must only notice them with a view to those episcopalians, whose affections for the mitre cloud their judgment in an ecclesiastical question of this sort. For these persons, let it be granted that Ignatius is the author of the "larger epistles" which go under his

* The Council of Nice decreed that a bishop should be consecrated by all the bishops of the province; but if that were impossible, owing to local difficulties and inconveniences, three bishops at least should be present at the consecration; the metropolitan assenting: the Council of Nice was held, A.D. 325.

name, and truly, on that supposition, it must be acknowledged, that Ignatius was one of the most haughty prelatists and violent church-autocrats that ever figured on the drama of usurped authority.

3dly. The effect of Pagan persecution, which, as it generally selected the gospel teachers as the first victims for the agonies of the arena, did, on that account, invest their memories and characters with a peculiar sanctity. A presbyter of a church seemed, in those days, to be set forth before the others "appointed unto death." He lived the life of a martyr in anticipation; and was crowned before his victory, by those who, in their friendly fears, saw him "die daily."

4thly. The speedy diminution of sound scriptural knowledge, which would alone be a door for all the wolves of Popery to make an entrance into the church. The conceits of heathen philosophy, learnedly mixed up with gospel institutes, the arts of rhetoric, and the abstractions of metaphysics, very soon found itching ears to receive them; angels came in abundance to preach "another gospel," and thus, as the word of grace was kept back, priestcraft rapidly advanced its standard from height to height of the gospel ground, till all fell under the power of Satan and his kingdom of darkness.

5thly. The tendency to *objectiveness*, which is inherent in the human mind: in other words, a craving for some visible object for the senses to settle on. If the glory of Christ, in his priestly office, is duly exhibited, it can be contemplated by faith alone; for we can shew believers neither priest, sacrifice, altar, mercy-seat, sweet smelling incense, nor temple of any sort. Hence our Lord pronounced a memorable blessing on those who should not be able to see, and yet should believe. This invisible glory is great beyond description, for its clearness, beauty, and consolation to those, who have been taught the faith by the spirit of truth; but, to carnal minds, it is an abstract intangible doctrine, without one drachm of satisfaction or semblance of reality; it affords no sort of pleasure, comfort, or strength, to the soul of a mere nominal christian, and is as little beloved by him as any of the dry propositions of Euclid. But a visible priesthood, with power and parade, officiating within the perimeter of holy rails, at altars of gold or marble, and mimicking mediation with divers well-contrived ceremonies and shows of intercession, is gross food for the natural man, and such as his coarse palate does exceedingly relish.* The natural man has an appetite for quails; manna is disgusting to him; he is always lusting for flesh in the wilderness; and hence priestcraft is amiable to all mankind, till its arts of rapacity and oppression render it an intolerable burthen. Nothing but the gospel, therefore, can save mankind

* Bunyan, the immortal author of the Pilgrim's Progress, has recorded his love for the outward show of worship, and his admiration of priestly authority, in the days of his darkness. "Then began I to fall in very eagerly with the religion of the times: to wit, to go to church twice a day, and there very devoutly both say and sing, as others; yet retaining my wicked life; but withal was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things (both the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else) belonging to the church: counting all things holy that were therein contained; and especially the priest and clerk most happy, and, without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to do his work therein. This conceit grew so strong on me, that, had I but seen a priest (though never so sordid and debauched in his life) that I should find my spirit fall under him, and reverence him; yea, I thought, for the love I bore them, as the ministers of God, I could have laid down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work did so intoxicate and bewitch me." What multitudes are there in the Church of England, who have no other religion than this!

from this all-devouring evil, which has as constant a tendency to return on society, as the sea to invade the banks of Holland; and to bring back its tribe of monsters over the golden harvests of a blessed agriculture. Our Lord is exalted in heaven to rescue mankind from priests: all that came before him were thieves and robbers, and every priest that has followed after him, is, by his office, an enemy of the truth, and a soldier of the great army of Antichrist.

6thly. A mis-statement, or modification, and, at last, a positive denial, of justification by faith alone without good works. On this fundamental doctrine there is a sad obscurity, contradiction, and uncertainty, in the school of the Fathers; and though they sometimes assert justification by faith, they sometimes virtually deny it. The system of meritorious works and of satisfactory penances, is to be discerned in a nascent state, in the writings of the early doctors; and this system is the strength of priestcraft: for, if good works may justify, and if acts of merit and penance can procure pardon, the vast market and trade of absolution and confession is thrown open for the deceived, and priests become then as necessary to those who enter into that market, as merchant-ships are for the merchants of foreign articles. Hence it will be found, that priests naturally insist on justification by works,* and denounce the contrary doctrine with unrelenting anathemas. As it is the glory of the true and only Aaron, to absolve him from iniquity who worketh not, but who believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, so is it the manifest interest of a false priest, to absolve him who does work, and by the abundance of his good works satisfies his confessor as well as his own deluded conscience. The strength of the Antichrist is priestcraft; the strength of the faith is to dispense with it altogether. Justification by merit is inseparable from priestcraft; and, therefore, the strength of the Reformation was to restore the gospel, to preach Christ and his righteousness alone, to declare that we are justified by faith without works, and that we stand in need of no Saviour but of Him, who by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

To these it might be expected that I should add a 7th cause, the connexion of Church and State, by the politic arts of Constantine, and the spurious piety of his successors: but, indeed, the church was already so deeply corrupted when he mounted the throne of the world, that he did but consolidate the scattered elements of existing mischief. The church had, by that time, acquired so strong an *affinity* for the state (as the chemists say) that it would have been impossible to have kept them apart much longer. When once, however, this concord of iniquity was duly achieved, the Levitical privileges of the usurping clergy became part and parcel of the laws of the empire. The mind of Christ was no longer to be found in the gospel, but in the imperial edicts; and the decrees of the monarch, or the councils of priests summoned by imperial mandate, became the rule and standard of orthodoxy! This new order of things never ceased till it,

* "That point of justification (of all others) is exceeding important; inasmuch as Calvin was faine to persuade, that if this one head might bee yeilded safe and intire, it would not quite the cost, to make any great quarrell for the rest."—Bishop Hall's *No Peace with Rome*.

So also Luther, "wherefore if the Pope will grant unto us, that God alone, by his mere grace through Christ doth justify sinners, we will not only carry him in our hands, but will also kiss his feet: but since we cannot obtain this, we again, in God, are proud against him above measure, and will give no place, no, not one hair's breadth, to all the angels in heaven; not to Peter, not to Paul, not to a hundred emperors, nor to a thousand popes, nor to the whole world." *On Galatians*.

at last, brought forth the disastrous serpent of the church, the Pope, the Man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple, shewing himself that he is God.

This hasty sketch of ecclesiastical corruptions, will suffice to shew the origin and progress of the Popish doctrine, which may be summoned up in this single definition, "teaching that man may take the priestly office of Christ." In what respect, I think we have not yet fully returned to the Gospel Institutes, by teaching *and by acting also as if we believe the doctrine*, that every faithful believer is a spiritual priest by virtue of his union with the Head of the church, I purpose to examine in the following letter.

LETTER III.

It may, perhaps, be enquired, *in limine*, what meaning is to be attached to the word "Priest?" For I am aware that there exists a small class of liberal-minded and evangelical clergymen, who, instructed in the true institutes, and, knowing full well that the sacerdotal heresy is the strength of the papal apostasy, deny that they are priests in the popish sense.

A priest is a person consecrated for the priestly office, by an order of priests already existing, and supposed, in virtue of this consecration, to be endowed with a character, giving him privileges in divine things, above those of his fellow-worshippers who are not consecrated as he is.

In the Levitical institutions, we find the priest greatly exalted in the service of God above the people, because the Levitical order was, till the coming of Christ, a type of the company of the faithful under the High Priest, who was eminently a type of Christ himself: the whole of the worship, the burning of the offerings on the altar, the presenting of every zebach* and mincha, of every korban and olah in the temple, and the performance of every religious ceremony, were the exclusive privilege and duty of "the priests, the sons of Aaron." The most important of the Levite's sacerdotal functions was to make an atonement for the sins of those that came to him, to have their sins removed through his mediation. "And it shall be, when a man shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned, a lamb or a kid for a sin-offering, and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin" (Lev. v.) and it shall be forgiven him." (Ib. iv.)

The sacerdotal powers of the popish clergy, though excessive, are avowed and notorious; for, in the theory of their religion, it is supposed to be impossible to continue in a salvable state, without the constant intervention and help of the priest. The priest makes an atonement for sin; he offers up the sacrifice of the mass for the living and the dead; and pronounces an absolution of sin on all those abused and foolish people, who look to him as their necessary intercessor. Nothing can be done in all the round of the popish religious rites, without the presence and blessing of the priest. Take away the mortal priest from popery, and all the system vanishes; and it is, for this reason, that popery is Anti-Christ, an opposition-Christ, another Christ, set up of man's invention, to abase the Lord our Righteousness, and, on his throne, to place a usurper-priest, who is not "after the law of an endless life."

Now we know, as a matter of history, that the English clergy have emanated from the popish priest-hood, and that the "apostolical succession," on which many of them rest the efficiency of their ministry, must, of necessity, be traced through eight centuries of popish bishops. They declare, that they are reformed papists, cleared from the dross, but retaining the virgin gold of Rome. Hence, in an historical way, they inherit the priest-hood of Rome, as, on theological reasons, they claim for themselves a full

* *Zebach*, the slaughtered-offering; *Mincha*, the meat-offering of inanimate things offered by fire; *Korban*, an offering generally; *Olah*, a burnt offering.

privilege of sacerdotal attributes. The first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury swore canonical obedience to the Pope at his consecration, and from him have come forth all the Protestant bishops.

The church of Rome is mother of the church of England; and this is so true, both in history and theology, that many of the Protestant prelatists have declared, and taken pains to prove, that the actual church of England is not a new system invented by Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, but only rescued by them from some corruptions which encumbered it. "I dare conclude," says Bishop Hall, "and doubt not to maintain against all separatists in the world, that England (to go no higher) had, in the days of King Henry the Eighth, a true visible church of God, and so, by consequent, their succeeding seed was by true baptism justly admitted into the bosom thereof, and, therefore, that even of them, without any further profession, God's church was truly constituted. But if it should be said that the following idolatry in Queen Mary's days, excluded them, consider how hard it will be to prove, that God's covenant with any people is presently disannulled by the sins of the most, whether of weakness or ignorance, and that, if they had renounced God, God had mutually renounced them."*

This history of the priestly succession is very important, for it not only explains the origin of the priestly usurpation, established by law in the national religion, but helps us to understand that uncertain and anomalous position, which dissenting ministers do now occupy in the congregational societies. The history of the church of England is, in no small degree, the history of the dissenting churches also. The original quarrel of non-conformity was not on the subject of church government: the first seceders protested against the pontifical vestments, and were driven into dissent mainly by the necessity imposed on them of wearing the popish surplice: they were so little awake to the all-important question of the priesthood, that, for a long time, they agitated other subjects, and omitted this as scarcely worthy their notice. They were, in the strict sense of the word, Calvinists; that is, they looked to Geneva for their rule of conduct, and it is well known that, though Calvin had erected his platform of presbytery, he entertained high notions of priestly authority, and had no objection to call in the sword of the state to enforce the decrees of the church.

The unrelenting violence and cruelty of the English bishops did, at last, goad the persecuted nonconformists into an examination of the foundation on which their enemies stood: in their dungeons and chains, they fully rejected prelacy as an Antichristian usurpation. From prelacy they moved on to presbyterian ideas; but, faithful to Calvin's pattern, they thought that the church and state ought to be united in a presbyterian love-knot. The presbyterian model is one of priests: the heresy is not got rid of in this second change; it remains; the enemy is still at hand, though in a less alarming appearance; and, as Milton most shrewdly said in one of his sonnets,

"Presbyter is but old priest, writ large."

The Brownists and Independents† next came forth as reformers of a more thorough creed; but their ideas were still entangled amidst the ruins

* An Apology against Brownists.

† I am aware that the Brownists soon appeared on the stage; but as they were for a long time but a small minority amongst nonconformists, their opinions cannot be said to have produced much effect till the Presbyterians had, as their predecessors, disturbed the political ideas of the nation.

of old-established opinions, and, though they repressed much of the evil, by restoring the congregational scheme, which, as it isolates the pastor from the pastoral body, must of necessity restrain the sacerdotal powers, yet still they never seem to have agreed in boldly and plainly defining the Christian ministry, so as to prevent the possibility of a mistake amongst their successors. This was a grave error, and the effects of it are visible even now; for, up to this present day, there are no settled opinions, no certain canon among the congregational dissenters, by which the limits of the ministerial authority can be stated, as the uniform rule of the whole body; and, indeed, the contradictory ideas entertained by dissenters concerning the ministry are so remarkable, that it is a matter of surprise to behold the actual harmony and fraternal feeling amongst the churches, in spite of the unsettled state of the question.

Thus have we traced the progress of the movement out of the Papacy, through the Prelatist, the Presbyterian, and the Independent. The one sect has sprung out of the other in true lineal descent; so that the Independent can, with more than heraldic accuracy, confidently declare that the Pope is his great grandfather.

It is, however, but strict justice to remark, that another sect, if sect it can be called, has approached the truth concerning the priesthood, and by entirely levelling every remnant of distinction between clergy and laity, has at last produced a system framed on the fundamental doctrine, that "the old covenant" having "decayed and waxed old," ought "to vanish away." This sect is the Quakers; a body of men, who seemed determined to investigate the perplexing question, without the least regard to the trammels of preconceived opinions and settled habits; and though, by such a method of investigation, they were in danger of running into some extravagances, they were also sure to discover some truths unknown, denied, or detested by their contemporaries: for so great are the delusions of every generation, that he, who systematically opposes the opinions of the age in which he lives, cannot fail to liberate some truths from the captivity of error, which nothing but a determined war of paradox could have rescued. The Quakers, then, are entitled to the whole credit of placing the sacerdotal controversy in its true light; and they not only stated the truth, but acted on it, and guarded their opinions with such a jealous discipline, that it became impossible for their successors in their society to misunderstand or misinterpret their meaning: to acknowledge a priest in any way, direct or indirect, is, in fact, to cease to be a Quaker. And herein is their wisdom deserving the highest possible eulogies; for though individuals amongst the Independents* have occasionally taught Quaker-doctrine concerning the priesthood, yet no society of Christians, excepting the Quakers, has, as a society, acknowledged and acted upon this great maxim, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the only Priest that has any pre-eminence, and that the whole body of believers are priests, in perfect equality, in and through their Head and Lord. One of the early Quakers was, therefore, right when he said, "we are not persons that have shot up out of the old root into another appearance, as one sect hath done out of another, till many are come up one after another, the ground still remaining out of which

* I refer particularly to "The Book of the Priesthood; an argument in three parts, by Thomas Stratten, formerly of Sunderland, now of Hull;" a very valuable and eloquent volume, second to none that Dissenters have published this century. When the inevitable deductions from that excellent book shall have been acknowledged and acted upon, we shall behold "judges as at the first, and counsellors as at the beginning," and then shall the Evangelical Zion be called "the faithful city."

they all grow ; but that very ground hath been shaking, and is shaking, destroyed and is destroying, removed and removing in us.*

But it is not so with the Congregational Dissenters : the old ground has substantially remained, though much addition has been made of new soil introduced from various quarters ; and with the old soil have also remained many of the fibres of the great root of Anti-Christ, which occasionally shew their life, "by springing up and troubling many : " it is to these fibres that I would now draw your attention. †

* Life of William Dewsbury. London, 1836, p. 5.

† It is curious to see the judgment of an acute Papist on the Protestant ministry. The following passage is from a work much praised by the Popish party : " Considerations sur le dogme generateur de la piété Catholique : par l'Abbé Ph. Gerbert. Paris. 1829."

" Wherever sacrifice ceases, there the man remains and the priest disappears. Look at the Jews. Among no people of antiquity had the priesthood struck such deep roots ; nowhere was it surrounded with more respect. What are at present the Rabbis, who have superseded the Priests among that nation, disinherited of all sacrifice ? The anathema, which weighs on that degraded ministry, is denounced to it even by Israelite lips ; 'their power,' they exclaim, 'can do nothing for the salvation of our souls.' The same observation applies to Protestantism. The antique idea of the priesthood is one of the human ideas, which it has lost with the sacrifice (i. e. *mass*). The day when the fire of the eternal holocaust was extinguished, the divine seal was effaced from the brow of the Protestant ministers. The public opinion of Protestants refuses them that pious respect, which all nations have attached to the sacerdotal character ; nor does it exact of them those superior notices, which Catholicism imposes on the priest ; and it does not exact them, from a sentiment of justice ; for it would be unfair to look for a consequence, when the principle has been destroyed."

There is much shrewdness in these remarks ; but the Papist should learn from the Protestant, that the priesthood is *entirely abolished, and that no remnant of it remains in the Gospel*. This is the only true answer to Rome's most subtle logic : as long as we keep up Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, Presbyter, or an ordained learned ministry, we cannot answer these arguments. Whole priest or no priest is the alternative.

LETTER IV.

IN the definition of "a priest," I have already stated, that such a one "is a person consecrated for the sacerdotal office, by an order of priests already existing." This is absolutely indispensable to constitute a priesthood; for if any one takes upon himself that office, without the intervention of the existing corporation, he is either a prophet or an impostor; a priest ordained by God himself, for an especial purpose in the church, or one sent forth by an evil spirit, to prophesy lies unto the people. Every true member of the church of Christ, who has received the seal of the Spirit, is a priest in the gospel sense: and if, with that seal, he has received also the gift of teaching, and the church accept his gift, he is a prophet, and may deliver that knowledge which he has received. Paul declares he was an apostle, "not of men, neither by men;" that is, he was no priest according to the received ideas and ancient custom; nobody had ordained him; no son of Aaron had anointed him with oil, and arrayed him in the consecrated ephod; the corporation of priests were not at all concerned or consulted in his ordination. If he had thought the apostolical succession indispensable in establishing the validity of his office, he might most easily have sought out those arch-bishops (as the apostles are deemed to be by some) and have received consecration from their hands; but he had other views, and what those views were he has stated very plainly; "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia." So he began preaching and teaching without ordination; and he so little thought it requisite to be ordained by the apostles, that he purposely avoided it, as is clearly intimated in the epistle to the Galatians.

This, then, is to be "an apostle not of men, neither by men," and is the true apostolical succession, for the honour of which the church of Christ has good reason to be jealous; for if the societies of Christians had been careful to recognize those only as apostolical messengers, who had manifested their conversion by their self-denying zeal for their exalted sacerdotal King and Lord, we should not, for fifteen centuries, have been plagued with the plagues of Babylon, nor should we, at this hour, behold the afflicting spectacle of numerous Protestants entangled in the meshes of Rome's pernicious cobweb.

To turn from the spiritual to the carnal priesthood, and to distinguish, by a broad line of demarcation, between "the clergy" and "laity;" to act as if we supposed that a certain and visible order of men had the power of admitting candidates into their body corporate, or that their interference, or even assistance, were indispensable, in opening the door of the ministry to those whom the grace of God had previously selected to teach the truth; is, in fact, to take away from the glory of Him who sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, and who, by the donation of repentance and remission of sins, rules as a Prince in his Israel, and anoints all his elect servants to be kings and priests to God and his Father.

As the great labour of the son of perdition has been to destroy the priesthood of grace, and exalt the priesthood of the flesh, and as this his work of wicked witchcraft, has too successfully transformed the unity of the believing body into the cloven foot of "clergy and laity," so should it now be the unremitting labour of the servants of the Lord to undo his work; to go back again to the fountain of original purity, and there, in a thorough cleansing of holiness, to recover the fair image of primeval simplicity, which may induce the bridegroom once more to say to his spouse, "thou art all fair my love, *there is no spot in thee.*" And for this purpose it behoves us, not to tolerate any ancient custom, any received formulary of words, by which it is possible that the understanding of believers may be led, unawares, into a train of thought bordering on the old delusion. We have all an inherent tendency to that delusion: without this tendency, the papacy never could have achieved that omnipotence of dominion, which it formerly secured for itself: for, what is the papacy, but an accomodation in all things to the desires of the natural man? and what is the anti-papacy, or Christ, but the crucifixion of the desires, and a confutation of the opinions, of the natural man? How careful, then, should we be, to avoid the paths wherein it is even *possible* to lapse into old errors! How sedulous, to follow the new spiritual chart, in our journey through the wilderness! How cautious, to shun the stumbling-blocks, which are thickly set by Satan in every high-road and by-path of the journey! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, *all things* are become new!" His spiritual understanding is new, his religion is new, and he has a new God. With Jehovah, known in Jesus Christ, he comes to see the new privileges of the church, and to acknowledge that these privileges are altogether unlike any thing prevailing elsewhere; a spiritual temple, a spiritual altar, a spiritual high priest, a spiritual society of priests and prophets, chosen by God the Holy Ghost, and by him appointed, anointed, and sent forth, according to his gifts, for any office he chooses; a fraternity of spiritual kings, who shall reign with their God for ever; and a spiritual union with the exalted Head of the church, perfect God and perfect man, who is the brother and bridegroom of his church, and who has taught his servants this unspeakable mystery, that they are part of his body, his flesh, and his bones.

Oh! who that acknowledges this creed, can, for one moment, return to the dismal trumpety of the clerical caste, without utter loathing and abomination? Who that understands these things, can take up the name of priest or prelate in his mouth, without nausea? But alas! we have been so long accustomed to see the sow that washed, return to her wallowing in the mire, that the disgusting spectacle excites neither our surprise nor our displeasure.

Now, in order to recover the privileges, of which the church is lawful inheritor, through the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our duty is to place the gospel ministry in a clear light; to bring it forth in open day; and not to allow it any false effect by shadowy backgrounds, and the picturesque accompaniments of antiquity. If the churches of Rome and England have *their* Brahminical orders; if they, in perfect consistency with their system, make their priests first breathe the sacerdotal life, through the indispensable handling of "prelatical fingers;" if they have their upper and lower houses of Christians, the one called "clergy" and the other "laity;" we cannot be at a loss for the line of conduct which we are to pursue, even to avoid all they have done, not only by ceasing to imitate or tolerate their deeds, but by denouncing them as a delusion, and worse than a delusion.

At present, however, owing to carelessness and inattention, or perhaps to a tacit acquiescence in a custom which by some may be supposed to have its advantages, we see the congregational churches very generally tolerating the ceremony of imposition of hands,* in the ordination of their ministers; and so much is this ceremony respected in certain quarters, that I suppose its omission would not less give offence, than the pretermission of the surplice by an officiating priest in one of our cathedrals. Some individuals admire the ceremony, because it is "an old custom;" because ministers, whom they respect, take a prominent part in its performance; and because it is generally accompanied with devout prayers, and edifying sermons. But, still, the ceremony either means something or nothing; if it means something, it must teach us, 1st. That the ministers have the power of conveying the Holy Spirit by the touch of their hands, which, without circumlocution, is plainly and broadly stated to be the case in the English Prayer Book;† or, 2nd. That the ministers are a corporate body, who, by this touch, admit a candidate into their corporation; and 3rd. as a corollary from the 2nd. That they, only, can make a minister.

To admit the 2nd. without the 1st. is evidently unsound; for as the plea of imposition of hands is, by the churches of Rome and Lambeth, based on their supposed power of conveying the gift of the Holy Spirit, and as they support their pretensions by appealing to Scripture, and to Paul's ordination of Timothy, with its consequences; a power which they say they have inherited from bishop to bishop, by the "apostolical succession;" so, to retain the ceremony, without a claim to the power, is a mere vanity; an imitation of a rite, without its essence; a mimicry of an antique custom, without its solemnity. To practise the imposition of hands in the recognition of ministers, without the accompanying pretences of Rome and Lambeth, is therefore to say, that the ceremony means nothing; but if it means nothing, why make serious and devout exertions to execute a nullity? This is a question I have repeatedly asked; without obtaining a satisfactory answer; for all that I can learn is, "that it is a custom, and that the people are used to it." True, the people *are* used to it, but they would not be so—nay, they would not endure it—if the evangelical priesthood were faithfully taught in the congregational churches, and if all its vast and precious consequences were constantly pointed out to believers, and acted upon as if they were a reality. It is my impression, grounded on careful and cautious observation, that much ignorance prevails in the minds of dissenters on this subject, the importance of which can hardly be too highly appreciated; for though the dissenting ministers must all be supposed to know the truth, yet this knowledge extends not to their congregations, or has so shadowy a substance in their minds as to produce no effect. The evil of "imposition of hands" is no trifle; for the *lay-dissenters* (grieved am I to be driven to such a phrase) who witness this ceremony, must attach great importance to it; must suppose that the ministers convey some faculty of holiness, and are a corporation divinely chartered for that purpose; or else must come to the conclusion, that their pastors are acting a part in a scene which might be very conveniently omitted. And

* By the First Book of Discipline, which was compiled by John Knox and his associates, and ratified by an act of council in 1560, the rite of ordination by the imposition of hands was laid aside as superstitious; but it was restored in the Second Book of Discipline in 1578, and is now practised as formerly in the Kirk of Scotland, where ordination is vested in the presbytery.

† See Letter vii.

See "Book of the Denominations," p. 334.

there is no question, that the effect produced on the majority, by this ceremony, is a persuasion, that the church of Christ is divided into "clerical" and "lay" members; and as it is now quite common for dissenting ministers to call themselves "clergymen," and to talk of "the laity," the erroneous opinion is current, and every day is tending to increase and confirm the error, that a dissenting minister is merely "a clergyman" of the voluntary principle, a parson of a church not established by law.

We are all expecting the day when the established church is to be disestablished: what would be the effect of such an event on the congregational churches, with their present ideas and practices relating to the gospel ministry? I can hardly doubt that it would speedily convert large multitudes of congregationalists into episcopalians, and simply because they have been so ill-instructed in the priesthood, and have been so long allowed to wander darkling on the subject, that they would hardly perceive the transition from a "reverend" congregationalist, to a "reverend" episcopalian, when once the barriers of acts of parliament and brute force had been removed. The change from dissent to the established church, would not be so easy with some individuals even now, if they had received deeper and sounder lessons in one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, and if they had not been all along misled by a foolish phraseology, and foolish customs, borrowed from the church of England, and by her inherited from Rome.

It is worthy of observation, that the modern Independents have, in this respect, gone back from a more advanced position which they formerly occupied, and that they have allowed themselves to be drifted by the current, in a retrograde direction, to a point, from which they were at one time not a little anxious to escape. In other words, the modern Independents have a greater tendency to clericism, than their predecessors. For proof of this fact, we may refer to Mr. Joshua Wilson's valuable "Historical Inquiry concerning the Principles, Opinions, and Usages, of the English Presbyterians;" where he has shewn (page 203—222) that the earlier and more rigid Independents took that view of ordination, which is now professedly held by the modern English Presbyterians, alias *Unitarians*, and that the modern Independents agree, or nearly so, with the moderate Presbyterians of King William and Queen Anne's reigns. Now the English Presbyterians of that period, were very decided in their views of ordination: they thought it indispensable, and laid a great stress on it. Among the "many things," which Baxter disliked in "the Independent way," one, and the first which he mentions, was, that "they made too light of ordination;" and in a treaty about an agreement with them, he tells us, "the greatest difference was the point of ordination." Dr. Calamy tells us, "that he did not pretend, while a *probationer*, to act with the attested authority of an ordained minister, and did not at that time baptize, as he knew he had no commission." This was the opinion of a Presbyterian. And Pierce, of Exeter, another Presbyterian, said, in his ordination sermon, that "he dared not act as minister without his ordination;" for which assertion he was much praised by the clergy, "as a learned man," and as one very near their door.

Sentiments similar to these, I have heard expressed in the most decided manner, by an eminent Independent minister; and though there are not many, according to my belief, who are of the Presbyterian doctrine on this head, yet it would be no difficult task to select sentiments, from modern ordination sermons, which would better suit the Presbyterian than the Independent platform. And all this is to be traced to that which I have already noticed, a want of caution on the part of the early Independents, who, by neglecting to state and define accurately, their views of the

ministry, its origin, limits, and functions, left the door open to sacerdotalism, which is sure to return, unless the door is hopelessly barred and bolted against it. The bitterness of the Clarendon* persecutions, and the peril in which dissenters were placed by the Jacobite scheme, in Queen Anne's days, brought the Presbyterians and Independents into close contact, and thus the Independents insensibly imitated and adopted the usages of their friends and brethren in affliction; so that the modern congregational practice may, in fact, be considered the practice of those moderate Presbyterians, whom adversity had brought down from that high place of intolerance which their predecessors occupied.

The natural effect of ordination, by the "clerical" body, with the imposition of hands, is to create characters different from those who have not thus been ordained: it is, therefore, to be expected, that such persons should carry the title of "reverend" about with them ever after; for as this is the finishing touch given to a priest in the chapels of the Vatican and Lambeth palace, it is in perfect keeping with the system, that a clerically-ordained minister of the congregational churches should copy his protoplast in this respect, not only to assert the validity of his ordination, which the prelatists deny, but to collect thereby as much *reverence* as is due to a person who, "is to-be-revered."

It is true, indeed, that only a few ministers cherish this title as a valuable appendage, whilst the majority consider it unimportant, and some utterly despise it; but *still it is retained*, and therefore it is as open to criticism, as any thing which we consider objectionable in the established church, but which the clergy declare is a matter of so little moment, as to be out of the reach of criticism to all candid minds. As, however, right and wrong in the use of speech, must be judged by the import of particular words, and as "every idle word" is strictly to be accounted for, it behoves us seriously to inquire, why preachers of the gospel assume the title of reverend? Does the word mean anything? If it means nothing, it is a solemn foolery, it is an *idle word*, and therefore should at once, and without hesitation, be renounced; but if it means something, what does it mean? The Scripture affords no authority for its usage, for there the word is only once mentioned, and in a manner to excite alarm in the mind of a pious minister.

"He sent redemption unto his people, HOLY AND REVEREND is his name."

And much as it may surprise those who have not examined the subject, there is no doubt, that the title is an ascription of that reverence to a man, which is due to God; a part of that impiety, which beginning with "reverence" for a priest, ventures to call an Archbishop "Most Reverend," and a Pope "Holy." We know that it came from the great mint of Rome; and to Rome, therefore, ought we send it back, to take its place with those indulgences, pardons, and bulls, which we long ago contemptuously carted out of the kingdom.

* The famous Lord Clarendon was the restorer of the established church after its humiliation by the puritans: he not only replaced the bishops in the house of lords, and glutted the clergy with wealth and power, but endeavoured, with all his heart and soul, to exterminate the nonconformists, by repeated blows aimed at them through some of the most cruel statutes that ever hatred and revenge dictated. When this bad man fell from his high power, it was curious to behold the bench of bishops voting for the ruin of their benefactor and restorer; but a prelate is too much of a Persian in his creed, not to worship the rising sun. The Honorable George Agar Ellis, (Lord Dover) did a service to society by publishing his "Inquiry into Lord Clarendon's Character." That little book has shown, in a manner not to be contradicted, that Lord Clarendon was as rapacious, dishonest, and thievish, as he was bigoted, vindictive, and unmerciful.

LETTER V.

THE charge of having either restored or retained the priestly order, within any section of Protestant Christianity, is met by some persons with a denial of the *possibility* of the fact; for, say they, a priest is a person consecrated to offer a sacrifice, but as all Protestants have rejected the sacrifice of the mass, and declare that the Church militant has no sacrifice to offer, therefore it is impossible that any of their ministers, whatever may be their privileges, should sustain the priestly office.

This, I am fully aware, is the argument of Rome; but as it is an argument *ad captandum* only, I deem it requisite to offer a few additional remarks, for the further elucidation of this very important subject.

As the Church of Rome presses this point with the greatest earnestness, and has the best claim to be heard on the doctrine of the priest, we will first produce her decisions on the matter in hand. In the beginning of the thirteenth century, the doctrine of transubstantiation was invented by the scholastics, and sanctioned by Pope Innocent III. who quickly perceived all the benefits likely to flow from it to the sacerdotal order. The fourth council of Lateran, A. D. 1215, under his auspices, published the following confession* or law, the first authentic recognition of a literal sacrifice. "There is one universal church of the faithful, out of which no one can possibly be saved; in which Jesus Christ is himself the priest and the sacrifice, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar, under the species of bread and wine; the substance of the bread being changed into his body, and the substance of the wine into his blood, by a divine power; in order that, to the perfection of the mystery of union, we ourselves may receive from his (substance) that which he himself received from ours. And, verily, this sacrament no one can perform, except a priest, who shall have been duly ordained according to the keys of the Church, which Jesus Christ himself gave to the apostles and to their successors."

Somewhat more than three centuries later, the Council of Trent confirmed the doctrine, or, in other words, engraved afresh the seal of the beast, by the following declaration:—"The sacrifice and the priesthood are so conjoined by the ordinance of God, that both appear together in all the law. Since, therefore, under the New Testament, the Catholic Church, by the institution of the Lord, has received the sacred visible sacrifice of the eucharist, it must be confessed, that with it there is a new visible outward priesthood, to which the old has been translated. Now holy writ shews, and the tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught, that the priesthood was instituted by the same Lord, our Saviour,

* Una verò est fidelium universalis ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur. In qua idem ipse sacerdos et sacrificium Jesus Christus, cujus corpus et sanguis in sacramento altaris, sub speciebus panis et vini, veraciter continentur; transubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem, potestate divina; ut, ad perficiendum mysterium unitatis, accipiamus ipsi de suo, quod accepit ipse de nostro. Et hoc utique sacramentum, nemo potest conficere nisi sacerdos, qui fuerit rite ordinatus secundum claves ecclesie, quas ipse concessit apostolis et eorum successoribus, Jesus Christus.

and that to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood, was committed the power of consecrating, offering, and administering his body and blood, and also of remitting and retaining sins," Sess. xxiii. 1. And to this preface, the following canon is appended:—"If any one shall say, that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood, or that there is no power in it of consecrating and offering the very body and blood of the Lord, and of remitting and retaining sins, but only an office and the bare ministry of preaching the gospel, or that those who do not preach the gospel, are not priests, let him be *anathema*." And on the subject of sacrifice this is their decree:—"And since in this divine sacrifice, which is performed in the mass, there is contained and sacrificed without the shedding of his blood, that self-same Christ, who once offered himself up, by the shedding of his blood, on the altar of the cross, the holy council teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory. And through this sacrifice it is granted, that if with a true heart and right faith, with fear and reverence, we come to God, contrite and penitent, we shall obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need: since the Lord, pacified by this oblation, in granting grace and the gift of penitence, remits crimes and sins even if they be very great: for it is one and the same sacrifice, and it is the same person, who makes the offering through the ministry of the priests, that offered himself up on the cross; there being no difference, except in the manner of making the offering."

These extracts are requisite to give a clear view of the papal doctrine, which, of course, must take the lead of all other theories and propositions on the subject, wherever there is an inclination to place the evangelical ministry on a foundation not authorized by the scriptures. In obedience to the tridentine decrees, it is, of course, the unanimous voice of all the papacy, that where there is no sacrifice there is no priest; and, therefore, the Roman Catholics deny that any priesthood exists, even in the splendid prelate of England; for all the bishops and priests of the Anglican Church, are, in the papal theology, held to be heretics, who amuse themselves with functions that have no sanctity, and exercise a pretended office, which has neither validity, meaning, nor efficacy.

If, however, it is to be taken for granted, that "a priest" means only a person that offers a sacrifice, there must be an end of the question; but certainly, we are not bound to this restricted and exclusive interpretation of the term, either by ecclesiastical or classical authority.

Here, however, my subject does not call upon me to inquire into the variations of the *classical* meaning of the word; with the *ecclesiastical* sense only am I concerned; and I think it may be proved that, for a long period in Church history, the priest was considered a person who might approach near to God with a spiritual offering, with the offering of thanksgiving or prayer; and that the popish idea of a literal sacrifice, necessarily attached to the priestly functions, is comparatively a novelty. Thus Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, very plainly tells us, that all believers who communicate at the eucharistic table, are true priests; "We, all of us," says he, "who as one man believe in God the creator of all things, through the name of his only begotten son, and have put off our filthy garments, that is, our sins, and are inflamed with the word of his calling, are the true and priestly race of God—*αρχιερατικον και αληθινον γενος εσμεν του Θεου*—even as God himself testifies when he says, that in every place among the gentiles, acceptable and pure sacrifices are offered up: but God does not receive sacrifices from any but his priests; wherefore God beforehand declares, that all those who, through his name,

offer those sacrifices which Jesus Christ commanded to be offered by Christians in every part of the world, in the sacrament of bread and wine, are acceptable to him; and I do indeed affirm, that prayers and thanksgivings, which are offered up by worthy persons, are the only offerings that are perfect and acceptable to God; for these alone the Christians have learned to offer, even in the remembrance of their food both wet and dry, in which there is a commemoration of the sufferings which the Son of God endured for their sakes." Justin Martyr, in this memorable passage, proves the opinion and practice of the early Christians, to be widely different indeed from the views entertained by the Council of Trent; but he also shews, that in ecclesiastical language, a priest is not, of necessity, one who performs a sacrifice, but rather one who stands in that relation of nearness to God, that he is able to offer up that which God will accept, whether it be by prayer interpellatory or eucharistic.

Tertullian may be our next and last authority. In his treatise *De exhortatione castitatis*, he argues from the laws of wedlock enjoined on the Levitical priesthood, that it must be incumbent, *a fortiori*, on the Christian clergy, to follow out the sanctity of such a law; and then, for the confirmation of his subject, but which it is not to our purpose here to quote, he argues that the laity are also priests, and that a layman may both make offerings and baptize;* offerings, in this passage, meaning apparently the offerings of prayer; and in another passage (*adversus Judæos*) he shews the Jews, that God requires spiritual, not earthly sacrifices, and that those spiritual sacrifices are praise, and the acceptable offering is a contrite heart; "sic itaque sacrificia spiritualia laudis designantur, et cor contribulatum acceptabile sacrificium Deo demonstratur." In this passage, which is altogether an excellent one, but too long to quote, he fully presses the true evangelical priesthood of Christ; urges, that it has put an end to all sacrifices except prayer and praise, which all Christians in all places can offer up acceptably to God, through Jesus Christ, the priest of the eternal sacrifices; "sacrificiorum æternorum antistes;" and so, in his *Apologeticum*, he says of the Christian, that he offers up a nobler and more valuable sacrifice than was ordered in the law, a prayer proceeding from the Holy Spirit, from an innocent soul, from flesh undefiled; "offert optimam et majorem hostiam quam ipse mandavit, orationem de carne pudicâ, de animâ innocenti, de spiritu sancto profectam;" and again, in the treatise *ad Scapulam*; "we sacrifice," says he, "with pure prayer in the way that God has enjoined; sacrificamus purâ prece quomodo Deus

* "Sed dices: ergo cæteris licet quos excipit; vani erimus, si putaverimus quod sacerdotibus non liceat laicis licere. Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus? Scriptum est, reges quoque nos et sacerdotes Deo et Patri suo fecit. Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit, ecclesiæ auctoritas; et honor per ordinis consensum sanctificatus adeo, ubi ecclesiastici ordinis non est concessus; et offers et tinguis et sacerdos es tibi solus. Sed ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici. Unusquisque enim suâ fide vivit, nec est personarum acceptio apud Deum; quoniam non auditores legis justificaverit a Deo, sed factores, secundum quod et dicit apostolus. Igitur si habes jus sacerdotis, in temetipso, ubi necesse est, habes oportet etiam disciplinam sacerdotis, ubi necesse sit habere jus sacerdotis."

There is a question as to the meaning of *offerre* in this passage; whether it is to be understood of prayer or the sacrament of the altar. Rhenanus and Pamelius interpret it of the sacrifice of the mass, but Le Prieur understands it to refer to prayer. If it is the offering of the sacrament, it gives still greater force to Tertullian's views of the priestly character of all believers. In another passage, *de virginibus velandis*, I find the word used for a similar purpose; "non permittitur mulieri in ecclesiâ loqui, sed nec docere, nec tinguere, nec offerre, nec ullius virilis muneris, nedum sacerdotalis officii, sortem sibi vindicare."

præcept; for God, the builder of the universe, does not want the blood or the frankincense of any one; such things are the food of Dæmons.*"

Here, then, it is apparent, that the early writers of the Church entertained an idea of a priest without a sacrifice, and that they considered all Christians capable of assuming the sacerdotal office, because to that office there was appended no other sacrifice than the prayer and praise of faith. This was the primitive, and this the true evangelical theory; nevertheless, by the continually increasing respect paid to the ministerial office of the preachers and teachers, the theory was gradually adopted, that the ministers could offer these spiritual sacrifices most worthily, and then, as an improvement on the theory, that none but the ministers enjoyed or might exercise the privilege, and that none but they might officiate in the spiritual worship. I know not that any ecclesiastical writer who followed Tertullian in order of time, advanced the sentiment that the laity were priests, and might exercise all the sacerdotal functions known and allowed in the gospel. His testimony is the last voice of the evangelical witnesses; and even his testimony is, in other places, vitiated by the new views of the priesthood, which were making progress at the time he wrote. All the Fathers have been of the clerical order; and it has been in pursuance of their supposed clerical duties, and in accordance with their avowed clerical tastes and propensities, to exalt their own authority as much as possible.

Tertullian wrote about the year 200 after Christ; and two centuries later, Chrysostom published his pernicious and thoroughly anti-christian treatise on 'the priesthood,' which is to this day, the text book of the Papal and Puseyite clergy: for the Papal clergy are fully satisfied with the exclusive privileges and dignities, which he has attributed to the sacerdotal caste, and find also in his tropical language, expressions which may with a plausible interpretation be applied to transubstantiation; and which equally satisfy the Oxford clergy, as proving all that can be desired for consubstantiation, at least, in its highest, darkest, and most mysterious meaning. Still, however, for many centuries after the days of Chrysostom, the Church had Priests without a sacrifice: the offerings of the Church indeed were manifold, and manifold were the operations assigned to the clergy, but still not the *sacrifice*, in the literal sense of the word; such as the Church of Rome now insists on as the inalienable appendage of the priestly office. Nevertheless, *without the sacrifice*, there was a sacerdotal caste before the mass came in; for strange indeed it would be to affirm, that before the modern dogma of transubstantiation there were no priests in Christendom! What! no priests from the days of Chrysostom to the pontificate of Innocent III. and the fourth council of Lateran? Alas! in all that period of darkness, the priesthood of the Lord our righteousness had been utterly abolished upon earth; his body the Church, the whole body of believers, anointed by divine grace into the royal priesthood, had been stripped of all their privileges, and the spiritual priesthood and their spiritual offerings set aside; and the "beggary elements" of Judaism, though crushed with the eternal curse of God, had been picked out of the ruins of Jerusalem, and carefully put together again, to form that Levitical monster, whose body is at Rome and whose shadow darkens all the soil of England.

* And so, Minucius Felix; "Litabilis hostia bonus animus, et pura mens, et sincera sententia; hæc nostra sacrificia, hæc Dei sacra sunt."

All these passages are unanswerable confutations of the popish history of the mass: writers who believed in the sacrifice of the altar, could not use such expressions. No papist could utter such sentiments as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Minucius Felix, without renouncing his creed.

† Gal. iii. 10 and i. 8-9.

Let us not therefore perplex our imaginations with the sacrifice ; but let us inquire what, to all substantial purposes, *the priest* is. He that in the flesh, stands nearer to God in the sanctuary than his brethren in the flesh, and can do for them in the way of offering, impetration, intercession, or deprecation, any thing that they can not do themselves ; he that, by virtue of his office, may perform some act of holiness, which his brethren in Christ may not perform, is, to all intents and purposes, a priest : this is that monster, whose body is at Rome, and whose shadow darkens all the soil of England.

Now, to make this clear, we must shew, 1st. that believers have a close access to God ; 2nd. in the Christian body there is no gradation in the privilege of proximity, so that one portion of believers may approach nearer to God than their brethren. If the first point can be proved, then it will be established that the faithful are priests, because a close access to God is the whole object of a priesthood : the sacerdotal office has no other design, than, by an allowed proximity to the Divinity, to exercise functions and enjoy privileges of communion, in which others may not participate.

All this is lucidly displayed and taught in the law. The Almighty condescended to name the mercy-seat as the throne of royalty, on which he would hold communion with the priest, acting as representative of the people. There were three divisions for the worship of the Jews ; the most holy place with the mercy-seat, divided from the holy place by a veil ; the holy place, containing the altar of incense and the table of shew-bread and the seven-branched candlestick ; the court for the sacrifices, where the great altar stood, and where the offerings were burnt. None but a priest might enter the holy place ; none but the high priest the most holy. 'Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold, and thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two Cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.' Ex. xxv. 27. This is not to be taken merely as a ceremonial ordinance of the law, but as a most lively type of the future gospel ; for the high priest went not into the holy place, merely to accomplish a rite, but it was to reap the benefit of a promise ; 'I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat ;' these are the words to be noticed again presently. And it is to be observed that this communion was a secret, a mystery, covered up from the gaze, even of the priests, by a veil, for the formation of which there was a particular direction : 'thou shalt make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet and fine-twined linen, and thou shalt hang it up that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil, the ark of the testimony ; and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.' (Ex. xxvi. 31.) And not only was this a mystery, but so difficult was the approach to God, and so great and solemn were the preparations for it, that the high priest was threatened with death, if he entered within the veil but at the prescribed times : 'the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place, within the veil before the mercy-seat, that he die not.' Lev. xvi. 2. And when he *was* allowed to enter, it was with solemn preface of sacrifice, and washing of the body, and indument of the pontifical attire : and there was a menace of death, hanging over the heads of all the sacerdotal body, if they should presume to neglect any of these ordinances. Death was the threatened punishment to Aaron and his sons, should they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, without their proper robes and ornaments, Ex. xxviii. 43 ; and they

were to be smitten with death, if they neglected to wash their hands and feet in the laver of brass, Ex. xxx. 20. The approach to God was difficult, awful, and dangerous, and never could be accomplished but by the shedding of blood, and the intercession of the priest, with a strict attention to all the rules of purification. Any person who should presume to interfere in the priestly functions, incurred the sentence of death: 'thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priests' office for everything of the altar, and within the veil, and ye shall serve: I have given your priests' office unto you as a service of gift, and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.' Num. xviii. 7.

And seeing that the congregation might not themselves draw nigh to the mercy-seat, or come into the presence of God, the high priest, as representative worshipper of them all, bore upon his breastplate the names of the twelve tribes, as an assurance, that in his functions of mediator, he carried with him into the holiest place, a memorial of all the people of God. Ex. xxviii. 29. Here the distance of the people, and the nearness of the priest, are fully expressed. We will take one more instance; it is in the consecration and unction of the priests under the law, by which they were set apart from the people, for the service of God; 'thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priests' office; and thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, this shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations; *upon man's flesh shall it not be poured*, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy and shall be holy unto you.' Ex. xxx. 30. This is a command that placed a perpetual barrier in the sanctuary, beyond which the people under the law never could pass; none but the descendants of Aaron and Levi, could ever receive the unction of the sacerdotal inauguration; they it was who alone could be anointed for the holy place; all the rest of Israel were, in this respect, classed amongst the great mass of mankind: 'on man's flesh it shall not be poured.' They could not come near to God, neither could any consecration impart to them the privilege. The priest alone was to be anointed into that office, which allowed those who sustained it, to approach the mercy-seat, the cloud-encircled throne of the celestial King of Israel.

But all this is entirely abolished and swept away in the gospel. When the Lord, our justification, died on the cross, all was finished; and the veil of the temple, the veil that had curtained off the holy place from the gaze and approach of Israel, was rent in twain, and the new ordinance of the evangelical priesthood was then brought forth from the eternal counsels of God. Christ then became the great High Priest of the Almighty; and every believer, who is united to him in a living faith, and has been consecrated by the unction of the Holy Ghost, of which a living faith is the proof, does, by virtue of that union, obtain all the privileges of the priesthood, and can enter into the holiest of all, to come quite near to God, in the full, free, and immutable functions of the spiritual sanctuary.

Having then seen the distance of the people under the law, let us see their nearness under the gospel. Our Lord, in many and great promises, declared, that the faithful should have a close access to and communion with God. 'In that day,' said he, 'ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you; he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' The veil of the temple is

indeed here torn down; the doors of the heavenly sanctuary are thrown wide open; and all those who love Christ, who believe in him, and keep his words, not only come occasionally to meet the Holy One of Israel, but he comes to meet them, and Christ and God "take up their abode with them."

But that access, which was assigned the Levitical order, for purposes of worship and prayer in the Temple, the evangelical priests far more fully enjoy; "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you; hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full: at that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I have come forth from God: verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Who shall compare the import of these invaluable promises, with any of the Levitical prerogatives? Who shall even place them in *juxta-position*, except to shew the immense disproportion between the meridian splendour of the spiritual, and the dim light of the legal ministration? "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." (2 Cor. iii. 8.) The righteousness which is of God, the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, has opened a "new and living way," for all who are righteous through his faith, to go direct to God: not merely to the court of the people; or farther, to the court of the priests; or farther still, to the holy place; but into the holiest of all, as members of the body of the great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession there for us. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," said the Redeemer; "no man cometh to the Father but by me:" but they, who are in union with the great High Priest, go where he goes, to the throne of grace, and enjoy the access of the ministry of righteousness: "therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand:" and, "in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

Hence, the place of the evangelical priest is in the holiest of all, within the new temple of righteousness; and into it does the Spirit of God invite and exhort all the brethren of the faith to enter confidently; "having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having an High Priest over the house of God, *let us draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith." (Heb. x. 19.) Believers pass through the veil, and go up to the very mercy-seat, not merely on the great day of expiation, but, all the year round, they hold communion with the God and Father of their Lord Jesus Christ; and, anointed with the consecrating oil of the Holy Spirit, and attired in the splendid robe of imputed righteousness, reap all the benefits of sacerdotal prerogatives and filial communications.

But if it were requisite to say more of the *nearness* of believers to God, we might add much on that surpassing mystery of our faith, the union of the brethren with Christ their Lord; that union, to elucidate which, he is represented as the head, and they the body; he the vine, and they the branches; he the foundation-stone of life, they the living stones growing up in him into a spiritual house; he the husband, and they the wife;

he called the Lord our Righteousness, and they, as the wife, bearing the same name (Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 16); and to confirm which, we are assured, that the members of the church "have put on Christ," are "in him that is true," and "Christ in them," that they are "accepted in the beloved," and "chosen in him before the foundation of the world," and "sanctified in him," and "preserved and called in him," and "baptized into him," that their "life is hid in him," that their "death is in him," that they "sit in heavenly places in him," that they are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ," that they "are part of his body, flesh, and bones," that being joined to him they "are one spirit," that they "are joint heirs with him," and shall receive all things freely from God their common Father, and at last reign with him in life, as kings and priests, and sit down with him on his throne!

All this then being established, the only question that remains to be answered is this. Are there distinctions of union and communion in the new temple? Impossible! nothing of this sort is intimated in the whole canon of the New Testament. We are not told that Christ's body is partitioned; and that one member may be near the throne of grace, and another still nearer, and another nearer still. The throne of grace is equally open to *all* the priests of the gospel; their communion with Jehovah Jesus places them all, without distinction, in the same position, in the same state of privilege, in the same degree of access. The spiritual altar of the gospel sanctuary (Heb. xiii. 10.) is not like that vehicle of superstition, an altar in a cathedral, raised on several steps and enclosed with exclusive rails; but it is a table of a family circle, where all that meet to offer up spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, are one in Christ their common head, levelled down to an absolute equality of free grace union. This is the argument of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, that from consideration of the perfect oneness of the whole body, all believers should comport themselves to one another with "all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace:" and why? "because there is one body, one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." And the test of a flourishing church is the perfect unity of the whole body, not marred and disfigured with distinctions, orders, differences, precedences, separations, partitions, but each member, in its proper place, administering to the health and supporting the life of the whole body; or as it is expressed in the admirable words of Paul, in the same chapter, "growing up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

And now, to a very brief application of these remarks. It may be deduced from all that has been said, that if any ecclesiastical institution or arrangement separates, or has a tendency to separate, the body of believers into two distinct classes, and to assign to one class privilege or character, which the other may not claim, then is the design of the gospel not answered, nor are some of its most important truths practically recognized. To point out the many particulars, in which the separation of believers (if such they can be called) is effected in the Church of England, would be superfluous; for that Church is avowedly governed by a priesthood, and "the clergy" and "the laity" are distinguished by the broadest

possible line of demarcation. The whole prayer book acknowledges the priest in all its ritual, by rubrics and sentiments borrowed from the papacy. Amongst the Congregational Dissenters, all this is softened and modified; and indeed, as to any acknowledged canon of church government, the priest has altogether disappeared from their churches; but still, as the dissenting minister is a spiritual representative for the people in their order of worship, and sustains the whole part himself, and as the people are as inactive as if they existed not, we must confess, that according to those views which I have endeavoured to state in this letter, he is to all substantial purposes, their priest. The Dissenting Minister, on the Lord's day—on that day alone on which all the brethren *can* meet together—is the sole person that visibly accomplishes the worship of God: no one but he, speaks; no one but he, prays; and this is invariably the case all the year round. If therefore all the brethren have indeed entered into the holiest of all, they none of them may open their mouths there; but have chosen one, to do that for the whole church, which they dare not, or cannot, or will not, do for themselves. If the Congregational Dissenters sincerely wished to establish such a mode of proceeding in their churches, as we may gather from the scriptures was the practice in the first æra, and of which the general bearing is evident enough, though some of the particulars may still be uncertain, they would forthwith allow at least a plurality of ministers, and indeed concede a liberty of ministry to all those who are “taught by the Lord;” and it would be open to all the brethren, to impart according to their gift and light, such exhortation, admonition, or doctrine, as they might judge to be for edification to the Church. But it is not so; and any expostulation with them regarding the existing state of things, is received as an act of hostility, and resented as a mischievous attempt to create disorder and confusion, and to introduce a controversy of discord in a quiet house. The truth, nevertheless, must be plainly stated, that the established order of worship in the dissenting churches is not scriptural; a plurality of ministers is not there tolerated; the brethren, who may have the gift, are neither desired nor allowed to address the Church; the whole task of instruction is consigned to one individual, regularly educated and salaried for the work, and no attempt is made to encourage the expression of that spiritual erudition, which assuredly is possessed by many a pious dissenter, who, through the instructions of divine grace, has hived up a store of profitable doctrine and wholesome experience, but which he carries with him to the grave, locked and sealed up in his own bosom, unknown and unappreciated by his brethren, because it has been the traditional etiquette of the sect, that the lips of one priest alone should “keep knowledge,” and that “the people should seek the law at his mouth.”

This letter shall be closed with an extract from the canonical law of the Roman Catholic Church, the Decretals of Gregory; because, in my judgment, it is a very curious specimen of the unintentional accordance of sentiment in pope, protestant prelate, and *other clergymen*. The words are those of that great dragon of antichrist, Innocent III. *De Hæreticis, cum ex injuncto*, lib. v. tit. vii. c. 12. “Although the wish of understanding the scriptures, and of exhorting according to them, is not to be reprehended but rather commendable; it nevertheless appears, that in attempting this, some laymen are deservedly to be blamed, because they hold secret meetings, usurp to themselves the office of preaching Christ, elude the unsuspecting simplicity of the priests, and avoid intercourse with those who do not adhere to such practices. But God, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, hates to such a degree the works

of darkness, that when he was sending into the world his Apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, he openly admonished them, 'that which I say to you in darkness, declare ye in the light, and that which ye hear in the ear, publish on the house tops;' by this manifestly indicating, that the preaching of the gospel ought not to be in secret conventicles according to the practice of heretics, but publicly in the church according to the custom of the catholics. For as there are many members of the body, but all have not the same duty, so there are many orders in the church, but all have not the same office; for the Lord sent some Apostles, others prophets, others teachers. Now since the order of teachers is chief in the church, not every one without distinction ought to usurp the office of preaching; for according to the Apostle, how shall they preach unless they be sent? and truth itself commanded the Apostles to pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send labourers into his harvest. But if any one should cunningly suggest, that such are sent invisibly by God, although they are not sent visibly by men, since the mission which cannot be seen is much more worthy than that which is outward or visible, to this we may reasonably reply, that since this interior mission is hidden, it is not sufficient for any one to assert that he is sent of God, because any heretic might assert as much."

LETTER VI.

WHEN one person is exalted, it follows of necessity, that others must be depressed ; and, as the exaltation of a minister is with reference to spiritual matters, it follows also, that the depression of those around him is a spiritual depression. And thus it is in some dissenting churches at present. The people, who constitute the church, "look up to their pastor" with a spirit of obedience and expectancy, which, though, in particular cases, created by a defective system, it may be advantageous, is, on the whole, injurious ; inasmuch as it abases the privileges of the church, and is little favourable to the full growth of believers set before them in the gospel, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," which should be the aim of all those who desire to be lively portions of the living temple.

I have said that a deficient system has created those cases, in which the actual view of the ministerial office is advantageous ; but I must refer you to the following letters for a full development of my meaning. Taking matters, however, as we now find them, and granting it to be right, and according to Scripture, that one minister should rule alone in a church ; that he should be considered a clergyman, and the members of the church the laity ; that he should be a learned person, with no inconsiderable store of general information and critical knowledge ; that he should be well-versed in the endless collisions and contradictions of the exegetical and doctrinal commentators ; that he should be a man of talent, whose exclusive duty it is to preach to and pray for a mute and expecting people, whose perpetual duty to him is to be silent, as it is his to be to them their constant teacher and liturgist ; and then, of course, it must be right for the members of churches, to follow and obey with all docility, the ecclesiastical monarch of their society, to leave all spiritual concerns in his hands, and, in one word, to make him their priest, "to accomplish the service of God." But if it should turn out that every one of these postulates is a fallacy, then the deduction will be inevitable, that the present relation of pastor and people to each other is unsound, and that it is either something more or something less than can be established by an appeal to Scripture.

It is one thing occasionally in a sermon to place the evangelical priesthood in a true light, and another to act as if we believed it to be true ; for unless the practical consequences of the doctrine are allowed their full force in the churches, it is in vain to attempt a clear exposition of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews. If a priesthood is still left upon earth with Aaronical prerogatives, then He who hath obtained a more excellent ministry, reigns not without a rival ; nor are the old things passed away ; nor is he who sits on the throne, allowed to make "all things new" without opposition from his creatures. Some particulars, in which the priestly office is either imitated or not avoided by ministers, have been already stated ; and allowing largely that much good is done under the clerical government, both by the congregationalists and the established clergy, yet still, *it is* the clerical government, and is the surrender of the privileges of the church into the hands of an individual. Sure I am, it was not so at first ; for if the order of the primitive churches used to be that which now

is, Paul never could have used expressions such as these to the early Christians: "If ALL prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, *every one of you* hath a psalm, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying." He wished to arrange their worship in a useful and comely order, and he gave his directions accordingly; but it is impossible to elicit from his rules, the most distant hint of a silent people listening to one fixed presbyter, the constant and only teacher and liturgist of the society.

But the tendency of the actual arrangement is, of necessity, to create inactivity amongst the people, when they feel that they have a spiritual delegate in whose hands are placed those large and responsible duties, which are supposed to attach to the ministerial office. Many there are, who can thus find a ready excuse for their own lack of zeal: they think their pastor carries the keys of the church, and to him, therefore, they consign their spiritual energies, as if he were a general proxy for all the people in their works of faith and labours of love. What multitudes of church members might be numbered, who take no personal interest in the operations of the church! How many there are, who content themselves with the external acts of worship and a formal attendance on ordinances, leaving all the rest to the minister, or to any one that choseth to undertake that, which they will not touch with one of their little fingers. But with these notions, there are other evils also; for to this source may be traced frequent discontent amongst the members, and bitter sorrow to many a worthy and laborious pastor. Great and numerous are the duties expected of a minister, and large are the ideas entertained of the limits of his office; and yet, if he does not fill up the complement of all the impossible toil imposed upon him, he too often falls into discredit with his people, for not doing that which cannot be done.

The study and preparation expected for the pulpit; the pastoral visits; the attention to the particular spiritual cases of individuals; the schools; the prayer-meetings; the church meetings; the public meetings, and all the rest of the complicated machinery of operative religion, impose a weight and multiplicity of cares on the shoulders of some pastors, which none but Atlantean shoulders could sustain; and yet if the minister neglects any part of these enormous duties, which a mistaken theory has apportioned to him, he is in jeopardy of forfeiting the esteem of some of his flock, as he too often discovers, to his no small discomfort and sorrow. To use a curious expression of a deep thinker, "he is a system and not a man;" circumstances have given him a character, which rightly belongs to a society and not to an individual; but neither he nor the church understands the difficulty of the case, the hidden cause of the difficulty, nor its only possible remedy. The theory of the parish-priest perplexes the views and confuses the judgments both of pastor and people, and as each party argues on an erroneous axiom, it is no wonder that the deduction of each should be faulty. The people too often think their pastor careless and inattentive; the pastor not unfrequently considers his people unjust and unreasonable.

LETTER VII.

I FEEL called upon by my subject, not to omit a parallel view of the clergy of the established church, in their management of the sacerdotal functions.

It is not, however, necessary to dwell long on this head ; for the church of England is so manifestly and undeniably imbued with the sacerdotal heresy, that to animadvert on the pretensions of the Anglican clergy is, in fact, to animadvert on the popish priesthood. I do not at all desire, in these letters, to enter into controversy with the English church, except when the subject demands it. I am inquiring into the operations of *the church of Christ*, as now seen on the earth ; and as many of the evangelical clergy, and many of their disciples, have every claim to be ranked amongst pious christians, it would be a strange omission not to notice their opinions and practices, in those points wherein they have afforded a pattern to the dissenters. Far be it from me, however, in this place, to turn aside from the evangelical church-people to the great herd of the godless, whether lay or clerical, who, by the vicious union of the church and state, are numbered in the established church. I have, in other publications, expressed my opinions on the vast and awful scandals of the church of England, and have, I trust, opened the eyes of thousands and tens of thousands to understand the merits of that question, which now is a national controversy, and which, I am persuaded, will only be terminated by the *secular* death of the dominant sect. But, here, I am concerned only with those, who evangelically can be called christians ; christians, not according to the rubric and the statute book, but by scripture rule ; and of such, in the church of England, and in spite of the church of England, it is cause of deep regret to behold their pious ministers occupying a position, which they dare not and cannot defend by christian principles. The evangelical clergy are too well instructed in the institutes of the gospel, and understand too well the doctrine of the Head of the church (alas ! not the only head of *their* church) not to comprehend the popish character and pretensions of the office they hold. They are priests ; priests in the gospel sense of the canon law ; priests by inheritance from the papacy ; priests to the full contentment of all those dark-minded clergymen, who have thrust their eyes into the blinders of the "apostolical succession." This is so well understood by the better clergy, that they feel it a very inconvenient truth, and one that they would fain be rid of, if they could. Some of them boldly plunge their memories into the waters of Lethe, and declare that they are not priests ; "only preachers of the gospel, and ministers of christian congregations : " but, unfortunately, their creed on this subject is registered against them, with an authenticity that defies and confutes the dictates of their best principles. The gospel tells them they are not priests ; but the prayer book, their ordination, their oaths, their subscriptions, the canons of their church, and the whole frame of the episcopal machinery, prove that they are : and this is one of those bitter torments of the conscience, which has caused many a clergyman, either to escape from his bondage by an open nonconformity, or to pass through life with a painful burden of secret sorrow.

The words pronounced at the ordination of a clergyman for priestly orders are insurmountable: "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: whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." It is needless to expatiate on this formulary, for it requires no comment, and is as clear in papal doctrine as it is possible to make it, and is a natural foundation for the following corollary—the well known absolution of a dying man, by a clergyman, according to the Prayer Book—"By the authority of Jesus Christ, committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

When Charles II. was dying, his brother James introduced father Huddleston, for the purpose of administering extreme unction to the royal deceiver, and used these words on that memorable occasion: "Sir, this worthy man once saved your life (in the battle of Worcester) *he now comes to save your soul.*"* And James said right, according to his creed, and that of the Prayer Book; for if a priest can forgive sins, he can save a soul. He is none other than a Saviour; he has the attributes of Christ himself, who is exalted as a Prince in Israel to give repentance and remission of sins; "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;" "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses."

Now, though the evangelical clergy endeavour to forget their yoke, or excuse themselves by protesting, that they never use the prescribed form of absolution, and never consider themselves as priests in any sense, yet, what are all these excuses but the vain efforts of men reduced to inextricable difficulties? Is it not pitiable to hear pious ministers of the gospel defending their conduct, by subterfuges which cannot persuade any one of their sincerity? Is not this an awful spectacle to behold in the church of Christ? *We*, however, who stand by as spectators, do not forget that declaration, which every beneficed clergyman has openly read before his congregation: "I, A. B., do here declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained and prescribed in and by the book, intituled *The Book of Common Prayer and administration of the sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the church, according to the use of the church of England, together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in churches, and the form or manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons.*"

What evangelical clergyman shall, after having made this declaration, dare to say that he is not a priest in the full sense of the word, and that he is not compelled to carry about with him the pretended prerogative of absolution, impious in a Roman Catholic priest, but ridiculous as well as impious in a Protestant minister?

But it is unnecessary to press these considerations: the pressure is great enough already, where cupidity or ambition have not seared the conscience; and where they have, it is in vain to address the language of expostulation or reproof. Here, then, we need only pause awhile, to bestow the passing tribute of a sigh on an enslaved portion of the church of Christ: for when we reflect on the zeal and piety of many of the evangelical clergy, and the strong hold they possess on the affections of their people; when we observe their strenuous efforts to save the souls of men; when we listen to their moving appeals to *the conscience*, and their solemn warnings to a heedless generation, of the constant scrutiny of that

* Lingard xiii. 377.

all-seeing eye which examines the very reins and the heart ; and then think of their shameful connexion with a shameful and secular establishment, all of whose offences they virtually uphold by acting under its discipline, binding themselves with its declarations and subscriptions, and obeying its secular and world-begotten bishops with real or simulated alacrity ; how can we help acknowledging, that they are acting a part which cannot bear examination by the plain truth of the gospel, and which must be condemned, because it is not, and cannot be, a sin of ignorance ?

And, truly, but for these considerations, what can appear more delightful than a country village, under the pastoral care of a pious and respected clergyman ? We go through the little street of cottages, feeling well assured that every one of those neat and humble mansions, will, on the next Sabbath, send forth some, if not all, of its inhabitants to the old church, to hear the gospel well and truly preached. When the sacred day arrives, and the village bells have finished their melodious invitation to prayer, we enter the venerable building ; and after a liturgy, which antiquity has rendered respectable, and good taste dignified and harmonious, we listen to a plain and affectionate discourse, in the old reformers' style, truly setting forth the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the love of Jehovah to his covenant people : the preacher is a grave divine, with well marked traces of deep piety and serious thought on his countenance ; his language is somewhat quaint and antiquated ; not by design, but by habit, and owing to a constant and affectionate acquaintance with the old school of sound divinity. We visit the cottages, and direct our conversation towards "the vicar ;" we hear nothing but expressions of respect, admiration, and gratitude. The living, trust that they are on the road to Zion, through the teaching and ministry of their honoured spiritual guide ; and they are sure that some of the dead—their dear friends and relations—are already in heaven, through a knowledge of the truth, which they first heard from his lips. But no ! *all* in the parish do not love the vicar ; there are a few vile and desperate characters, three or four poachers, two or three incurable sots, and the licentious mothers of some unhappy children born out of matrimony : these sinners hate "their pastor ;" they call him "a hypocrite," and have their lies and scurrilous tales against him. This is his greatest praise ; it is as much to be valued, in our apprehension, as the applause of all the other inhabitants ; for it proves, that they hate a righteous man because their own deeds are evil ; and because he reproves them, and is as faithful in warning sinners of judgment to come, as he is in leading on "the good and faithful servants" to expect in faith "the joy and kingdom of their Lord."

Thus, then, righteousness is flourishing in the village : the manners of the villagers are courteous and obliging ; the brawlers and gossipers are not masters of the street ; the children are not neglected ; the schools are judiciously and piously managed, and are well attended ; the pastor is the soul of every movement in favour of a moral improvement ; he suggests, cherishes, and supports all that is good, and discountenances, or at least drives into a shame-faced secrecy, all that is bad. There is an air of peace in the village ; the vicarage seems the abode of peace ; we know that a good man is in it, who rules by love amongst the people. We begin to love the old church for his sake ; we forget our stern nonconformity ; antiquity resumes its witchcraft power over our senses ; the old arched windows, the painted glass, the groined roof, the patrician monuments of knights and dames, the ivy-mantled tower, the curfew-bell, and even the vesper-owl, that sallies forth with downy wing, for his night's excursion, all have charms.

for our tranquillized meditations ; and because a good man has appeased us, we are in danger of lapsing into respect for a vicious system. But no ! we remember what the parish was before the good man came to it, and we foresee what it will be again when he shall have passed into a better country. A Dean and Chapter are the patrons of the living, or a noble politician, or an irreligious and jobbing chancellor : the next vicar is already pointed out ; either a rapacious cormorant, who has already stuffed his maw with three or four fat benefices, or the third son of the great lord of the district, a famous fox-hunter and an unerring shot. The consequences will be inevitable ; but we need not describe them, for " gross darkness will cover the people."

And this is the church of England ! and of this church " the good man" is not only a member, but a prime support, and to all the evils of the system he has made himself a party ; *he is one of those that uphold the system by accepting office under it.*

This makes us remember all the blots and blurs of the Prayer Book ; the priestcraft it inculcates, the absolution, the burial and baptismal services, the blasphemous office for King Charles the martyr, and all its other flagrant faults, which clergymen, and none so much as clergymen, have frequently and indignantly exposed. Then we proceed onwards to " the unfeigned assent and consent," and, last of all, to the bishops, the " good man's" masters, to the bishops in parliament, the bishops at court, the bishops buying-in to the funds, and heaping up their scandalous treasure !

Thus, then, our nonconformity returns ; the peaceful village loses its charms, a cloud passes over its sunshine, the vicarage is thrown into the shade, the bells lose their melody, and clang harshly into our ears, " church and state ;" and as, with a heavy heart, we take up our pilgrim's staff, to continue our journey through a woeful world, we confess that the serpent still defiles every earthly paradise, and that all on this side of the grave is " vanity, and vexation of spirit."

LETTER VIII.

It is an inevitable result of a sacerdotal institution, that the privileged persons belonging to that class should be considered *holy*, and that evidences of greater holiness should be sought for in them than in "the laity." If priests are conscientious men, they do, in consequence, adapt their conduct to the opinion entertained of their order, both because they think it a duty which they owe to God and man, and because they perceive, that the honour of their priesthood is concerned in their strict and self-denying deportment. If they are hypocrites, they pay great attention to external appearances, and in the seemly robe of pharisaical simulation, indulge the desires of the flesh with so much caution and secrecy, as to evade the criticisms of a censorious world. But if they are neither conscientious men nor hypocrites, then do they openly set the priestly office at defiance, and enter into the sinful pleasures of the day without dissimulation or attempt at concealment.

It is well known how large a share of blame and unpopularity has attached to the Anglican priests, owing to the irreverent conduct of many of their order; and how loudly the public voice has been raised, though in vain, to reprobate those clergymen who, living lives of pleasure, are to be found in the chase, the ball-room, the rout, or the theatre, to the no small vexation of their stricter brethren. The theory of the superior sanctity of priests, is the basis of most of the episcopal charges; and nothing is more common, than to hear a sober priest lauded for living "as a clergyman ought to do."

This idea, as might be expected, prevails also to a considerable extent in dissenting churches: it can be traced in the conversation and habit of thinking, both of the ministers and the people, and is conspicuous enough in some published ordination sermons. Many of the older nonconformists, and particularly of the Presbyterian school, have written most solemnly on the sanctity of the ministerial character; and none more eloquently or with greater seriousness, than the renowned Baxter, who seems to have thought that a Christian minister should aim and arrive at a degree of piety and holiness unknown to an ordinary believer, and that he ought to be a sort of incarnate Seraph, glowing with a vivid sanctity far above the inferior spirits of the church militant.

The following passage from Robert Hall, as conveying the sentiments of a modern divine of high repute, may serve for a specimen of the sort of language, which ministers indulge in when expatiating on the sanctity of their office and character: "Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue, with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master; and give to our conduct the character of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. 'Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world,' said our Saviour to his disciples, *whom he was about to send forth in the*

*character of public teachers.** As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed, we cannot make a wrong step, without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings, and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a Christian minister is little less than a public triumph over the religion he inculcates; and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion his efforts to the advantages resulting from the success, we must be aware, how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function."

This passage is, indeed, when compared with others of a kindred spirit, but a moderate exhibition of the doctrine I refer to, and for its moderation I have selected it; but it is sufficient for my purpose, to shew the prevailing tendency towards an undue exaltation of the ministerial office. The historical origin of this doctrine has been already examined; it is by emanation and imitation from the church of England; though it must be almost superfluous to examine its soundness, for if it were true, that ministers ought to be *more* holy than other believers, then it would follow, not only that other believers may be less holy than ministers, but that there must be a brighter crown of glory reserved for the ministerial order, seeing that the promise of the autopsy is to holiness (Heb. xiii. 14.). The next step from this theory would be, to covet the priestly office for the purpose of going to heaven, and so

"dying, put on the weeds of Dominic,
Or in Franciscan, hope to pass disguised."

In the churches of Rome and England, they do indeed talk of their "holy orders;" but it is a singular fact, that while there is not a word about holy orders in the New Testament, and the epithet holy is but once or twice employed to designate the Apostles themselves, it is applied as the common designation of the brethren of the church. They are "*holy* brethren;" *holy* brethren who are "partakers of the heavenly calling;" who are "saved and called with a *holy* calling;" who are "chosen that they should be *holy* and without blame;" who are exhorted in prayer "to lift up *holy* hands, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable to the Lord;" whose bodies are holy because they are the temple of God; who are "a holy priesthood."†

These scriptural truths ought seriously to be remembered, not only for the confutation of all dogmas tinged with papal ideas, but to prevent the possibility of Christians entertaining the mistaken notion, that there are two grades of holiness in the church, and that ministers are on a spiritual eminence above their brethren, the household of faith. Some Christians, members of churches, from which one would have hoped all such popish notions had been utterly banished, are in this error, and seem to think that they may do with impunity what a minister might not, or that an act of "innocent" mirth or relaxation on their part, would be a grievous indecorum in their pastor! It is not surprising to me that such an error prevails, for all that I have endeavoured to detect in the course of these

* This certainly does not appear from Scripture: the passage referred to (Matt. v. 13, 14.) is addressed to the disciples on the Mount, probably a large multitude of hearers, certainly not a convocation of ministers only. The clause of this advice concludes with a sentence manifestly for all believers, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

† Stratten's Book of the Priesthood, pp. 279-280.

letters, tends directly to establish it; and, certainly, it could not be, that so many guide-posts to sacerdotalism, should fail to bring the feet of some wanderers to the gates of the city which sitteth on seven hills. But, indeed, this error not only may be made an excuse for two grades of holiness, but has a tendency to keep in the back-ground, the glory of Christ in collecting all believers into his kingdom, as they are in union with Him, and as by his righteousness they are made the righteous nation. We know, that because the Son of God did love righteousness and hate iniquity, therefore God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above his fellows; that He is anointed High Priest of the church; that all the unction of the Holy Ghost is first on Him, and then from Him descends to his people, "the skirts of his garments." That He is the mighty Aaron, on the holy hill of Zion, and that all who are written in his book of life, are one with Him, and are holy Levites, are "kings and priests unto God and their Father." The church is, by this union, "the fair and spotless bride," because there is no beauty in the moral world to be compared with the splendour of holiness, which she has through Christ her Head. She shall be called "the Lord our righteousness." This is the great mystery, which no wit of man could possibly invent; it came from the throne of the Almighty God of Israel; God the Holy Ghost has taught it, and God the Son died, and revived, and rose again, to bestow it on his church, as the transcendent mystery of his divine redemption.

Let us cherish this doctrine! Nothing more precious than this will ever come down from heaven again, till the Lord himself shall appear in majesty at the restitution of all things. Let us tell believers that they are holy in Christ; that it is their privilege, their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification and redemption, to cleave to Him, and to be in Him: that they are to lift up their eyes to Him as their life, their pattern, their all; and then, as eyes, dazzled with looking at the sun, do, when they turn to behold this opaque earth, see nothing but confusion and darkness, so will they, with this gaze at the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, be able to see nothing in their poor sinful fellow-creatures, that is not dark, mean, and blurred, excepting where they, too, are shining with the reflected blaze of the Sovereign Sun, and are, by beholding Him, transforming from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.

"And this honour have ALL HIS SAINTS."

LETTER IX.

LEARNING has ever been considered a proper appendage of a priesthood ; it has been its decoration from the earliest times of which we have any record. Beyond the Indus, the Brahminical caste are supposed to have been the schoolmasters of their ancient nation, and the nurses of its civilization, many centuries before the brilliant period of Grecian history. In the creed of that wonderful priesthood, existing with great power, even in these days, it is taught that the Brahminical order came forth from the mouth of Brahm, or the Supreme Being, and that it is therefore their privilege and duty to be the teachers of the rest of mankind, who were produced from the inferior parts of Brahm's great body. The priests of India are "the mouth of God" to the people ; and with this prerogative, they claim a right of teaching mankind all the doctrine of the soul and its salvation, the purification and lustration which it can accomplish by piacular rites and atoning penances, the mysteries of the stars and of the heavens, the mysteries of the earth, and all the secrets of nature, which they disguise with furious fables, and pervert with enormous lies.

The priests of Egypt, and of old Ethiopia, Egypt's mother land, were renowned for their learning ; their theology was, indeed, roguery, and their learning a good deal mixed with fraud ; but still they were men of erudition and science : and even amongst the Druids, it is supposed that there was hived no inconsiderable store of knowledge, as the unfailing alimant of priestly authority over an ignorant and uninstructed people.

The sacerdotal order has long ago discovered, that knowledge is power, and has therefore been anxious not only to work this lever of dominion with its own hands, but to prevent any others from touching it. In short, wherever we turn our eyes, from occidental Mexico to "utmost Indian isle Taprobane," from the sage Aztecs to the primitive Buddhists of the Eastern Archipelago, we shall ever find, that priests have claimed as exclusive a right to the keys of knowledge as to the keys of the church. The Romish clergy, who have always been famous for persecution, and imitating the heathen priests, did, as a matter of course, assert that they were the only authorized teachers of mankind ; and we know that for a long period, none but the priests had any pretensions to scholarship, contemptible as it was in the days of ignorance. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, however, the church of Rome had many learned men in her vast armies of seculars or regulars, and the church of England came forth from the church of Rome at that very time, when learning was in high repute, and when Rome could boast of some of her profoundest scholars. The controversy between the papacy and Elizabeth's church, was carried on not only by plots of assassination on one side, and by trials of high treason on the other, but by the vigorous collision of powerful intellects, by the war of the pen, and the indefatigable labours of the press. The early Protestant prelates were men of eminent learning ; the contest between them and the popish advocates turned chiefly on tradition and the authority of the fathers ; a field of argument, which requires the most extensive reading and the most thorough acquaintance with ecclesiastical history. By tradition also,

they defended themselves against the Presbyterians ; for the church of England, in its defensive as well as offensive warfare, has ever placed its strength more in tradition than in the word of God.

The splendid dowry which the dominant sect has received from the state, is, in these days, stoutly defended, on the plea that vast wealth is a necessary bribe for learning, and that if "the great prizes" should be withdrawn from the church, the priesthood, having no longer a temptation to erudition, would sink into profound ignorance, and thus a middle-age darkness settle on the nation. We hear it everywhere repeated, that the clergy *are* "learned men;" an assertion essentially false, as must be confessed by all even of the clerical party, who are capable of understanding what learning really is, or who have candour to confess what they know to be true; but still it is repeated, that the clergy *are* learned, and thus the idea is cherished, that the Anglican priests are, in this respect, equal, at least, with the priests of all other established religions.

From all that has been already urged, it must be anticipated, that I am to find a parallel in this point amongst the dissenters ; and this is, certainly, no difficult task ; for "a learned ministry" is no where more highly esteemed than amongst the calvinistic dissenters. The *Congregational Magazine** has lately asserted, that the body of the nonconformist ministers are as learned as their brethren (*i. e.* priests) of the "dominant sect." In exegetical and hermeneutical theology, I think they are decidedly more learned than the established clergy, whilst in classical attainments they are beneath them : for it is a fact, well known, that, at the two great universities, and especially at Cambridge, theology is so little studied, taught, or encouraged, that the clerical candidates do sometimes approach episcopal ordinations, in a state of extreme ignorance on those subjects, in which it would be but decent that they should have *some* information. This truth is so apparent, that a notorious prelate has lately talked of establishing a theological school, to prepare the candidates for examination, and to furnish them with that theology which they failed to acquire at the university ; and yet it is extremely probable, that these young gentlemen, whose pinions are ingloriously plumed by a bishop's chaplain, would be able to pass a brilliant examination in Greek tragedies and comedies, in Greek and Latin versification, or in a course of pure mathematics.

There is more knowledge of the Hebrew language amongst dissenting ministers than amongst the clergy ; but in a critical knowledge of the Greek, the clergy excel the nonconformists. In a general acquaintance with *history*, and the range of the belles lettres, the superiority is again with the "learned" clergy ; but in those things which it behoves erudite Levites to understand—that is, in all *clerical lore*—in all solid divinity—the nonconformist ministers far surpass their well-paid antagonists.† I

* Cong. Mag. cxxxiii. pp. 48.

† The argument in favour of "the great prizes" in the established church, as solid rewards for learning, was invented by the rapacious and unprincipled Bentley ; and has, since his days, been frequently used by the clergy, when pressed hard for an excuse of their vast wealth. Well may the bishoprics and other wealthy emoluments of the church be called "prizes," so rarely do the learned clergy draw one from fortune's wheel, so frequently are they disappointed with "a blank!" Look at the rich priests of our day, and then count up the learned ones amongst them ! look at the men of letters amongst them, and see how they are neglected ! As an illustration of the neglect in which the learned are allowed to "dwindle, peak, and pine," I would refer to the Rev. S. T. Bloomfield, the erudite and laborious editor of the Greek Testament, and of other works in high esteem amongst the learned, on the Continent and in America, not less than in this country. Thus Dr. Bloomfield speaks in the preface to

must, however, observe, that this comparison (a comparison which I have endeavoured to make with the strictest impartiality) is greatly in favour of the dissenting ministers *as a body*; for if they should be compared with the whole multitude of the clergy, and not with the men of letters amongst the clerical order, their superiority would be immense, seeing that the ignorance of the majority of the privileged corporation is very great; nor can it be otherwise, as we must at once perceive, when we duly consider the inevitable effects of the mercenary mode of preferment, and the marketable state of the pastoral office in the Anglican church. It is quite true, that every clergyman must first have been educated at one of "the learned universities;" and it is also quite true, that they are all by courtesy called "learned men;" but if we look a little deeper than the surface of things, we shall find that the attainment of a degree at Oxford or Cambridge is no proof of erudition. It proves only, that a young gentleman has spent three very jocund years amongst his merry compeers; and by three or four months reading of three or four subjects, has passed the ordeal of an examination requisite for a degree. The majority of the Anglican priests are hewn out of this quarry. The comparison of learning is not, therefore, to be made with the great multitude of the priests, but with the men of letters in their order.

his second edition of the Greek Testament: "The author has only to add, that having fairly done his best, he commits his work to the candour of the public with some confidence, at least from the consciousness of having *endeavoured well*: and though he shrinks not from any fair or candid criticism, yet it might disarm the ruthlessness of even a thorough-paced critic, if he could know the extent of the difficulties, of all sorts, with which the author had continually to struggle in his progress through this work: in the prosecution of which, he not only had constantly upon him the charge of two parishes (and thus was continually obliged to carry forward his labours *εν παρεργω*) but has suffered under the continual pressure of those carking cares that drag down the mind to earth, necessarily involved in scanty, precarious, and continually decreasing resources."

LETTER X.

WE have thus seen, that the episcopal and congregational ministers unite in the opinion, that a learned ministry is indispensable in the service of the church of Christ. I know full well, that this is also a generally received opinion throughout the land, and that few, perhaps, except the quakers,* would hesitate to give their "unfeigned assent and consent" to its uncontested orthodoxy. But the universality of an opinion ought not to add to its authority with an inquiring mind; or, rather, it ought to make the inquirer suspect; that it may possibly be a universal delusion, fit only to be classed with the exploded prejudice, that "the earth is the centre of the universe," or that "nature abhors a vacuum." The more we study the history of opinions, the more we shall discover, that they have owed their renown and their great authority to preconceived notions and traditional decrees of antiquity; and if this be true of the opinions hitherto entertained of nature's laws, or the public institutions of civilized society, much more is it likely to be true concerning theological opinions, which, for the most part, have been compelled to pass through the turbid passions or prejudices of various sects, and, therefore, have small chance of resembling "the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal." What a multitude of theologians do, to this very day, consider it little less than a self-evident truth in Christianity, that the church ought to be united to the state, and that it is the duty of the state to uphold and protect, in an especial manner, some one sect more than the rest! It is true, that this gross error derives much of its strength, from the interested passions of the parties who entertain it; but, nevertheless, it is a general creed of the ignorant and the uninstructed in all ranks of life; for I have ever found, that those persons, whose lives are free from all religious and moral restraint, and who even hold all piety in utter contempt, are, nevertheless, fully possessed with the idea, that the state "ought to support religion" (meaning thereby an established church); and that, if this support should be withdrawn, society would fall into a frightful state of anarchy. All the heathen philosophers, or nearly all, were, for "the union of church and state;" and, indeed, the natural man is, generally speaking, an advocate of the doctrine, which, in spite of this general approbation, is a pernicious and deadly principle of Antichrist.

The necessity of a "learned ministry" is, perhaps, more popular, and more approaching to universal, than any other opinion; for it has not, like some others, to struggle with party opposition, and may be entertained by all sects without offending any. I, nevertheless, suspect, that it is to be classed amongst the untenable errors of the Christian commonwealth, and that its wisdom is based on the rudiments of this world, and on that philosophy, which there is an express command to avoid.

* The rulers of methodism have lately, under Jabez Bunting's guidance, made a dangerous effort to introduce learning into their sect. It is an experiment which, if persevered in, will probably, create contending elements, where peace has hitherto prevailed. The conference, according to the constant policy of priests, are for learning; the people are well content that the primitive arrangements should continue.

It is incumbent on us to remember, and we never can be too deeply impressed with this important truth, *that the church of Christ is not like other bodies*: it is not a sanhedrim of argute and subtle rabbis, nor a senate of a learned university; nor a parliament of literati, convoked for the purpose of unveiling the face of the universal Isis, and of displaying all the close secrets of the mighty mother, by a strict analysis of her perplexing phenomena; but it is a body of illuminated and regenerated saints, who once were darkness, but are now light, and who profess to have received a spiritual knowledge by the immediate teaching of God, concerning mysteries, which the rest of the world neither accepts, nor admires, nor understands.

This is a truth, so copiously taught in the Scriptures, and so largely admitted by all pious writers, that it is scarcely necessary to insist on it, or to quote strong passages to the purpose, from authors whose names carry weight with serious Christians. When we unfold the pages of Scripture, how frequently do we find it declared, that man in his natural state, and before grace received, is profoundly ignorant of the truths of salvation! that the Almighty promises to give light, to teach, direct, and lead into the truth, those who follow him as their guide, and, in a holy humility, "acknowledge him in all their ways, and lean not on their own understanding;" that it is the office of the Holy Ghost, through the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for his glory, to execute this promise of the Father; that the language of the saints is, in consequence of this economy, the language of suppliants, daily living on the supplies which they receive from the throne of grace, acknowledging their ignorance, feebleness, waywardness, and proclivity to sin, mingled with moving prayers for farther light and deeper instruction from God himself! "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Oh, let me not wander from thy commandments! Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law; quicken thou me according to thy word; make me to understand the way of thy precepts; strengthen me according to thy word; teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end; uphold thou me according to thy word, that I may live; make thy face to shine upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes; lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness; lead me in thy truth; lead me in a plain path, send forth thy light and thy truth, and let them lead me; teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God." These are the cries of the Lord's people, thirsting in the dry land where no water is, for "the small rain upon the tender herb, and the showers upon the grass:" they are not ashamed to confess their weakness, ignorance, and helplessness, knowing that they have many precious promises of help for all their need, as long as they trust to the Great Shepherd of Israel, and not to an arm of flesh.

Let it now be remembered, that these are the wishes and the words of the regenerated people, the voice of the church as a suppliant, earnestly begging for donations of grace from God himself. Could "a learned ministry" help the church in these spiritual straits? Could that which we fairly and usually mean by the word "learning," be available in difficulties like these? Assuredly not: but a minister *learned in the word of God*, well read in the Scriptures, deeply practised in the school of prayer, and trained-up in the wholesome discipline of many tribulations, might render some assistance; not indeed by giving one drachm of grace, for that is out of the reach of all the angels of heaven, but by helping together in prayer, and by setting forth those truths, which experience has found useful for strengthening faith in the hour of trial. "Blessed be the God of all com-

fort," said Paul, "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." This was Paul's ministry to the church, in her straits and sorrows; he never thought of bringing his learning to bear on cases like these.

But what do we find in Scripture, of the sort of teaching requisite for the unregenerate? "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" "ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of the heart;" "held under the power of darkness;" "the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned;" "the veil is yet on their hearts when they read the law;" "not many wise men after the flesh are called, for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."

This being the description of the mental malady of the unregenerate, in scripture, which may be all summoned up in one expression, "blindness of the heart," what is the remedy? Even in this promise, "*I will give them a heart to know me.*"

When the Scriptures speak of blindness of heart, they inform us, that the understanding has contracted a distaste and aversion to the truths of God, as revealed in Christ, through the corruption and sinfulness of the heart, or the affections; and that this is a rank and sore disease, and difficult to be handled, because they who are in its power, know not that they have it; for as their intellects are clear, perhaps, to the attainment of physical and moral truths, so they cannot believe that they are not fully competent to understand the Scriptures when they read them, or that the faith of God's elect is a mystery to them, when they peruse the texts which teach it. "The veil is on their hearts;" no mortal teacher can possibly remove it; the learnedest, yea, and the soundest, and the most spiritual, preachers, can not reach the adytum where the veil is; they may unlock all the avenues leading to it; but the key of the citadel—the heart itself—is in the hands of God alone. This truth was pressed on the Jews by our Lord; "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: it is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God; every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." We see, therefore, the unspeakable value of that promise, "*I will give them a heart to know me.*"

It, therefore, being evident, that the aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, are brought into the holy city by Him who is King in Zion; that He is the teacher of the converts, in whatever way his teaching is dispensed; and his ways are manifold; and it being further evident, that the consolations of the afflicted Christians, their safe conduct through the wilderness, and their immediate help in all the vast variety of their difficulties, are from that hand that led Israel out of Egypt, we see left but small scope for those achievements which are expected from Learning, when introduced as an auxiliary to the gospel. But, indeed, this auxiliary, in spite of his high renown, can do nothing but defend some of the outworks of the Church's territories: he may, perhaps, rout the Socinian or Popish sophisters in a battle-field far distant from Zion, but he never can lead captive one of Jehovah's enemies; he never can put God's law into the

heart, where the principles of rebellion already predominate. No ; the reduction of the rebellious is a task reserved for Him, who went up on high, and led captivity captive ; it is his province "to rule in the midst of his opponents," for his "arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Him."

To conclude this argument, then, we may state two very important truths :—1st. That the first preaching of the gospel was not by a learned ministry. 2nd. That multitudes, even in this generation, have been converted through the ministry of those, who had not the slightest pretensions to learning.

The first of these propositions is more than one argument ; it is almost all that is to be proved. I must, therefore, make sure footing here, and repeat, that the ministry of the apostolical times was *not* a learned ministry ; from which it will follow, that learning in Christian teachers is something more than was required in the apostolical days ; and that unless the need of it is so great, by some extraordinary change of circumstances, as to reduce the church to extremities if she be any longer deprived of its assistance, it is as little to be desired as a prelate's diocesan mitre, or any other signment of man. But there is nothing in the New Testament intimating, that, at some future day, it would be requisite to make preachers of the gospel learned men ; nothing which can be forced into such a *prophecy* ; for prophecy it must be, seeing that nothing of the sort was known in the apostolical age.

Let this argument be well weighed : for as in the great controversy between dissenters and the dominant sect, or rather between the nation and the priests, we rightly demand Scripture authority for the lawless position of the established church, and declare that a church of the gospel must be gauged by the gospel ; so ought we to be able to shew, that the cherished strength of the dissenting churches is something which rests on the clear authority of the New Testament.

LETTER XI.

THE advocates of pulpit-learning, being destitute of any direct proof from the New Testament to support their views, must be driven to indirect proofs, to analogies and inferences, to probabilities and conjectures, and to such methods of reasoning, as would be more plausible in any other question, than that which at present engages our attention.

They may tell us, that as Israel took of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold; as David consecrated to the Lord the spoils of the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, and all nations which he subdued; as the crown of the king of Rabbah, was set upon the head of David; so the spoils of all secular learning should be dedicated to the church, and to the use of the church. They may triumphantly recount to us the famous ecclesiastics who have hung up heathen trophies in the sanctuary, Clemens Alexandrinus, Justin, Athenagoras, Cyril, Lactantius, Jerome, Augustin, Basil, Nazienzen, Arnobius, and others; not to mention the elaborate researches of the Benedictines and Jesuits, the learned labours of monkish missionaries in eastern climes, and the magnificent zeal of various cardinals and prelates of the popish communion, who, either by their own intellectual labours, or their largesses to renowned scholars, have added precious stores to the hive of theological and oriental erudition. They may point out to us the venerable dignitaries of our Anglican protestant church, in the days of its literary glory, studying in furred gown in college cell, and ransacking the golden veins of ponderous folios, not without some valuable result to the right understanding of chronology, or of history in connexion with divinity. They may direct us to the libraries of the two universities, and shew us how the scholarly puritan, not less than the courtly prelate, loved to muse in the classic shades on the banks of Cam or Isis, and how they brought their careful observation of oriental and occidental antiquities, their skill in philology, and their deep acquaintance with the customs and peculiarities of past ages, to assist in the noble labour of elucidating scripture.

Then, they may urge the necessity of learning in ministers of the gospel, because we live in different times and countries: we are moderns in the west, but the Apostles and their churches were ancients in the east; the whole frame of society is changed; the customs, manners, ceremonies, habits of thinking, are completely altered; the phenomena of nature are varied; our civil, social, and religious conditions are essentially different from those of old Palestine; the arts of life, and the productions of nature, are all dissimilar; and the scriptures are consequently making frequent allusions to moral and physical peculiarities, which we cannot comprehend: wherefore, to master all these difficulties, besides the difficulties and obscurities of a translated tongue, we stand in need of an instructed ministry, whose business it is to explain the scriptures thoroughly to their congregations, and to leave nothing in uncertainty.

Now, to all these things what shall we say? Even this; that Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God;" that "He is made unto us wisdom," and that in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and

knowledge." It is, indeed, our business to search the scriptures; but why? because they testify of Him; that he is the wisdom of God, in a mystery; the hidden wisdom; the like whereof is not to be found in any course of reading, in any volume in the world, except only in the scriptures of truth. By far the greater part of those things of which learned men have written, in their endeavours to elucidate the bible, are the mere outsiders, the mere shell of the truth; they relate to matters which are incidental; mere accidents; mere casualties; things which have no savour of life in them; nothing that can profit, illuminate, or edify the christian; nothing that can contribute to the spiritual information of one that is seeking for the truth.

"The second Adam, the Lord Jesus from heaven, is a quickening spirit." It is true, that He was in the flesh, and in the flesh went about doing good; and having fulfilled all righteousness, was slain with vast anguish of body, that He might bear our sorrows and carry our grief, and that we might have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. It is also true, that we have sufficient record of his actions as the son of Mary, and as the supposed "son of the carpenter;" but it is also evident, that his actions as a man are recorded in a very slight and shadowy manner; that all those minute circumstances which render biography intensely interesting, are passed over, leaving to us no small scope for our curiosity to discover that which is hid from our gaze. But these tantalizing omissions are, I doubt not, intentional; ordered so by the Almighty, who, knowing the tendency of the human mind to fix on things sensible, and to pretermitt things spiritual, has most wisely ordered, that we should know of the Messiah sufficient for rational evidence of his holy humanity, but very far less than could satisfy the eager demands of our curiosity. "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

If the choice were given to the people of Christendom, to select of these unpublished doings of Jesus, may we not be certain, that they would earnestly desire to have copious information of circumstances, which would fill up all the vacancies in his biography; minute accounts of his life, daily actions, friends, and family: and be grievously disappointed, if they were to be supplied only with our Lord's sermons, and mere dry notices of the places where he delivered them?

Now, it is precisely in those curious matters, that learning is chiefly exercised in elucidating the gospel; in places, dates, customs, antiquities, oriental allusions, productions of the soil, geography, &c. But the Lord Jesus is a quickening spirit, and it should be our desire to know Him, as He lives for us near the throne of grace; or as Paul expresses it, "to know the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places."

Dr. Owen has well commented on these words: "So much as we know of Christ, his sufferings, and his glory, so much do we understand of the Scriptures, and no more."

If, then, the Scriptures should be studied by Christians, as a volume of oriental history and antiquities, or as a tome of the Indo-Persian* meta-

* Dupuis, and others after him, endeavoured to prove that the Christian faith is an eclectic system of Indo-Persian origin.

physics, the arguments for a learned ministry might be valid : for I know not how we could understand the Shasters, the Bhagavad-Geeta, the Puranas, or the institutes of Menu, without collateral information relating to Hindoo customs ; but as we know that the Holy Spirit has dictated the Scriptures, to be the word of general life ; the language for all nations ; the voice that talks with the hearts of all men, in every latitude of this terraqueous globe ; and as the Gospels are written in the plainest and simplest style, and with this express object, that they might be universally understood ; and when we observe, how that "the going forth of the word giveth light—giveth wisdom—unto the simple ;" how savage nations, lately converted, embrace the truth in its naked simplicity with all joy, and, for all purposes of salvation, joyfully understand the Scriptures ; how "poor and ignorant" men and women oftentimes display a surprising knowledge of the word of God, compelling us, with all gratitude, to confess that the Great Teacher has anointed them with the unction of evangelical understanding ; whilst, on the other hand, learned scholars, yea, and mitred doctors, deeply soaked in Greek and Latin, display the most childish ignorance of the gospel in their sermons or published books ; then are we compelled to acknowledge, that learning is of little benefit in the pulpit ; is not wanted ; works little good when it is there ; is no necessary adjunct for a preacher of the gospel ; does not, in fact, help him ; and often is the cause of excessive mischief and confusion in the church.

A learned theologian may perhaps consider himself greatly exalted above an unlearned student of the Scriptures, and may perhaps pity the pious multitude, who, versed only in their mother-tongue, and having no help but a Concordance or a Bible of references, wander in the dark through the vast wilderness of oriental allusions, and are utterly at fault in some points, where erudition could give many a curious and sometimes an interesting explanation. Michaelis, in the pride of learning, has ventured to assert, that no one ignorant of rabbinical lore can possibly understand the Sermon on the Mount ; a most astounding falsehood of academic arrogance ! For though a pious Christian, who never studied the Talmuds, the Chaldee paraphrast, the Gemara, the Medrasch Tanchuma, or the Targum of Onkelos and Jonathan, nor ever heard of their existence, may, in consequence, be totally unaware of some Judaic allusions, which Michaelis and others suppose they have discovered in the New Testament, yet he will know all that it concerns him to know for guidance and instruction, and will be infinitely less likely to make mistakes in the interpretation of Scripture, with the help of the High and Holy Teacher to whom he has in all humility entrusted his understanding, than if he sat down to hunt for hidden curiosities with all the accuracy of a Gesenius or the subtlety of an Eichorn.

There are many manifest inconveniences, as there are also some advantages, in applying learning to the study of the Scriptures ; but I fear that the disadvantages greatly preponderate, *when the range of erudite theology is entrusted to the ministry.* I need not here appeal to history, to prove how many disastrous heresies and schisms have sprung up in the church from the hotbed of human learning ; how many wars and tumults have arisen from the controversies and argute disputations of learned divines. Baronius has asserted, that the greater part of all heresies have originated not with the ignorant multitude, but with men of much intellect and research, with men of talent and of elevated station in the church, with bishops and high dignitaries, who began with disputations and dexterous cavils, and ended with schism and open rebellion. Dr. Owen,

himself one of the learnedest of divines, has remarked, that it would be difficult to sum up all the mischief that has desolated the church, through the labours of ecclesiastics, with subtle heads but unsanctified hearts: and the truth of this remark we can ourselves verify, by turning our eyes to Germany, where the tribe of neologists and sceptics are constantly rising to the surface, with some curious jewel of unbelief, fished up with infinite labour from the deeps of hell; or to America, where the portals of theologic seminaries are pouring forth clouds of Palagian and Sabellian locusts, "like horses prepared unto battle, and with faces as the faces of men."

LETTER XII.

LET us a little more particularly examine some of the evils adverted to in the last letter.

He that reads the Bible in the old way, seems to be walking with great delight, "by a place of broad rivers and streams where goeth no galley with oars;" the waters are silent, majestic, undisturbed; they are "the still waters," and he by faith is constantly catching a glimpse of the Good Shepherd, who leads his flock by the verdant margins, "to make their souls like a watered garden;" he searches that he may find him; but if he finds him not, he is distressed and perplexed, and, in the language of holy love, says within himself, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside from the flocks of thy companions?"

But when he reads the Bible in the new way; when the glare of modern *exegetis* dazzles his eyes; when the German light has been let in upon the scene, he seems immediately to stand on the shores of a boundless ocean, whose waves are dark, restless, and conflicting; "the galleys pass with oars," and "the gallant ships" in abundance; but it is for an evil trade, and many are shipwrecked before his eyes, swallowed up in hopeless infidelity. The Good Shepherd is gone; he is no where to be found; all the winds of heaven seem to conspire to drown the very sound of his name, and the hubbub of "primary meanings," "orientalisms," "historical allusions," "mythic phraseology," "figurative expressions," "allegorical types," "poetical ornaments," "grammatical constructions," "*usus loquendi*," are called in to the scene, to make confusion worse confounded; and to turn the Scriptures of truth into a volume of dishonest trickery or studied obscurity, whose dark pages none but learned academicians and deep-read scribes can possibly explain.

I give one instance, and it is indeed but one amongst thousands. That portion of the prophecies of Isaiah, beginning with the 13th verse of the 52nd chapter, and ending with the last verse of the 53rd chapter, is so clear a prophecy of Christ, that no unlearned person could possibly doubt its import. In many passages of the New Testament, it is made the subject of either direct quotation or allusion, and our Lord himself distinctly referred to it as a portion of Scripture fulfilled by his mission, (Luke xxii. 37.) Evidence like this, one would naturally suppose, must preclude all cavilling on the subject; for no one but a Jew or an avowed unbeliever, would be hardy enough to urge that Jesus Christ and the Apostles were mistaken, and that the prophet had quite another meaning. But learned Christians have shewn themselves not less audacious than Jews, Turks, or Infidels. The school of Christian theology had become amazingly more sharp-sighted, erudite, and sagacious, towards the close of the last century; and a swarm of celebrated expositors, under a firm conviction, as one of their own favourite writers frankly expresses it, "that the prophets announce nothing of future events but what they might know and expect, without any special divine inspiration," have undertaken to shew, that Isaiah had in this passage no prescience of the Redeemer;

These elaborate writers suggest, that the subject of the prediction is a "collective" one; that it refers to the whole Jewish people; to the abstract of the Jewish people; to the pious part of the Jewish people; to the Jewish priesthood; to the prophetic order; to king Hezekiah; to the prophet Jeremiah; to an unknown prophet, killed by the Jews in exile; to the royal race of David who suffered unjustly; to the Maccabees, or to the prophet Isaiah himself! These are the hypotheses of the Döderlins, the Eichorns, the Schusters, the Telges, the Stéphani, the Rosenmüllers, the De Wettes, the Geseniuses, the Grotiuses, the Boltens, and divers others of high celebrity in the learned world, who have filled all Europe with the renown of their names, not without a reverberating echo from the transatlantic school of "Celeberrimi."

I have selected this one instance of the audacity of learned men in handling the word of God, both because it is an exhibition of their impiety in attacking one of the noblest bulwarks of the gospel, and because it cannot fail to supply the place of a thousand other instances; for it is obvious, that if the men of letters have dealt thus with prophecy, in the splendour of its glory, they must have felt very little scruple in denying and gainsaying the promises of the Holy Spirit, where the light shines with a feebler ray. And true it is, that if any one wished to draw up a vademecum of infidelity, he might easily compile a book from the labours of learned divines, in which every promise of the Messiah, every indication of the gospel, would be flatly denied, and opposed with laborious arguments and profound research.

We cannot deny, that the school of Germany has produced a race of literary giants and Anaks of intellect, but many of them, alas! are also Goliaths, who defy the armies of the living God; and though some of the vaunting crew would conceal their intention under the guise of Christians, yet we know, that their business has been rather to fabricate fiery darts for the wicked one, than to supply shields of faith for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

But it will be said, that all this touches not England,* and that, in this country, the theologues of the dominant and dissenting sects, have avoided the neology and rationalism of the German sophists. It should, however, be remembered, that till within the last dozen years, we seemed to *know* nothing of the effects of the German school, or to know little more than was brought to us by the vague rumours, and short accounts of some of the most popular works. Lately, there has been visible a bias to German literature: we begin now, highly to admire their erudition, and may soon, perhaps, proceed to tolerate, and then to adopt, some of their fatal spirit of interpretation. Germany and America have pronounced us a nation of theological ignoramuses, and we have tacitly pleaded guilty to the charge. There are not wanting some dissenting ministers, though very few as yet in number, who are in correspondence with the German divines, and who are known on the continent as well affected to the new school, I do not say in scepticism, but in the fashionable style of "exegesis," and in that tendency to novelty and recondite discoveries, or pretended discoveries, which is the distinguishing mark of the German theologues. I would put it as a question, and really not as an insinuation, but simply as a question, Is it quite certain that those who control the education of

* Mr. Milman's *Neological History of the Jews*, may be considered as the first attempt of any of the clergy to introduce the German method of interpreting Scripture into this country; unless, indeed, we are to reckon the Bishop of Peterborough as his predecessor.

dissenting academies, are fully aware of the danger apparently threatening the creed of the Reformation? Have they their eyes fully open to the progress of unsound opinions, in the United States of North America? If Germany has not yet exerted her dangerous influence over the minds of those who are educating for the ministry, is there no ground to fear, that Professor Stuart's* subtile commentaries have opened the way for a further advance towards Pelagian views, and that a writer who has been introduced amongst us, on high authority, as a sound teacher of the faith, has gained many converts, in this country, to opinions, which in his own are already strongly contested? The temptation of mischievous learning is so much to be apprehended, that we must hope, if the tempter should ever come with his deadly intellectual bribe, the guardians of youth will be on the watch, and repulse the enemy, though he assure them, "that they shall not die, but shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Perhaps it would be premature to say, that the effects of continental learning are already discernible in some dissenting pulpits; but *something* is working there even now, which is not for good. We hear now not unfrequently, much, far too much, about "primary" and "secondary" meanings of passages in Scripture. The congregation is sometimes perplexed with a ten-minutes explanation of "the historical sense;" and portions of the word of God, which hitherto have, without question, been applied to Christ, are now explained as having "a primary" view to some Jewish king, priest, or prophet. A preacher will, perhaps, take the 16th Psalm, and, at some length explain every word of it as said by David of himself, and shew how it agrees exactly with some parts of David's history; then remembering how the inspired writers have taken a different view of the Psalm, will conclude with the Christian and spiritual interpretation; not much, in my opinion, to the edification of his hearers. It is like plunging the body first in snow, and then bringing it into the rays of the sun; a very capricious and hazardous treatment of the human frame.

I might quote an instance, where one, whose ministry I usually find profitable and instructive, lapsed once, in my hearing, into this learned mood, and at some length opened out "the primary meaning" of a well known prophetic passage, leaving a painful impression on my mind, which haunted me for some days; and if this effect is produced on one who is no stranger to expository subtleties, what must not the effect be on those who have hitherto read their Bibles in the old way, and who have never suspected, that the guide-post to Zion was a Janus with a double face?

The creed of some believers is as a tender root growing out of a dry ground, and cannot bear these visitations of blight on its timorous strength. It has need of a kinder and more refreshing treatment.

If I wished to enlarge the prayer, "Lord increase our faith," it certainly would not be, by petitioning for an increase of this sort of preaching which I have here noticed.

* The following passage appears in the third edition of Professor Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans:—

"Another friend (having first mentioned Dr. Pye Smith), well known in this country, and also very dear to me, the Rev. Dr. Henderson, of Highbury College, in the precincts of London, who has also written a short prefatory commendation of the English edition of my Commentary, in a letter to me, dated June 24, 1833, has expressed his views in regard of my exegesis, of the passages in question, in the following manner: 'Your view of the 7th chapter meets with my approbation. I deem it most important. The other view seems greatly calculated to keep up and foster a low state of Christianity.'"—p. 619.

LETTER XIII.

AN unnatural taste is soon acquired, and, after a short apprenticeship, the most abstinent persons may become the willing slaves of intoxicating liquors or narcotic drugs. Nothing, surely, ought to be less palatable to a Christian, than an exhibition of metaphysics, philosophy, and school-learning in the pulpit; but, alas! in some dissenting churches, or at least amongst the leading members of some dissenting churches, there is a raging appetite for this pernicious pharmacy. This appetite is generally known as a "demand for talent," a demand, which is unquestionably greater than the supply, though the supply is not scanty.

The incitements to this demand are various.

1st. The semi-sacerdotal character of the dissenting ministers, constantly brings them into comparison with the priests of the dominant sect: they compare themselves with their antagonists, and their people are equally ready to make the same comparison. The clergy boast, with very loud trumpets, that they are learned men, and endowed with rare abilities; and sixteen thousand priests, all blowing the trumpet in unison, cannot fail to fill the length and breadth of the land with a most audible din. Now, as a dissenting minister seems to be the metempsychosis of a parish priest, it is quite in keeping with this gentle transformation, that he should endeavour to appear at least on a par with *the old form*; a butterfly is naturally expected to be more brilliant than the chrysalis. The dissenting minister knows that the people expect "talent" from him, and he himself wishes to gratify them. Hence that odious saying, at least it grates most odiously on my ears, "Mr. A., of such a chapel, is a very clever young man;" "Mr. B. is a man of talent;" or "there is much talent, much information in Mr. C.'s sermons." Remarks like these were never heard in the apostolic age.

2d. The dominant sect is pleased to assert, that dissent prevails only amongst the middling and lowest classes of society; that the religion of nonconformists is not for ladies and gentlemen; and that where intellectual culture prevails, dissent must fade and fall away. There is some truth, perhaps, in the assertion, that dissent prevails *actually* in the middle classes of society; but it is a glaring error to take for granted, that ladies and gentlemen of the aristocracy are remarkable for much information or intellectual culture, or that dissent has any inherent qualities, which render the climate of plebeian ignorance a necessary condition for its health and vigour. The church of England offers a very facile religion for power, wealth, and fashion; it is as easy to adopt its creed as it is to pass through a church door: we need not, therefore, be surprised to find it attracting all the power and fashion of this world; but there is nothing in dissent to render it distasteful to cultivated minds, nor is there any disposition amongst dissenters, to encourage ignorance in any department where knowledge can possibly be attained: on the contrary, the danger appears threatening in the opposite direction; the danger of calling in the power of this world's wisdom to sit on the throne with Christ, and to say to the work of men's hands, "these are our gods." I would not venture to pre-

dict, that the congregational churches are ever to be the windows, to which English ladies and gentlemen will flock as doves, even in an extreme commotion of society—a commotion which I believe is at hand—but I think it far from improbable, that if some vigorous stand is not made by influential dissenters, against the fashionable error of the age and sect, “the poor amongst men” will betake themselves to religious domiciles, better suited to their feelings, than those ambitious fraternities with which some of them are at present united.

3d. Within the last twenty years, there have arisen several dissenting ministers of eminent talents, and some such there are at present on the stage. They are in the eyes of the congregations, as “the chief priests,” and students at the academies look up to them as stars of the first magnitude. These are the ministers selected to give impression at ordinations, particularly in the neighbourhood of London; their ordination charges are generally very striking, sometimes very brilliant discourses, urging on the young ordained minister a close attention to his studies,* and an unremitting endeavour to place himself, by his attainments and varied knowledge, in an exalted situation in the opinion of the people; ignorance is put under the ban with heavy anathemas, and the nascent pastor is solemnly warned of the vast peril of appearing deficient in talent, or at least in wide-extended information.

4th. The course of education pursued in the dissenting academies is, of course, to be taken into the account.

5th. The solid rewards of “talent,” that is, the profitable pastoral locations, in divers parts of the kingdom, may be also reckoned amongst the efficient causes.

The demand for talent being thus generated, the effects produced by the demand are greatly to be deplored. The church, through its instrumentality, is elevated indeed on a pedestal, to be admired by the world and to be praised of men; but a passionate idolatry of human excellence tinges at first the language, and ultimately the theology of ministers; the eyes of the people are turned from “the foolishness of preaching which saveth them that believe,” to gaze at the achievements of penetrating and comprehensive intellects; humility is seen more in the charms of description, than in the reality of practice, and the graces of the gospel are drained through the alembic of human wit, till they come forth in the æry sublimations of “mental phænomena,” the volatile Hermes of the psychological science. Some who are advocates for talent, which, in the sense accepted amongst dissenters, means either eloquence, or metaphysical ratiocination, or learning,† or information; in short, any thing that places the minister

* “Science and Literature are now so widely diffused, even over the middling classes, that no small measure of information is requisite to enable a minister to converse with his own flock; *unless, therefore, you intend to devote eight hours a day to your studies*, I have no strong expectation that you will long retain this pulpit. To secure such a portion of time as this, it will be necessary to guard against that temptation to neglect the study, with which a ministerial station in this mighty city must ever be attended.”

“Pastoral Charge at an Ordination, by a living dissenting minister.”—p. 39.

† Luther has left a most valuable testimony against learned and high-flown preaching. “A preacher,” said he, “that intendeth to please the world should be thus qualified: first, he must be *learned*; secondly, he must have a fine deliverance; thirdly, he must have neat and quaint words; fourthly, he must be a *proper person*, whom women and maids may love; fifthly, he must not take but give money; sixthly, he must preach such things as people willingly hear.—When I am in the pulpit, then I resolve to preach only to men and maid-servants; I would not make a step into the pulpit for the

on an imaginary eminence above ordinary preachers, urge their views by loudly disclaiming against those teachers who are all for "comfort," and never feed their flock with "information," as if a preacher had but two courses to take; to nourish his hearers with the comforts of the gospel, or else to shew that he is a man of learning, curious research, or logical acumen! The latter, indeed, might be neglected and never missed, but woe to that herald of the gospel who omits the former and does not speak "comfortably to Jerusalem;" woe to that man who, having undertaken to preach the grace of God through Christ, tells men only of the righteousness of the law or of human opinions! The province of evangelical preaching is, indeed, wide, and allows a vast range of rebuke, reproof, and exhortation; but he who, on system, shall omit the comforts, which are the portion of the elect, cannot be a disciple of the promised Paraclete. (Acts ix. 31.)

It may be laid down as an undoubted truth, that wherever a display of intellect is required in the Christian ministry, there must be "high conceits engendering pride." The mind of him that is on the look out for talent in the pulpit, is far above its proper level: such a one is not as he was at first, when he cried out of the depths; then, he was abased and prostrate at the foot of the cross; then, his language was, "O thou son of David, have mercy upon me;" then, in a most black and uncomfortable darkness of soul, his sorrows were heavy, and the unsearchable riches of Christ seemed out of his reach, and the trumpets on Mount Sinai were loud and dreadful; so that when the messengers came at last with glad tidings of peace to his soul, their very feet were beautiful to him, and there was nothing so sweet to him in all the world, as the full exposition of the grace, the salvation, the freeness, the love, the unmerited redemption that is in Christ Jesus, justifying the ungodly as they cease to seek salvation by good works, and accept it in faith without any merit of their own. What, then, has changed the heart of him who cries out for talent in the pulpit? What does that man possess as a Christian, that he did not receive? Is it not all of grace? and has he not need every hour, of the right hand of righteousness? Can he, unless he be an apostate from the faith, have any other prayer than this, as far as his spiritual life is concerned, "deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word?"

It was so at the beginning, and it must be so still: there is nothing in Scripture leading us to expect, that at any time, in any age, or in any æra, the mind of man should be so changed, his intellect so vastly exalted, his affections so purified, his fleshly nature so beatified, as that a new mode of preaching would supersede the old method adopted by the apostles. Humility will be required of us till the day of judgment; salvation by grace will never cease; it never will be an obsolete doctrine, "that unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and as long as we see through a glass darkly, we must, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby.

The present mode of preaching, which, I do not say, *prevails*, but which is far from uncommon, is a forgetfulness of the doctrines of grace; a silence, an awful silence, on the glory of Christ. This is the great fault, or, rather, the great sin, in the churches; and it is not to be wondered at; for where the head is possessed with the excellence and power of talent,

sakes of Philip Melancthon, Justus Jonas, or the whole university; for they are already well seen in Scripture; but when preachers will direct their sermons to the high, learned, and deep understandings, and will breathe out altogether Rabinos and master pieces, then the poor unlearned people present *do stand like a flock of kine.*"

the heart becomes blind to the beauty and power of Immanuel. There are some preachers, who seem to think that they are, in an evil sense, so much "the lights of the world," as to forget that there is a greater than themselves in the universe; so struck with the splendour of their own abilities, as to turn their backs on the Sun of Righteousness, the only life-giving light in Israel. It is a melancholy truth to publish to the world, that there are chapels, where the preaching of the cross is practically considered foolishness, and is superseded by "the enticing words of man's wisdom," to the great grief and pain of those pious Christians, who seem to themselves banished into outer darkness, when they may not behold the radiance of the Saviour's countenance. How often have I heard complaints to this effect, from persons of deep and solid piety, who are doomed to hear the cold and profitless ministry of eloquent discourses, expatiating on any thing but that which is of benefit to the spiritual life! How many chapels might I not indicate by name, where the dismal error of the age has emptied the seats of hearers, or cast a spiritual torpor on all who remain!

It has been my lot, to hear orthodox nonconformists deliver sermons, such as, I should have supposed, could have been heard only in Socinian chapels; for though they did not attack the *foundations*, nor assert any thing contrary to sound faith, yet so entirely did they omit the gospel, or any allusion to any one of its doctrines, that a Mahommedan or a Jew might have listened with pleasure to the whole discourse, without wincing at one word, except the formulary at the end. The language was excellent, the thoughts were vigorous, the delivery animated, the action just and graceful, the manner energetic and decorously impassioned, forming a *tout ensemble* which commanded attention and secured unabated interest; but alas! not one word was uttered, by which one could guess that the preacher was of the Christian persuasion. The discourse, on one particular occasion, was on prayer; and yet, in a long sermon on this vital subject, every thing was said almost that could be said, excepting the truths revealed in the gospel; the throne of grace; the great High Priest; the only approach to God through his righteousness and intercession; and the angel to whom has been given "much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne!" All this was passed by; the celebrated preacher was discoursing of the god of nature, the god of the natural man, "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord;" and a Guru from the banks of the Ganges, or a Mullah from the mosque of Mecca, might have said "Amen" to this Christian sermon!

O Dame Hewley! it was not such preachers as these, that thou didst mean by those much-litigated words, "the poor and godly ministers of Christ's holy gospel."

What, it may be asked, is the cause of such a phenomenon? Certainly not a secret Socinianism, for the preacher's creed is beyond suspicion. No; we must explain it by remembering the temptation of talent, which cannot enter the heart without its accompanying train of lofty and ambitious views, which changes the pensioner of grace into a man of power, and transforms the docile pupil of the wisdom that is from above, into the self-sufficient dispenser of intellectual riches. He that has gained applause by these means, will not readily renounce his laurels, though they are more befitting the brows of a Greek sophist, or a Florentine academician, than of a follower of Him, whose only earthly crown was made of piercing thorns.

These sins of the pulpit prevail chiefly amongst the philosophizing

school, which is only one degree less dangerous than the school of the rationalists. Rationalism creates, by anticipation, a rational religion, and then forces the facts of revelation into harmony with a preconceived plan. The rationalists and the neologists view the Bible as a book of venerable fables, which they are at perfect liberty to submit to any treatment which may suit their purposes. The philosophizing preachers are sound in their creed abstractedly, but the creed and the text are often, with them, but as airs to the composers of music: the air is very well to start with, but the *variations* are every thing. The philosophizers seem to think, that there are two classes of people for their ministry, "the people," and "the thinkers;" the superior and the inferior minds; and that it is indispensable to furnish ambrosia to the one, whilst husks are quite sufficient for the other. But some preachers have become so elated with their success in the ambrosia treatment, that they are quite unable to preach a plain gospel sermon, and even to a degree, that makes themselves perceive and lament the inconvenience. The balloon of talent has taken them up too high, and they cannot come down again to the gospel level: there may be a vast deal of brilliancy in their ministry, but it is not like the rays of the sun; they cannot make it pass from a rarer into a denser medium.

This elated school teaches to this effect, "that the popular view of the gospel is best adapted to the people; but profound minds, from which the popular view is not hidden, and who are supported by it as well as the multitude, find, in the contemplation of points of view less generally perceived, an additional conviction, which yields an intellectual delight, a spiritual (metaphysical) repast, which is perhaps necessary to them, and and which may appropriately be styled, strong meat. This food, being adapted only to their particular constitution, is not relished by the multitude; it is suited only to the cultivated intellects. With the people generally, they unite in *the common forms of expression*, which for them are equally true and respectable: in short, in the language of Pascal, "there must be thoughts in reserve, though we speak in other respects like the multitude."

This is their theory: it is not part of my plan to confute it in this place; I will, therefore, only observe, that all religions invented by men, have indeed had their hieroglyphic doctrines, but the gospel is the voice of Him that came from above, and is above all.

LETTER XIV.

IN America, where it seems to be taken for granted, in the congregational and presbyterian societies, that a learned ministry is essential to the edification of the church of Christ, they spare no pains to put in action this supposed lever of the gospel; "and so zealously are her youth engaged," says the *Congregational Magazine*, "in seconding these mighty efforts, that their ardour needs to be repressed rather than stimulated; they are literally falling victims to their excessive application to their studies."* This extraordinary information is corroborated by Messrs. Reed and Matheson, the late deputies of the English churches to America, who attest, that hundreds of young men have broken themselves down in the fine flower of "a noble vigour," in preparing with too great ardour for the Gospel ministry, in the United States. How strange a position of circumstances is this! the ministers of the gospel, not dying as martyrs to the faith, not perishing at the stake or the scaffold, not pining in chains and dungeons as of yore, not worn out with extreme labours and perils, such as the apostle Paul describes, but dying "by hundreds" under the pressure of study, sinking under lexicons and grammars, languishing under dialects, and falling a sacrifice to the lecture-room and the professor's chair! Surely all things must be turned upside down, to have wrought this change; for, whereas, of old, Paul desired the church to witness, how "that not many wise men after the flesh were called," now, it seems to be the glory of the churches, that the foolish things should be despised, and the wise exalted. In the apostolical age, the Greeks used to seek after wisdom, and were disgusted that the gospel heralds preached only Christ as the wisdom from above, "because the foolishness of God" was in those days "wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men;" but if the Greeks, in this our generation, were to come and seek for wisdom, we may presume that they would find it, in all its glory, in the theological seminaries of America and Germany, and by no means in a despicable condition in the halls of Highbury and Homerton. "The foolishness of men" is not the stumbling-block before the door of the sheepfold in these days.

It may, perhaps, be interesting to behold the apparatus of theological discipline in the German universities, a discipline indispensable for the ministerial office in Prussia, and in some of the German principalities; unless, indeed, "an enthusiast" should venture to preach, without leave obtained from the sovereign, and without the official diploma of his university; in which case, he would infallibly be thrown into prison, and feel the smart of that rod, by which a military and royal high-priest compels orthodoxy to wear the regimentals of the state.

In the German† universities, the students of theology are required to make further progress in the study of philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. In addition, therefore, to theology, the student must attend lec-

* Cong. Mag. cxxxiii., p. 33.

† See the Biblical Repository, edited by "Professor Robinson of the Andover Theological Seminary," p. ii.

tures on logic, metaphysics, ethics, or moral philosophy, and the philosophy of religion; by which last is understood, "the philosophical exhibition of the eternal and universal ideas which lie at the foundation of every particular religion, and the examination of the religious tendencies and propensities of our nature." But farther still, the students are *invited* to attend lectures on the classics, history, and the natural sciences.

The course of lectures necessary to be heard, in order to sustain future examination is, 1. propædeutical, or *introductory*; 2. theoretical; 3. practical. The propædeutical are divided in (1) *hodegetik* (or leading-the-way-lectures) which teaches the subdivision of the science into different departments or disciplines, and the character of each of these, and of the relation which each particular discipline bears to the whole; (2) *methodik*, or the proper method of study, shewing the necessary qualifications in those who devote themselves to the study of a science, and to point out the hindrances which lie in their path; (3.) to shew in what particular way the different branches or departments of the science may best be studied, and this is shewn from the nature of the science itself; (4.) *hermeneutic*, which, in order to understand in their full force and extent the truth of the Bible, undertakes to teach the character and condition of each of the sacred books; the peculiar circumstances and characteristics, which serve in any way to throw a light upon, and affect their particular interpretation.

The *theoretical* lectures are those on the exegesis of the Old and New Testament, and archæology of the Scriptures; systematic and symbolic theology, and ethics; the history of doctrines, ecclesiastical history and antiquities.

The *practical*, comprises pastoral theology, or the proper mode of exercising the pastoral office; *katechetik*, or the method of imparting religious instruction to children, as by catechisms; *homeletik*, or the art of preaching; *liturgik*, or the mode of conducting public worship.

All these departments are taught scientifically and theoretically; and through all this intricate labyrinth of instruction, must the student of divinity wind his weary way, before he can emerge an authorized minister of the gospel.

The following is a *lectionsblatt*, or list of lectures for theological students, delivered in the university of Halle, for the summer of 1830:—

THEOLOGY.

"Theological Encyclopædia, or Methodology, by *Niemeyer*; Encyclopædia and Theological Literature, by *Guerike*; Hermeneutics, by *Weber* and *Memeyer*.

"Biblical Archæology of the Old and New Testament, *Gesenius*; Historical and Critical Introduction to the Old Testament, *Guerike*; the first chapter of Genesis, *Strange*; Job, *Wahl*; the Psalms, grammatically, *Schott*; Isaiah, *Gesenius*; Minor Prophets, *Rodiger*; Prophecies respecting the Messiah, *Fritzsche*; Historical and Critical Introduction to the New Testament, *Ulmann*; Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, *Tholuk*; the same Gospels *Wegscheider*; Epistles to Timothy, Titus, Romans, and Hebrews, *Thilo*; History of Christ's Passion and Resurrection,* *Tholuk* and *Wegscheider*.

* "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.....that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings."—(Phil. iii. 10.)

“General History of Doctrines, *Wegscheider and Ullmann*; Systematic Theology, *Weber*; the same in connection with the history of particular doctrines, *Wegscheider*; the symbolical books of the Evangelical churches, beginning with the Augsburg Confession, *Guerike*.

“General History of Religion and the Church, to the time of Gregory VII., *Thilo*; the same from Gregory VII., *Thilo*; the same from Gregory VII. to the present time, *Guerike*; Lives and Writings of the Apostolical Fathers, *Ullmann*; History of the Reformation, *Lorentz*.

“Practical Theology, *Franke*; Homeletiks and their History, *Marks*; Preaching of distinguished Pulpit Orators of our own and other times, *Wagnitz*; Catechetics, *Wagnitz and Franke*; Catechetical Exercises, *Weber*; Popular Dogmatiks, *Fritzsche !!!*”

Thus it is that the Apostles, sent forth by men, are prepared to do the work of evangelists! and thus is the gospel ministry cut up and thrown into Medea's cauldron, to come forth a new creature of magical power, and to perform prodigies, amongst mankind! We need not be surprised, that the fiery-flying serpents of neology and rationalism, have been generated in abundance by the *lectionsblatts* of the German universities.

To what extent, they have carried the machinery of theological and ministerial preparation, in America,* I know not; but it cannot, surely, be far behind the doings in Germany, if we are to credit the statements already quoted in this letter.

In the English dissenting academies, they have not established anything approaching to the severity and intricacy of the German discipline. The theological lectures are, as might be expected, from the high characters of the tutors, valuable and instructive; but it would require a regiment of tutors and professors, to place Highbury and Homerton on an equality with the university of Halle. The classical education, which keeps pace with theological instruction in the English dissenting academies, includes, according to the established custom, Greek plays, and the et-cætera of the classical course; and thus is much valuable time lost, in obedience to the fashionable demand, for what is called “a complete education.”

Granting that learning is requisite or tolerable in the present imperfect state of things, I would venture to suggest, that a thorough acquaintance with Greek and Latin prose might be quite sufficient; and that if the students were taught to write Latin prose, with facility and elegance, and to translate Greek prose without hesitation, they would have acquired that which ought to satisfy the most zealous directors of the colleges. The composition of Latin prose used once to be considered indispensable, in every one who had any claims to be reputed a scholar, though it is an art now almost unknown amongst the gentlemen educated at the two great

*They that wish to become acquainted with the real state of the manners and morals of an American university, should peruse the 19th chapter of Mr. Abdy's “Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States.” It is in vain to look for the truth on this subject, in the complimentary volumes of the two deputations.

Drs. Cox and Hoby have, at the end of their volume, given statistical tables of population and education; and in one of these tables, we learn the following curious facts of some of the American universities. The university of Burlington has no president, no tutors, no students, and no books; the university of Alton is in the same condition; the university of Eaton has no president, no tutors, no books, but *ten students!* happy decemviri! the university of Haddington is precisely in the same condition; and the university of New Hampton has a president, two tutors, one thousand books, but no students; the colleges of Oberlin and Willoughby have twelve tutors and professors, but no students.

universities. Mathematics have been lately introduced at Highbury ; but might well be renounced to make way for instruction in the French or Italian languages, and to give more opportunity to the study of general history, one of the most valuable sources of moral information, but, at present, grievously neglected in the education of youth. A well-directed course of history, from the days of Augustus to the Reformation, from the Reformation to the French Revolution, would be of incomparably greater value, than some half-dozen of the usual embellishments of education, on which the opening mind of man is made to waste its energies in this land of traditions and idols.

LETTER XV.

I HASTEN now to give some proof of the undue sway, which talent, at present, exercises over the religious world; proofs in abundance might be adduced from publications of well-known individuals; but, as that might be considered an unfriendly source of illustration, I turn to the *Evangelical Magazine*, which, as it is invested with the character of a reviewer, may, itself, most fairly be reviewed. Moreover, this periodical has been so long established, and is so widely circulated, that its sentiments may safely be taken as the most authentic expression of the religious feeling of the day. To its pages, therefore, I turn, and shall first notice a review of Mr. H——'s sermons, which appeared in one of its numbers some time back; premising, however, that it would be most unfair to consider that gentleman accountable for any strange expressions, which an exaggerated admiration of his style may have elicited. Thus speaks the reviewer, in the zeal of his eulogy: "In our universities, in our dissenting colleges, there were rising many who felt, powerfully felt, that the people ought to gather round it every faculty of mind, every power of imagination; that it must subordinate itself to the knowledge that can instruct, and the eloquence that can charm, both consecrated and devoted to its high and glorious objects. With these examples before them, *they went forth*. They have lived to contemplate a new æra in the church," &c. This is stating the ambitious designs and vain conceits of the talent-school, without disguise; but if it be true, as the reviewer says, that "the pulpit *must* have the eloquence that can charm," &c., then what becomes of those pious, simple, and humble men, who answer to none of these desiderata? I presume they must retire, and leave the field to more grand and gaudy orators, who, as the reviewer aptly expresses it, "went forth" from the halls of erudition, with all the pomp of a brilliant movement, to take the world captive with the magnificence of their achievements. The reviewer thus proceeds: "Fine abstractions, subtle reasonings, and lofty conceptions, as they belong to the regions of pure intellect, can only be bodied forth in a style which they create for themselves, and which is in nearest alliance with their peculiar nature; and we are persuaded that, in nine cases out of ten, the latter is censured because the former is not understood. The style is involved and obscure, to those who have not the capacity to comprehend the idea it naturally conveys, and, very probably, in the simplest manner." Here the theory of talent has made some advances; for not only is the minister extolled for his "fine abstractions, subtle reasonings, and lofty conceptions," but a congregation, devoid of such noble qualifications, is scorned and insulted; and it is represented as something more than a misfortune, not to be able to follow the great man through those regions of "pure intellect," into which his superior faculties have enabled him to soar. So that we have come to this point at last, that not only the preachers, but the hearers of the gospel, ought to be men of refined and cultivated intellect, lest the valuable seed, scattered by the metaphysical sower, should fall into thankless and unfruitful soil! The Scriptures do, indeed, talk of a preparation of the soil, but for other purposes than those

contemplated by the reviewer: "sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow-ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

I pass over all the fustian of the review in its personal compliments to the minister, whose sermons called forth that ill-advised critique, for such topics are not within the compass of my remarks; but when we hear preachers of the gospel proclaimed, in an evangelical review, as "stars* of the first magnitude, inimitable, sui generis," &c., we need not be much at a loss, to find a stone wherewith to crush such nonsense. It is at hand: "that ye might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written, that none of you be puffed up one against another;" "what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

In the same magazine, but in a later number, we have kindred sentiments again avowed, though with more sobriety of language: the reviewer is noticing a new publication of some of Jeremy Taylor's works, of which he thus speaks: "We have never been of the number of those, who admired the theology of Jeremy Taylor; it is crude, conjectural, and, not in a few places, unscriptural. We are not aware, that on a single difficult point in religious controversy, he is to be regarded as a safe guide. He was too imaginative on the one hand, and too dogmatical on the other, ever to attain anything like a sober and well-digested view of the Christian scheme. He blundered, *in limine*, on the doctrine of original sin, and this error vitiated, to a lamentable degree, his entire theology. No well-grounded student of the doctrine of Paul, in the first four chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, can read six pages in Bishop Taylor's theological writings, without perceiving a leaven of pharisaic dependence, inconsistent alike with just views of the total depravity of our nature, and a simple, entire acceptance through the righteousness of the great surety." (*E. M.*, Dec., 1835, pp. 5, 49.) All this is well, every word is just and sound; for it is quite true, even as Coleridge could discern, that Taylor's views do not differ essentially from the Socinian scheme: but how great must be our surprise, after so fair a proem of the reviewer, to read this foul conclusion! "We are so conscious of the great value of Jeremy Taylor's writings, that we cannot but rejoice to see them in their present cheap and elegant form, and accompanied, as they are, with an elaborate and *highly talented* critique from the pen of our best writers."

The reviewer, therefore, rejoices that the works of a teacher, whose theology is "crude, conjectural, and highly unscriptural," have been published, in a cheap and elegant form; the cheapness, for general dissemination, the elegance, for the lovers of smart things; and yet, when so disseminated, the reviewer largely confesses, that their author teaches false doctrine concerning original sin, and to such a degree, as "lamentably to infect his whole theology;" nay, he has not written "six pages," without contradicting the gospel as taught by Paul, and without manifesting "the leaven of the Pharisees," of which our Lord warned us to beware. In short, this bishop's works are against "acceptance through righteousness of the great surety." Could, then, Baronius, Bellarmine, the Tridentine fathers, the holy inquisition, or the man of sin himself, have found a writer

* The fancy of representing the celebrity of our fellow-creatures, in the metaphor of a star, originated, I believe, with the stage-players; at least, the great mimes of the day are called "stars," in the language of the stage: but when this metaphor is adopted by Christians, it brings to our recollection "the star wormwood, which fell into the waters, and made men die of its bitterness."

more exactly suited to their tastes, than this same bishop as pourtrayed by the reviewer? And yet he rejoices that his works are republished in a cheap and elegant form, and is conscious of their great value!

But the mystery soon explains itself; for the reviewer goes on to say, "the main value we attach to the works of Jeremy Taylor, is the noble and holy excitement, which they are fitted to apply to the mind, *particularly those who are candidates for the work of the Christian ministry.*" Noble and holy excitement! such, it may be presumed, as animated the Pythian, when, inflated with Delphic gas, she poured forth extemporaneous verse to admiring Greece. For, surely, after all the reviewer had said, it cannot be the holiness of Christians. Any thing, however, that will make preachers cut a figure in the pulpit, from whatever quarter, is acceptable to those, who are labouring under this raging thirst for talent.

Now, if sentiments like these occasionally make their appearance in the *Evangelical Magazine*, and are allowed to pass without animadversion from its numerous correspondents, who either are, or may be, the whole body of dissenting ministers, several evangelical members of the established church, and many Wesleyan Methodists, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion, than that such sentiments are at present in vogue, and that the reviewer is uttering, with confidence, the received opinions of the day; a fact not to be passed over without grave reflections on the inroads, which the principles of this world have made on the simplicity of evangelical wisdom.

LETTER XVI.

BAD taste and bad doctrine generally go hand in hand; I mean, bad taste in rhetoric and in the composition of language; for bad doctrine is most friendly to refined taste in those elements, which constitute the dominion of the senses. This is a remark, which I am aware requires historical and moral proof; but the limits of these letters compel me to withhold the proof at present, and to content myself with stating this proposition, that where the evangelical institutes are perverted, weakened, denied, forgotten, or superseded, there we may reasonably expect to find a bad taste prevailing in the language of the churches; and, *vice versa*, the proposition will be found also to be true.

Having, therefore, attentively considered all that has gone before, it might be expected, that we should discover the pulpit of our age manifesting a corrupt taste both in language and sentiment. And this *is* the case, and will be so acknowledged, perhaps, by another generation, when the language of truth, of nature, and of the gospel, shall have silenced, with its majestic simplicity, the worthless jinglings of our popular oratory. But it is not merely in style, but in the region of thought and sentiment, that bad taste prevails; for it would be an easy, though an ungracious task, to select from various religious publications, which have issued from the press within the last twenty years, specimens of the worst taste in composition; specimens of the grossest inaptitude of words to the subject; the vices of a metaphysical abstruseness, conceited phraseology, suspicious sentimentality, or redundant and misplaced ornament. Sometimes, the authors are so carried away with zeal for pretty sentences, that they lapse unconsciously into false doctrine, and, by a lavish use of metaphorical embellishments, utter expressions, which could scarcely be reconciled with the Assembly's Catechism, or any received standard of orthodoxy. Sometimes, a dashing allusion to a discovery of science, betrays them into a momentary neology,* and sometimes, a bright idea tempts them to do violence to a text of Scripture, and wrest its meaning into a curious quaintness.

But the error of taste, observable in some religious teachers, is not confined to their sermons or writings; it extends even to *the manner* with which they deliver their set orations from the pulpit or platform. This manner sometimes partakes (let the truth be spoken) of gross conceit or ridiculous affectation. At least, on particular occasions, when they are expected to create an effect, some individuals throw into their general demeanour, an air of finery, simulated pathos, or exaggerated feeling, which, by a calm and clear-sighted spectator, cannot possibly be set down to anything but *acting*, and acting, too, on a stage where not so much as a fictitious thought should be tolerated. I much suspect, that in the minds of many of the auditors there is a tacit unexpressed feeling, when such exhibitions are going on, that the admired and popular orator is performing his part very well, but still that it is a part; a scene in a tragedy, got up

* It is not to be supposed, that I am heaping together criminations without proofs to substantiate them; those proofs are now before me, but it is not necessary to publish them.

for an occasion; so difficult is it to give to sentimentality or artificial emotion, whether expressed by words, gesture, or looks, the appearance and force of truth, in the cool and perhaps severe judgment of an English audience.

An occasion once offered itself, for some evangelical members of the established church, to attend a public meeting of dissenters in their neighbourhood. By my advice, they went to the meeting; for it was my wish that some unreasonable prejudices should be removed, by their hearing the admired orators of a sect, of which they knew little but by misrepresentation. They were persons on whose judgment and right feelings I could rely with confidence. The effect produced on their minds, by what they heard and saw, was unfavourable: they freely acknowledged, that the speakers had a happy command of flowing oratory, and were evidently endowed with no mean abilities; "but," said they, "there was, several times, such an air of conceit and finery in their manner, and they said some things of themselves or their friends, with such evident intention to produce a particular effect, that we felt as if we were listening to actors in a theatre."

What a lesson might this be to the advocates of the rhetorical art, in whatever way exercised! But who shall teach this lesson, to minds seeking the applause of a school, nurtured in an artificial discipline, and ignorant or incredulous of the powers of truth's irresistible eloquence?

But there are writers who seem to commend, *ex cathedra*, "skilful management," both of matter and manner, to the occupants of the pulpit; for what can be the meaning of the following passage? "Whatever the mode of address, or whatever the choice of topics, there are two qualities inseparable from religious instruction; these are *seriousness* and *affection*. In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that while, with unsparing fidelity, we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, *it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips*, and we may then expect them to realize its import, *when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it.*"*

In simplicity of style and in good taste, the evangelical clergy excel the dissenting ministers, though in the oratorical art itself they come far behind them. The clergy, with a few exceptions, do not impress their hearers with an idea of their abilities, and are more to be admired for their zeal and sincerity, than for their powers of suasion at public meetings; but in the pulpit, they are not unfrequently efficacious preachers, and for the most part, are free from the vices of *bad taste*. Some of the evangelical clergy I could name, who, though their preaching has been long and worthily esteemed, have never once, perhaps, in all their ministerial career,

* "On the discouragements and supports of the Christian ministry." By Robert Hall.

"Compared with names like these," says another modern teacher of great repute, "how poor were the subjects of ancient oratory! and such is their force, such the freshness of their power (descriptions of the day of judgment) that though a thousand times presented to the imagination, they may yet again, *whenever skilfully managed, command breathless attention*, while the sands of the preacher's hour are running low." *Natural History of Enthusiasm.*

employed a studied figure of speech, or made use of an illustration, or addressed the imagination with a single embellishment of rhetoric. Their preaching is a plain, unornamental style of serious *talking*; and yet, by this talking, by this pious conversation from the pulpit, how deep a hold have they established on the affections of their hearers; how vastly is their ministry preferred to the unquestionably superior discourses, superior in language and management, in the neighbouring dissenting chapel, where "talent" perhaps is "wasting its sweetness on the *desert air*!"

It is, however, extremely difficult, perhaps hopeless, to secure acknowledgment to the full force of these truths, from one who has thought that his great strength is in his abilities, and that "a man of talent" is sure to fill a chapel. All that he has seen or heard amongst his associates, in his academical and pastoral days, has contributed to strengthen his delusion; and to make him think, that as knowledge is power in the world, so is talent power in the gospel. With such a theory, it is impossible altogether to exclude the theatrical art from the pulpit; for he that is managing his abilities to produce effect, will naturally adopt these subsidiary practices, which invest oratory with power in the forum or the senate: and, perhaps, all may be extremely well managed according to rule, and the discourses, as well as the mode of delivery, may be exactly after the model of academical perfection; and yet all this apparatus is useless, and produces little effect! Hence, some who are conscious of their superior qualifications, who know that they are in possession of an ample store of information, and a facile flow of speech, are surprised, and sometimes offended, to find all these precious commodities disregarded; whilst others, who have none of their excellences, command attention, and are eminently successful in the ministry. It leads them to suppose, that the people have no discernment; that they are a herd of ignorant, illiterate, and vulgar-minded fools; that it is in vain to cast away valuable seed on such a thankless and barren soil; and that a pastor, who has been so slighted, will but shew a proper respect to his office, by turning away in indignation from intellects, which neither appreciate his instructions nor comprehend his superiority. I have known one minister, at least, under this false impression, hasten "to fresh fields and pastures new," after having for some years, in vain poured forth the far-fetched treasures of his study upon his bewildered congregations. The people rarely could understand the abstractions of the preacher, who rarely condescended to preach a plain gospel sermon; and thus, after a cold and fruitless union, the minister and the church separated; he, despising his people, and they, never mentioning his name but as of "a high gentleman." Had this minister's discernment not been clouded by the prevailing delusion, and had he studied the style and doctrine of the old writers, instead of daily feeding his mind with the labours of the "subtile and irrefragable doctors," who, with all their deep thinking, never prove any thing, nor ever discover any available truth, the catastrophe might have been very different, and he might now have been the happy pastor of a large and affectionate flock.

Before this subject is finally dismissed, a word should be said on the influence, which Robert Hall's writings at present exercise on the dissenting body. The publication of his complete works, and the applause with which they have been greeted, in various quarters, have stimulated too many students of divinity to imitate his style, both in language and dialectick, and with feeble powers to reach, or at least to approach near, the eminence occupied by that brilliant disquisitionist. It is a vain and unprofitable effort, and wears out the wings of many an aspiring genius, in

labours which, if applied in a proper direction, might produce some happy result. Robert Hall is entitled to praise in his proper place; but that place can hardly be within the precincts, though perhaps not far from the confines, of the church of Christ. It certainly would be improper to call him a divine, for divinity is not to be found in the pages of his elegant writings: he is an admirable reasoner, but his province was to overthrow the Deist, rather than to improve the Christian; and I suspect that another age will confess, that he was too abstract for edification, and too pious for pure reason. If metaphysics could have added power and life to the quick and powerful word of God, if logic could have sharpened that two-edged sword, which pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, it would have been effected by Robert Hall;* but he that gave us the truth in Christ, knew, by his superior wisdom, that it was inexpedient to strengthen his word from the sources of metaphysical cognition, which he left to be explored by those, who love to touch the short limits of the reasoning faculties, where they are soon stifled in the thin atmosphere of psychological analysis.

* There is a saying abroad, attributed to Robert Hall, that "voluminous Dr. Owen is a continent of mud;" a scornful *bon mot*, which I have heard some of the modern school quote with high relish. We may safely appeal to time to confute the sneer; for I suspect, that Owen's works will never be laid aside, in spite of their uncouth style, unless, indeed, the son of perdition should again take possession of all the earth. "The continent" may indeed be alluvial, but it is on that account the more fruitful; and the soil which has made it, is brought down from the holy mountains by a river, whose fountain-head no eye of man has seen.

But this sarcasm may probably have been attributed to a wrong author.

LETTER XVII.

THE question of comparative merit, between the congregational dissenters and the evangelical church people, is to be decided, according to the wishes of some persons, by an appeal to their comparative* piety; a mode of deciding the question which, in my opinion, is faulty and reprehensible; for not only does the state of absolute isolation of each dissenting church, produce a vast moral variety in the whole body, so that what may be true of one society would be quite untrue of another; but the qualities of piety are such, as to forbid our placing them in the scales, and pronouncing on their value. There are various sorts of piety; of the Scribes and Pharisees, of public worship, of closet devotion, of secret ascetism, of spiritual meditation, of superstitious will-worship, of desponding melancholy, of joyous hope, of unseen alms-deeds and works of love, of open munificence in the cause of religion, of trembling fear, of dawning hope, of all-enduring faith, of patience, and of love; and of these, though some belong to superstition or hypocrisy, yet they may not seem so to our eyes, and of the others, which are, indeed, acceptable to Omniscience, we may know nothing; it is, therefore, a safe, wise, and blessed command, "to judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

But it is quite lawful, to state facts that have come under our observation, and to divulge truths, the knowledge of which may conduce to some good end. Now, one of these facts is this; that the *true* evangelical church people, seem fully alive to the danger, pollutions, and snares of the world, and the constant necessity of watching against its influence; that their warnings are often directed to this topic, and their practices regulated accordingly; whilst amongst the dissenters, the vast importance of watchfulness against the chief enemy, is slightly apprehended and feebly inculcated. This remark will not, however, apply to *all* who are usually classed under the denomination "evangelical;" because it is a painful truth, that of that party, whether lay or clerical, there are many who are misplaced amongst serious Christians; for not only is the denomination so widely extended now, as to include any clergyman who merely preaches justification by faith, and assists the missionary cause; but all ladies and gentlemen, who lend a helping hand to the machinery of the party, whether by purse or influence, are likewise set down as serious Christians, though their lives are plainly inconsistent with the self-denying profession of the cross. I therefore do not speak here of the glittering phalanx of metropolitan evangelicals, which occupies the high places at the May meetings, and which, after the speeches of the convocation, is disbanded for the

* This comparison has been given in favour of the established church, by Dr. Pye Smith. "I must profess my opinion, that *the increase* of vital piety in the established church, within the last thirty or forty years, has been proportionably, and, comparing the measure of advantages, greater than among us."

"Necessity of Religion to the well-being of a Nation," a sermon, by John Pye Smith.—p. 42.

evening route, or the avocations of aristocratical ambition; nor of the tempestuous millenarians of the coronet; nor of the staff of shewy preachers, moving amidst the adulation of drawing-rooms and the incense of patrician admirers; nor of those dignitaries or pluralists, who, with a seraphic faith, calmly enjoy the profitable corruptions of their tainted church; nor of those busy ladies and gentlemen, who, with the slang of doctrine on their lips, seem to think that they have a plenary indulgence to serve two masters. No; the works of these persons are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and charity is not wounded by seeing them struck out of the list: but I speak here of those who indeed are evangelical, in the best sense of the word, who have escaped the pollutions that are in the world by obeying the gospel, and to whom the gospel has come, not only in word but in power, separating them entirely from that, which if a man loves, the love of the Father cannot be in him. (1 John ii. 15.)

Amongst such we may observe a vivid apprehension of the dangers of the world, and that, too, chiefly manifested by those, who have taken refuge within the sanctuary from the patrician ranks of society. Neither is this a surprising phenomenon; for such persons, in their days of gaiety, were behind the scenes of fashionable life; they knew the secrets of its iniquity; they saw the paint and varnish of the actors; they were familiar with the pulleys and the tricks of the shifting scenes; and, feeling in their hearts, that all on that stage were perpetually employed in the tragedy of practical atheism, they have placed themselves, in great alarm, as far as possible from the neighbourhood of this unmasked iniquity. There are also evangelical clergymen, who faithfully warn their flock of the danger of the world to believers, who know the sunk rocks and whirlpools in its fair and treacherous seas, and who advise its navigators to stop their ears, lest they should be captivated with the song of the Syrens. It is in vain to give warnings of the "motions of sins working in the members," and of the proclivity of the human heart to temptation, unless the greatest temptation of all is set forth in its true character, and repulsed from any lodgment in the mind, which false reasonings and treacherous affections too frequently offer it. The habitual inclination of the will is to follow the solicitations of the senses: these solicitations are concentrated in the world; for whether the temptation be by wordly friendships, gain, pleasure, or applause, it will be found, on analysis, that the secret of the temptation is, to draw off the mind from the *spiritual habit* to the life of the senses, to set the affections on things below and not on things above, to fix the eye on visible and temporal delusions, and to turn it away from invisible and eternal realities. Hence, there is, in the well-known words of the apostle John, a rich storehouse of mental philosophy, though expressed in the concise language of an oracle; "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world:" and it would be well, if the deep wisdom of this oracle occupied the attention of those preachers, who love to "think deeply" in the pulpit, but who are constantly fathoming other profundities than these.

Now, it so happens, that I, who have heard but very few sermons of the evangelical clergy, but very many of the dissenting ministers, can report, that the former frequently allude to this subject, and press it on their hearers with serious admonitions; whilst the latter, by some accident, have never, in my hearing at least, made it groundwork for those reproofs, which the topic of "watchfulness" seems necessarily to include. In short, I never did but once, and that in a passing sentence of a weekly

lecture, hear a dissenting minister preach on the danger of the world to believers. It is possible, but extremely improbable, that this might be accidental; I therefore look for the solution of their silence to another theory; and believe that it is to be traced to the fact, that dissenting ministers are not aware, *by experience*, of the peril in which the church is placed, by its proximity to the world that lieth in wickedness. A dissenting minister has generally come forth from a pious dissenting family; he has been sent, in the opening dawn of manhood, to a theological academy, where he has witnessed only gravity of manners, a pure morality, and the almost ascetic discipline of the religious life: the three or four years of his academical course, have been spent in the study, or in rural itinerancy, or amongst students going forth from the cell to the pulpit; his friends and acquaintances have been all accepted members of Christian churches, and his heart has, ever since he began to think seriously, been fully engaged in the movements of the religious society. What, then, can such a one know, by experience, of the world? How can he be the pilot, amongst the sandbanks of a dangerous stream, which he has never navigated, and knows only by description?

Moreover, it seems to be a general opinion, amongst Christians of the middling and lower classes, that the world is to be found only in regions far above their level; that it is in "the west-end of the town," amidst the gilded equipages and gay festivities of patrician parade,

"Where throngs of knights and barons hold,
In weeds of peace high triumph hold;"

forgetting that there is "a world" amongst those who are in trade, and are accumulating money; or anywhere, in fact, where the means of power over that which will gratify the senses, are put into the hands of man. Thus they do not dread the waterfall, till they are amazed by its thunder and the clouds of its declivity, nor do they remember, that their frail bark may be carried down by the rapids, many miles distant from the last great leap.

But it is the world of trade, the world of wealth, the world of pride and of power, created by any circumstances, against which the voice of warning should be unsparingly raised. There are many dissenters wealthy and prosperous, and many more desire to be so with all their hearts,* and some

* The following observations deserve serious attention; they are, indeed, the observations of an enemy, but, alas! are directed with precision to a vulnerable part. It is in vain to deny the truth of the accusations, which apply to some dissenters as well as to professedly serious members of the established church. "Of all the indications of a worldly spirit, none is so distinctly and emphatically denounced as a love of riches (here follow many texts). Do they serve to alarm that class of Christians, who remonstrate with such morbid piety against popular amusements, or to check, under a sense of spiritual danger, their desire to increase their worldly means? Do the serious deny themselves the use of riches, on account of their tendency to corrupt the human heart? We apprehend not. As far as we are enabled to discover, they testify no reluctance whatever to follow the footsteps of 'the worldly' in the road to wealth. We look in vain for any distinguishing mark, in this respect, between the two classes of society; that *which is of the world*, and that which is *not of the world*. All appear to be actuated by the common impulse; to push their fortunes in life. All exhibit the same ardent, active, enterprising zeal in their respective pursuits. The mammon of unrighteousness seems to inspire none of the serious either with terror or aversion. Where the ordinary channels for procuring wealth are closed against them, they shew no disinclination to obtain it in other ways. It comes equally acceptable to them in the shape of a legacy, or of a dower with a companion for life. The love of money, which is the root of all evil—(mark the terrific epithet!)—is treated by them with an unaccountable degree of lenity and indulgence, considering their repugnance to worldly amusements: not a word escapes from them on the pernicious effects of wealth. Not

there are, who have adopted a luxurious style of living, which it would be in vain to defend against the direct prohibitions of the New Testament. To enter into this subject minutely; to treat of the ostentation of expensive furniture, the display of elaborate dinners, the glitter of costly habiliments, ever varying according to the rapid variations of fashion; and the gay conversation, ill-disguised with family worship at the conclusion of the feasts, with many other points of a kindred character, would be a long task; I therefore only glance at these things, which will be well understood in certain quarters: and as there are some, who have, unawares, found themselves in the vortex, and begin to doubt their situation, and others, who are perfectly tranquil in the midst of their peril, I would to all such recommend, when they next are in circumstances to inquire into the fitness and safety of their position, to ask themselves, if they could in the midst of their worldly enjoyments, with a good conscience, make that profession which Paul has made for a justified Christian? Gal. ii. 20.

It is much to be apprehended, that the trial of "the world" ought, atth is present time, to be felt most acutely by conscientious persons of the middling classes; for, as trade is principally in the hands of that class, it is with them, that the difficulty of struggling with the unquestionably dishonest practices of the day must rest. We hear, everywhere, that trade is now conducted on new and dishonourable principles; that the system of competition, underselling, and frontless rivalry, which, thirty years ago, was considered scandalously disreputable, is now become a general custom; and that those, who are endeavouring to make their fortunes as tradesmen, too often resort to tricks and artifices, which ought to bring the blush of shame on the cheek of honour. If this is really the case—and it is loudly proclaimed by those who have every opportunity of knowing the truth—how great must be the temptations with which some members of Christian churches are now environed! How painfully must they perceive, that *they* have their "world" to contend with, not less than the wealthy patrician and the exalted prince! Happy, then, is that Christian who, in providing for his family, knows that all his exertions are "with clean hands and a pure heart," and who can depart in peace from this scene of temptations, without having wounded his conscience by practices, which are incompatible with *Christian* integrity.*

a tract issues from their repositories to caution us against its pursuit; not a homily is heard from their pulpits on the solemn obligation to war against it..... We see many of the serious rolling in handsome chariots, maintaining numerous servants, giving costly entertainments; we see their carriages emblazoned with the same heraldic ornaments, their attendants clothed in the same gaudy liveries, their tables covered with the same luxurious viands, that are in ordinary use with the men of the world. These trappings of pride, and vanity, and vain-glory, seem to find just as much favour in their eyes, as with other people..... Rank and importance are discarded by none of the serious, as unfitting appendages of a spiritual life. Nay, they are sometimes sought after with an avidity that, to vulgar apprehension, seems strangely at variance with the lofty pretensions of such men," &c., &c., &c.

"Pretensions of the Evangelical Class."—*Edinburgh Review*, No. cvii p. 106.

* A description of the Albigeneses, by the Romish Inquisitor, Reincrius, A.D. 1230, will shew that the Protestants of the thirteenth century, had their cross to bear in trade, not less than in the profession of their faith. "In order that they may better avoid lies, and oaths, and trickery, they do not enter into trade, but they live by the labour of their hands alone, as ordinary hired workmen. Even their teachers are mere artizans. Riches they seek not to multiply, but are content with the necessities of life."

This could not be mistaken for a description of *modern* dissenters.

LETTER XVIII.

IN the present crisis of our church history, we seem called upon, not to omit altogether some notice of the voluminous controversy of Puseyism, which now agitates all the church of England, and will not terminate without producing some important results.

To Dr. Pusey, the regius professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford, is generally attributed the origination of that sect or party, which is now called after his name; but if honour were given to whom honour is due, the more appropriate name of the sect would be Hamites,* from Dr. Hook, the teacher to whom even Dr. Pusey has attributed his knowledge of those precious truths, which characterise the Oxford Tracts.

Dr. Pusey returned from the continent, in the year 1828, and then published an apologetic inquiry into the charge brought against the theologians of Germany, by Mr. Rose, the Christian advocate, of Cambridge. Mr. Rose, the late principal of King's College, London, was certainly deeply imbued with those opinions, which are now known by the name of Puseyism, as early as the year 1824; for, at that time, I conversed with him on these questions, at Cambridge; and such were the sentiments which I used to hear him express, that they led me to suppose he was aiming at the revival of the Laudean school, which seemed, in those days, to exist only in history. Puseyism had not yet been mentioned; and the Laudean views, now in a fair way to influence the whole body of the clergy, were not openly entertained by any writer in the church, as far as I am acquainted with clerical proceedings.

Dr. Pusey's opinions are supposed to have been not unfavourable to Rationalism, when he took up the pen in defence of the German theology; and on that ground, most probably, the *Edinburgh Review* defended Pusey, most warmly, *versus* Rose. An entire change, however, must subsequently have taken place in the sentiments of this gentleman, who, together with his coadjutor, Mr. Newman,† and all the leading tractators of Oxford, came to consider Mr. Rose a sort of patriarch in their cause.

In the year 1830, the Rev. J. H. Newman, and the Rev. R. H. Froude, fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, disagreed with the provost of their college and some of the tutors, on the subject of their exercising another prerogative, besides the usual offices of tuition and literary superintendence; and upon the provost's refusing to allow their claims, resigned the offices they held as college tutors. What Mr. Newman's opinions may have been, at that time, I know not; but in the year 1828, Mr. Froude, the now all-but-canonized saint of the party, thus wrote of Mr. Newman in a letter to a friend: "Sep. 7, 1828; I heard from N. the other day, with the testimonials.....He is a fellow that I like more and more, the more

* From *hamus*, a hook.

† Mr. Newman has lately published a volume of sermons with the following dedication: "To the Rev. Hugh James Rose, Principal of King's College, London, and domestic chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, when hearts were failing, bade us stir up the gift that was in us, and betake ourselves to our true mother, this volume is inscribed by his obliged and faithful friend, the author."

I think of him; only I would give a few odd pence if he were not a *heretic* :” a heretic, in Mr. Froude’s phraseology, means a protestant, and N. is an abbreviation for Newman: at that time, therefore, “the Vicar of Saint Mary the Virgin” was not indoctrinated in the theology of the Oxford Tracts; indeed his opinions were bordering on low-church views.

About midsummer of 1833, the party began publishing THE OXFORD TRACTS, having first organized themselves in a regular association, as is apparent by a sentence in Mr. Froude’s Remains: “Sep. 16, 1833, has sent me your resolutions for *our association*, which I think excellent;” and it is to the operations of this association, that we must now for a few moments turn our attention.

The system of the party seems to be this; to take advantage of the obviously incomplete and unfinished state of the Church of England; and knowing well that it is a mixed system, which, in the act of emerging from popery, was suddenly arrested by the death of Edward VI., to collect carefully all that it has of its ancient popish form, and to reject, as far as may be, without absolute infraction of ecclesiastical law, every thing that savours of its protestant regeneration. The Church of England is indeed an image of iron and clay, a fabric of ill-assorted and incongruous materials; but such as it is, Elizabeth, who came to the throne, as a heroine of the protestant cause, after the Marian persecution, would not allow any change to take place in this her brother’s unfinished plan; and indeed it seems certain, that she wished rather to recede to some more papal form of religion, till she was stimulated by the unceasing intrigues and treasons of the papists, to appear, to the world at least, a protectress of the protestant religion. The discrepancies and contradictions of sentiment in the authorized standards of the Anglican faith, have been frequently exposed: the prayer-book, the homilies, the articles and the canons, are a quarry from which a Laudean, a Puritan, a Calvinist, and an Arminian, may each hew out his own religion, and plausibly argue that his is the orthodox selection: but besides this, the very omissions of the established church, the many questions which it has left open and undecided, allow a Laudean to argue, that if the established church, which was once avowedly popish, has not, in emerging from popery, denounced or rejected such or such “usages,” it is fair to suppose that she does not oppose their retention; and, therefore, it is right and proper to revive any “ancient usage” not absolutely prohibited. Amongst these omissions, for sake of example, I mention “prayers for the dead,” which, it is now decided in the courts of law, the Church of England *does not forbid*; and if she does not forbid, then the next step is to revive the custom; and so of divers other “usages.”

In such a system as this then, it is certain that the clergy, whenever they are influenced by any decidedly religious feelings, of whatever class those feelings may be, must advance too far one way or the other: if they deeply feel and value the protestant doctrines, then they *must* approach too near the puritanical or dissenting regions; that is, too near for their engagements of obedience to the popish parts of the prayer-book and the canons; but if, on the other hand, their religious feelings should be of the superstitious order, then they must advance far into popery, too far for the thirty-nine articles and some of the homilies; so that if religious feeling is in action amongst the clergy, there ever must be a tendency to puritanical or popish tenets. The temptations, however, to a clergyman, are so strong and numerous towards the popish side, and so evidently does he enhance his own power by going over to that religion, that it is only wonderful they have not marched *en masse* on the Laudean road long ago. In the reign

of Charles I., Archbishop Laud, with rapid strides, took the Church of England into Puseyism, or popery faintly concealed: the executioner's axe stopped his project, which revived again, however, in the reign of Queen Anne, but was foiled with a great overthrow by the revolution of 1688. It was the evident policy of the Brunswick dynasty, to discourage the high church party, and to promote clergymen, with opposite views, to the bench: hence, the two first Georges steadily repressed the old Laudean school. Puseyism was consequently to be found chiefly, if not altogether, amongst the non-juring clergy, the Jacobites, and all the other pious malcontents of that æra. Bishop Ken,* and Hicks, and Collier, and others of that grade, kept up the consecrated flame of Puseyism and "privy conspiracy," till the flame seemed to die out altogether with the death of the non-jurors. During the reign of George III., and his successor, the clergy seemed perfectly contented with their secular emoluments, and were little disposed to trouble themselves with any questions of an exciting nature: *religious feeling, for sixty years at least, was not in action*, and, therefore, they were neither puritans nor papists, neither evangelical nor Puseyistic, but simply consumers of tithes, or, if need be, persecutors of methodism, when methodism arose to disturb their golden slumbers. At last, however, the old Laudean fever has revived, and has spread its contagion through all ranks of the clergy: a swarm of unknown and inferior priests may now justify the adoption of Puseyistic opinions, by reference to the Prelates of Oxford and Lincoln, and, it is believed, to the Archbishop of Canterbury also.

But now to the Oxford Tracts. The managers of "the association" seem to have laid down three principles in the course they are pursuing. 1. To restore every thing practised or believed in the papal communion, not expressly forbidden and plainly prohibited by some decision of the established church: this they call, "inquiring after ancient usages of the holy catholic church," "cherishing a transmissive religion," and, "listening to the venerable voice of the fathers, councils," &c. 2. To enjoin silence on all the protestant tenets of the church, such as the atonement, justification by faith. 3. To make a liberal use of phrases expressive of their abhorrence of popery; which, however, has not succeeded in deceiving even the Roman catholics, who perfectly understand this politic language of their best friends, and most useful allies.

A few specimens will suffice. Dr. Hook thus teaches: "With the holy apostles, the primitive fathers, and our own reformers, the simple object being the maintenance and propagation of God's revealed truth, they sought to promote this object, not by the bible only, or by *transmissive religion*† only, but by the reciprocal influence and conjoined operation of both; the one [*i. e.* the bible] suggesting, the other [*i. e.* tradition] *confirming*; the one, by the inculcation of moral sentiments, and the adoption of the means of grace, ‡ training the mind and preparing the soul; the other, given by inspiration, for doctrine, for confutation, for correction, for amendment, for instruction in righteousness." (Dr. Hook's five sermons; iii. 84) Thus

* Ken, Kettlewell, Hicks, Collier, are now favourite saints of the Oxford school. It is rumoured, that, by some solemn process, they have canonized Bishop Ken, *more Romano*, so that now he is Saint Ken.

The extent to which the non-juring attachments of the Oxford party are carried, is strikingly displayed by Dr. Pusey's sermon on the 5th of November. The reverend gentleman seems anxious to revive, if possible, the Jacobite agitation; so great is his love for the Stewarts and the non-jurors.

† *Transmissive religion*; one of the words of the propaganda vocabulary for *tradition*.

‡ *Means of grace*; a phrase for ceremonies, penances, feasts of the saints, fasts, &c.

tradition and the bible are to be the joint guides of a Christian; the other guide, by whom the bible was dictated, not being acknowledged as the instructor of Christians by any writer of the new Oxford school. "No sooner was a bishop appointed over one of the apostolical churches, than the direction given by Saint Paul was, 'the things which thou hast heard of me of many witnesses, the same commit thou (not in writing, but *παρὰ* θου, commit in trust) to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' Now, what is this but saying, in other words, lay the foundation of that which I [*i. e.* Dr. Hook] have ventured to call an hereditary religion; a religion which, handed down from generation to generation, may spread, like the roots of a tree, on and below the surface of society, forming a *germinating principle of piety*, blending itself into *man's mode of thought*, and thus influencing indirectly even when its direct influence is not sought. *Here is the foundation, the pillar, the ground of truth.*"

Every word of this is popish. Bellarmine has put in precisely the same plea for tradition; and both he and Dr. Hook would have us believe, that Paul, by word of mouth, put in trust to Timothy certain admonitions and remembrances of things to be believed and done, which were not committed to writing; that Timothy "put these in trust" to other "witnesses," who "put them in trust" to the next generation, and so on from generation to generation, till they came down to that undefined period, when they became part of the established creed and fixed rule of conduct for the church catholic.

But what is this "hereditary religion," and what this "germinating principle of piety," which is to be our guide in comprehending the scriptures? In their zeal against popery, the Oxford tractators are careful to renounce the decrees of the Council of Trent, which, they tell us, are novelties and "abominations:": no; we are to enquire what was generally practised and believed, antecedent to the Council of Trent; we are to find out the popular traditions of the fathers and doctors of the church, before the fourteenth, or at the latest before the fifteenth century; and this we are to embrace as our "hereditary religion." This should be seen in the words of Dr. Hook: "The papist exalts tradition to an equality with the scripture, and then receives as tradition, *not what is really such, that is, what has been received as such by the Catholic Church*, but what has at any time been decreed by that branch of the Church, which is in slavery to the court of Rome. Thus the canons of the Council of Trent* are received as traditions. The papist, therefore, interprets scripture, not as we do, *by the light of tradition properly so called*, by reference

* It is but fair to hear the Council of Trent on the subject of tradition: it differs not the least from the decrees of the Oxford school: it is simply a question between them, as to which of the old stories and superstitions are genuine.

"The sacred œcumenic and general Council of Trent, rightly congregated in the Holy Ghost... considering, that the truths and discipline, which were received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves through the dictation of the Holy Ghost, are contained in written books or unwritten traditions, and have been delivered, as it were from hand to hand, till they have come down to our times; following, moreover, the examples of the orthodox fathers, doth receive and venerate with an equal affection and reverence of piety, all the books both of the Old and New Testament (seeing that one God is the author of each) as well as the traditions themselves, as if they had been spoken by the mouth of Christ himself, or dictated by the Holy Spirit, and preserved by a continual succession in the Catholic Church."

This is certain, that there is not one bud of "germinating piety," one item of "transmissive religion," accepted and cherished by the Oxford school, which is not also accepted and cherished by the Church of Rome.

to the opinions and practices of the primitive ages, and by deference to the authority of the Church Catholic, but according to certain dogmas, of a comparatively modern date, of the Roman Church (ii. 40)." The application of this rule is thus: "in forming our analogy of faith, let us, when duly prepared by prayer, compare scripture with scripture, let us attend to its grammatical interpretation; but let us place all under the supervision and correction of catholic tradition (117)."

Hence it is obvious, that this door being once opened, the Oxford tractators have given themselves licence to bring in their great harvest of superstitions, gathered from all the centuries of ecclesiastical history, which precede the Council of Trent; and that their theology, by which they are to "supervise and correct the scripture," is anything that has been generally entertained by the Church Catholic, from the Council of Nice to the Council of Constance; any dogma of darkness or usage of foolishness, from that insipid dreamer Hermas (one of the apostolical fathers, and a great favourite with the Oxford school,) down to Alphonsus Tostatus or Johannes de Turre crematâ.

The difference between Puseyism and Romanism, on the subject of traditions, being only one of dates; on the other great question of the church, the difference between them is only as to the caste of priests, to which all spiritual power upon earth is apportioned. They quite agree as to the fact, that priests are the sole vicegerents of Christ; the point of difference between them is merely, whether these priests are of the Roman or the Lambeth orders. "The church," says Dr. Hook, "stands towards us, in the same relation as the Apostles did towards the primitive Christians: she dogmatizes on certain articles of faith, and then requires us to act as the Bereans did after the preaching of the Apostles, to search the scriptures, and to ascertain for ourselves, what she says can be read therein or proved thereby: (ii. 43) the church dispenses the ordinary graces of the spirit: (iv. 94) where is the absurdity of receiving in the first instance, certain doctrines and articles, because* our holy mother the church assures us that they are the doctrines of scripture, and of the Church universal, of which she is a part, though we may not as yet have compared them with holy writ? Where is the absurdity of obeying the Holy Ghost, and permitting the church, in which we have been educated, thus to become to us the ground and pillar of truth." (iii. 87) And so, the Oxford tract, No. 17, on the Ministerial commission. "Thus did Christ stand in the midst of his generation as an Apostle, as one sent of God, and so must his

* The tract on "the grounds of our faith," addressed "ad clerum," and dated Oxford, the feast of St. Luke, complains that "at the reformation, the authority of the church was discarded by the spirit dominant amongst protestants, and scripture was considered as the sole document both for ascertaining and proving faith." All the writers of this party abominate protestants; they are always finding fault with their naughty deeds at the reformation; and Dr. Hook is anxious to be well rid of the appellation of a protestant. "The appellation," he says, "is not given to us, I believe, in any of our formularies, and has chiefly been employed in political warfare, as a watchword to rally in one band all who, whatever may be their religious differences, are prepared to act politically against the aggressions of Rome..... many of our divines object to the word (Archbishop Laud could not endure it). They contend, with good reason, that it is quite absurd to speak of the protestant religion; since a religion must of course be distinguished, not by what it renounces but by what it professes: they apprehend that it has occasioned a kind of sceptical habit of enquiry, not how much we ought to believe, but how much we may refuse to believe." Call to union, 82.

Just so. We refuse to believe all Dr. Hook's transmissive religion, and all the traditions stamped with the seal of approbation by the sacred œcumenic and general Council of Trent: we are protestants.

deputies (i. e. the priests) stand among their brethren, as men sent to a rebellious house, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, speaking with authority; and if we be asked by what authority we speak, and who gave us this authority, we have our credentials at hand, 'whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained;' 'verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'" The same tract very tenderly sets forth the inestimable advantage "to a humble and fearful member of Christ's flock," when his conscience is burthened, to know "that there is a duly commissioned minister of "God's word at hand, to whom he may open his grief, and receive the benefit of God's pardon;" and the same of a dying man, the tract says, "How, then, ought we to look upon the power which has been given us by Christ, but as a sacred treasury, of which we are ministers and stewards, which it is our duty to guard for the sake of the little ones?"

All this might have been written by a Roman Catholic priest; the blind obedience to the church, the humble submission to her dogmas, the belief that she imparts the Holy Spirit, the binding and loosing given to the priest, the pardon and absolution of sin by the priest, and the sacred treasury of forgiveness of sins in the keeping of the priest; this is sound papal doctrine: but surely, if any one is disposed to believe these things, would it not be much better to go to Rome at once, than to stop short at the door of the Church of England? For, whatever Dr. Hook and the Oxford tracts may be pleased to predicate of the establishment, as "the holy catholic church," this is certain, that it has all its catholicity to itself; for with the exception of the very small episcopal church in America, (which, by the way, the Oxford tractators do not acknowledge) the "catholic church" is known and recognized no where but in England and Ireland; if indeed, its present condition in Ireland can be called a recognition.

But now we proceed to the results of these fundamental doctrines of the party: "The true church reform," says Dr. Hook, "is a fair and candid examination of the question, whether the truth be in us or not, in order that it may be more carefully guarded; whether we have retained in our services, *all the old usages* we ought to have retained; whether there be any portion of the godly discipline of the primitive church, which our ancestors wished, but were not able to restore, three centuries ago, that can be restored now." (ii. 47)

This plan of "church reform" the Oxford tractators are zealously urging; they are inquiring into ancient usages," and restoring them as fast as may be. In Dr. Hook's sermon, entitled "a Call to Union," we find the reverend gentleman complaining of many innovations. He tells us, that it is now the prevailing practice for the minister to turn in prayer to the people, whereas* formerly (i. e. in the days of the mass) the ministers "turned from the people in prayer, to them in exhortation, so that even

* It is a canon of piety with all the Oxford school, that their priests should turn their backs to the people, during the time of prayer in the church service. For this purpose, they have their favourite "fald-stool" placed before the altar, on which the priest kneels, with his face to the stone cross on the altar, and his back to the people. This is the fashion at Mr. Newman's chapel at Littlemore, near Oxford. Pope Innocent III., in his book on the mysteries of the mass, decided that the priest should perform the service with his back to the people, and assigns this reason for the practice, because it is written, "thou shalt see my back parts." Ex. xxxiii. 13.

The real reason is, to impress the idea of the total separation and distinction between priest and people; as if the priest were performing some mystery, apart from the laity.

by his action, the people could distinguish between his address *to* them, and his address *for* them, and *with* them to God." (The italics here are Dr. Hook's). He further laments over that "unsightly novelty," a second pulpit, "adopted in some sanctuaries instead of the ancient fald-stool, or low desk;" he regrets, that the clergy "no longer say the communion service, standing at the communion-table, and that the table is deprived of the candlesticks, with which it is directed that it should be adorned, and that *several portions of the clerical habiliments have fallen into disuse.*" But greater sins than these are committed in "the sanctuary; the omission, when the Eucharist itself is administered, on the part of some of the clergy, to place the bread and wine with their own hands *as an oblation on the altar*: this is an omission of too serious a nature, to come under the head of a mere ceremony."

In the notes to this same sermon, the reverend author also reminds us, that "the decencies of religion" were carefully attended to, by the directions given to the chaplains of young Prince Charles, previous to his expedition of courtship to Spain: "that the room, appointed for prayer in the Prince's mansion, be decently adorned chapel-wise, with an altar, fonts, palls, linen-coverings, demy-carpets, four surplices, candlesticks, tapers, chalices, pattens, a fine towel for the Prince, and other towels for the household, a traverse of water for the communion, a bason and flaggons, two copes :..... that the communion be celebrated in due form, with an oblation of every communicant, and admixing water with wine, smooth wafers to be used for bread." Now, to most people, this catalogue of trumpery would appear more appropriate for a company of conjurers, preparing to exhibit their tricks, than for ministers of the christian religion; but with Dr. Hook, it passes for proof of ancient piety, and the beauties of transmissive religion.

It would be a long and laborious task, to recount the strange things proposed by the Oxford school. I would refer my reader for general information, to the *British Magazine passim*, where the sentiments of the party have been expressed, for some time past, without restraint.

An unfailling test of popery is the adoration of the Virgin Mary: this is the great act of "voluntary humility," which Satan introduced into the Church; this, with transubstantiation, is the consummation of idolatry: all the scattered particles of superstitious adoration, formerly the property of Diana of the Ephesians, the Dea Syria, the great queen Isis, the Mater Cybele, the Despoina Themis, the Virgin of the Zodiac, or the Venerable Luna, have been carefully collected into the popish laboratory; and out of these ingredients have come forth "Saint Mary, the Virgin, the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, the Rose of Sharon, and the Empress of the Angels." The process of "church reform" proposed by Dr. Hook, could not have proceeded thus far, without discovering that it has been a very ancient usage, established many centuries before the Council of Trent, to worship the "Queen of Heaven:" this is "a catholic" not a "Roman" tradition; and therefore, true to their system, the Oxford tractors have made wonderful advances, considering the short time their association has existed, to restore this *ancient usage*. Amongst Mr. Newman's published sermons, there is one entitled "The Reverence due to the Blessed Virgin;" for as Mr. Newman is vicar of Saint Mary-the-Virgin's Church at Oxford, and the officiating priest of the chapel of Saint Mary-the-Virgin, and Saint "Nicholas, Littlemore," he could scarcely do less than endeavour to extol his patroness. Mr. Newman says in his sermon, "she had, we may well suppose, that purity, sweetness, and innocence of heart, that bright vision

of faith, that confiding trust in her God, which raised all these feelings to an intensity, which *we ordinary mortals cannot understand*;" a very broad hint indeed, that she was divine and not mortal; "what must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only relative of the Son of God? this contemplation runs to a higher subject, *did we dare to follow it*; for what, think you, was the sanctity and grace of that human nature, of which God formed his sinless son, knowing, as we do, that what is born of the flesh is flesh, and that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean." Mr. Newman here declares for the doctrine of the sinless nature, or the immaculate conception of the virgin; so that he has already given in his adhesion to the Franciscan theory, and has exceeded even the measure of faith professed by the Dominicans! Mr. Newman informs us, that one of the reasons why the Virgin Mary "has not been more fully disclosed to us, in the celestial fragrancy and beauty of the spirit within her," is, that "it is too high a privilege for sinners like ourselves, to know the best and innermost thoughts of God's servants;" for how "is it possible, that we should bear to gaze on the creature's holiness in its fulness;" and therefore, "*it is in mercy to us* that so little is revealed about the blessed Virgin, in mercy to our weakness; though of her there are many things to say, *yet they are hard to be uttered seeing we are dull of hearing*;" i. e. not yet fully prepared to receive all the splendid revelations of Saint Peter Damian, and Saint Cardinal Bonaventura, concerning the ineffable Queen of Heaven.*

To hasten over these redundant superstitions, the bare existence of which I can only here briefly notice, I must not close this letter, without adverting to the great doctor of the Oxford holy catholic church. The reverend Richard Hurrell Froude, late fellow and tutor of Oriel College, son of the venerable Robert H. Froude, archdeacon of Totnes, Devon, was born A.D. 1803, "on the feast of the annunciation of the blessed virgin," and died Feb. 28, 1836, of a consumption, in the West Indies. The party have published his "Remains;" dating the publication, "on the feast of the purification of Saint Mary the virgin," 1838; and in the preface they thus express themselves: "Some apology may seem requisite, in the first place, for the very magnitude of the collection; as though authority were being claimed, in a preposterous way, for the opinions of one, undistinguished either by station or known literary eminence. This apology, it is believed, will be found *in the truth and extreme importance* of the views, to the development of which the whole is meant to be subservient; and also, in the instruction deriveable from a full exhibition of the author's character, as a witness to these views." From this compilation a very few extracts

* Professor Keble, the poet of the Oxford sect, has thus extolled the Virgin in verse.

Ave Maria! mother blessed!
To whom, caressing and caressed,
Clings the eternal child;
Favoured beyond Archangel's dream,
When first on thee with tenderest gleam,
The new-born Saviour smiled.

Ave Maria! thou, whose name,
All but adoring love may claim,
Yet may we reach *thy shrine*!
For he, thy son and Saviour, vows
To crown all lowly lofty brows,
With love and joy like thine.

will suffice. "Sep. 16, 1833.....has sent me your [*i. e.* professor Keble's] resolutions for our association, which I think excellent; only I should like to know why you flinch from saying, that the power of making the body and blood of Christ is vested in the successors of the apostles? It seems to me *much simpler*, and less open to cavil, than 'continuance and due application of the sacrament.' I suppose all dissenters think they have positive evidence, that their own ways are best calculated for 'the continuance and due application.'—"It has lately come into my head, that the present state of things in England [Aug., 1833] makes an opening for the *reviving the monastic system*. I think of putting the view forward, under the title of 'Project for reviving religion in great towns.' Certainly colleges of unmarried priests (who might, of course, retire to a living when they could and liked) would be the cheapest possible way of providing effectually for the *spiritual wants* of a large population.....I must go about the country, to look for stray sheep of the true fold; there are many about, I am sure; *only that odious protestantism sticks in people's gizzards*. I see Hammond takes that view of the infallibility of the church, which Pusey says was the old one. We must revive it. I am shocked to see Jeremy Taylor so heretical about excommunications: *he says, that when unjust, it is no evil!!!*"—Nov., 1833. "I wish you could get to know something of S. and W., and un—ize [probably, unevangelize], unprotestantize, un-Miltonize them. I think they are our sort, enthusiasts of a sort that not many are of."—Aug., 1834. "The administration of the communion is one of the very few religious duties now performed by the clergy, for which the ordination has been considered necessary. Preaching and reading the scriptures, is what a layman can do as well as a clergyman. And it no wonder the people should forget the difference between ordained and unordained persons, when they, who are ordained, do nothing for them [the people] but what they could have done just as well without ordination. If you are determined to have a pulpit in your church, *which I would much rather be without*, do put it at the west end of the church, or leave it where it is: every one can hear you perfectly, and what can they want more? But, whatever you do, pray don't let it stand in the light of the altar, which, if there is any truth in my notions of ordination, is more sacred than the Holy of Holies was in the Jewish temple." This hatred of pulpits and preaching is characteristic of the party; the performance of ceremonies, and the reading of prayers at the altar, they would fain have to supersede the preaching of the word.

"Oct. 4, 1831.....I am glad he has taken the curacy: all the methodists in these parts are cocking up their ears at the news of his approach: *may he escape becoming a gospel minister!* I have read the lives of Wickliffe and Peacocke in Strype: at present I admire Peacocke and dislike Wickliffe." The dislike of Wickliffe needs no interpretation; the admiration of Peacocke arises from this circumstance, that having been a Lollard, he recanted and went back to popery.—Jan., 1832. "I have not lately increased my admiration of the reformers: one must not speak lightly of a martyr, so I do not allow my opinions to pass the verge of scepticism; but I really do feel sceptical whether Latimer was *not something in the Bulteel line*."—March, 1835. "I have been reading Clarendon: I am glad I know something of the puritans, as it gives me a better right to hate Milton, and accounts for many things which most disgusted me in his, not in my sense of the word, poetry. Also, *I adore King Charles and Bishop Laud:*" to which the whole party cheerfully respond, Amen! "As to the reformers, I think worse and worse of them. Jewell was what

you would, in these days, call an irreverent dissenter. His defence of the apology disgusted me more than almost any work I have read.—Certainly the Council of Trent had no fair chance of getting at the truth, if they saw no alternative between transubstantiation and Jewellism.”

These few sentences will suffice. Froude is the great man of the Oxford party, and by his “Remains,” we may judge of the real views of the authors and promoters of the tracts.

Space is not left me to enter into the mystery of their interior doctrinal views; neither can I here shew how they teach, that all who are baptized in infancy are regenerate, and pardoned, and justified; that there is but one justification, and that, as it takes place in baptism, justification *by faith*, is a doctrine in which an adult is not at all concerned, provided he has been baptized as an infant; that when, by sin after baptism, the first grace is lost, no new fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness, except through the austerities of penance, or, as Professor Pusey expresses it, “by enduring pains, and abiding self-discipline, and continued sorrow, endeavouring again to become *capable* of mercy;” how that “more than one repentance after baptism would be very rare if not altogether hopeless; for we have no longer a whole-burnt offering to lay upon God’s altar;” and that “the church’s ministry of reconciliation shall be granted once, and only once, after baptism;” how that all spiritual experiences and testimony of the witness within, are delusions and “condemned by the Church:” these are points, each of which would require a long elucidation. But enough has been said to demonstrate, that the theology of the Oxford tracts is indeed popery; and that, from Oxford, clouds of darkness and spiritual death are rolling over the face of the kingdom; and, that all things seem preparing for a restoration of the Roman Catholic religion. What may be the future history of this superstition, what progress it may make, what rebuffs it may meet with, or how long it may take to accomplish all it aims at, we cannot now venture to predict; but, that the Roman Catholic priests rejoice greatly at what is going on, and express their joy without disguise, is known to most persons: for Rome now anticipates, with confidence, a restoration to her ancient domain in this realm, and with gratitude looks to the Oxford school, as a pioneer to clear away incumbrances, and to prepare all things for the triumphant return of the sacerdotal empire of the Roman see.

That the evangelical clergy are by their position, continually in danger of lapsing into the vortex of Puseyism, is apparent in their writings. “I wrote to remind you, good Protestants,” says the author of the Velvet Cushion, “that you owe to Popery, almost every thing that deserves to be called by the name of a church.” (p. 17.) And of the Oxford Tracts, Mr. Bickersteth says, “it is true that I strongly deprecate many of their statements and views as erroneous in themselves, and leading to still more dangerous errors. But there is too much seriousness, conscientiousness, and even partial truth mingled with those views, for me ever to have expressed the utmost abhorrence against them.”

Letter in the Record, April 4, 1839.

LETTER XIX.

If a well-instructed physiologist were to lose his way in the pathless tracts of the earth, he would, nevertheless, be able to divine the climate and the country through which he was wandering, by attentively considering the productions of the soil, and the appearances of animal life surrounding him.

His knowledge of botany would instruct him, that he had found his way, it might be, into the regions of the Brazilian empire; or his acquaintance with the animal kingdom, would insure him, that he was in the wilderness of Southern Africa. Every climate has its peculiar productions, every country has its distinctive marks, by which it may be described and recognized. And so is it in the land of Emanuel: the delightful fruit found there, and no where else, is LOVE; Christian love; love in Christ, the divine AGAPE of the word of God, the fruit of the Spirit, the evidence of the twice-born and redeemed people. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." This is the mark of Christ's people; this is their colour, the seal and token of their caste, the distinctive mark and clear sign of their tribe. A Christian might have lost his way in the world, he might be in a strange country, in a region of which he knows nothing; but he marks the inhabitants, he sees Agape in their demeanour, broadly stamped by the seal of the spirit; he observes, that they love one another in the ineffable affection of evangelical unity, and now he knows that they are disciples and servants of his Lord; he recognizes his brethren, and he rejoices that he has found the sons and daughters of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

And thus, again, on the other side: if he were searching for God's family, and were to meet with many exterior marks of their society, yet, if he could discern no love amongst them, he would know that they could not possibly be the people of his inquiry: and why? simply because, as our Lord told us, that "by this should men know that Christians are his disciples, when they love one another:" so, is it inevitably true, that when men find a people *not* loving one another, they must know that they are *not* his disciples. This is plain and clear for any understanding: men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles; every tree has its fruit; a disciple of Christ has his fruit; it is love. If, therefore, there is not love to be found in an individual, or an aggregate of individuals, that man or those men are certainly not Christians, whatever professions they may be pleased to make, or whatever name and title they may have appended to themselves, or to their society.

The evidence of the regeneration is "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet. i. 22.); it is the fruit of the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; it is a proof that a man has passed from death unto life, that he knows God, that God dwelleth in him, that God has instructed him.* The Scriptures set forth the love of God and of his children as interchangeable evidences, which mutually prove one another; so that he

* 1 John iii. 14; 1 John iv. 7; 1 John iv. 12; 1 Thess. iv. 9.

who loves God in truth, loves his people, and he that loves his people in truth, loves God.* A church of Christians is known to be in the energy of its life, when love to the saints is conspicuous (Eph. i. 15.); and it is the object of earnest prayer that this love should be on the increase (Phil. i. 9; 1 Thess. iii. 12): and amongst nine fruits of the spirit, which the Apostle Paul enumerated as discernable in the peculiar people, he names love the first of them all. (Gal. v. 22.)

Moreover, it is evident, that love is the greatest gift to the church; the richest of all the donations, which the conqueror of death has to bestow on his servants. This, I say, is evident, on comparing the doctrines of Scripture. "When Christ ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, he gave gifts for men; and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" and yet we are elsewhere taught, that all these great gifts are worth nothing at all without charity or love; "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing."

What, then, is the state of that church, where love is not? It is a mere *nothing*; it may make a noise, indeed, and a sound about religion, but it is the sounding of brass or of a tinkling cymbal; it may have all the ordinances, all the body of devotion, but there is no life in the body. To what purpose is the multitude of its sacrifices? Let it bring no more vain oblations; for its incense is an abomination, and its worship is sin; it has not opened its bosom to receive the chief gift of the victorious and enthroned Redeemer, and therefore stands before him wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

But let us pause awhile, to consider the elements of this evangelical Agape; for it is evident, from the words of our Lord, when he set it up as a perpetual mark of his kingdom, that it is of no vulgar and ordinary nature. "A NEW commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you.*" Now, unless it be something much more than sectarian friendship, a weed that plentifully luxuriated in the world before the incarnation of Jesus, the son of Mary, it cannot be called "new." We may, therefore, easily declare what it is *not*. Christian Agape is not an affection for any man, or family, or society, because he or they belong to our sect; for if it were, then a Mahometan, who has a strong and even enthusiastic preference, for one of his own creed and nation, in comparison with a Christian, "has passed from death unto life because he loves his brethren." To love only one sect or party of Christians, which we may have heartily espoused as the only church or party, and not to love a Christian as a Christian, is counterfeit love; and so also, to love only those Christians who are our kindred and relations, or have been in some manner our benefactors, cannot be a fulfilling of that "new" commandment, which our Lord bequeathed us. The strength and novelty of the commandment, consists in the similitude of Christian love to the love which Christ bears to his people; "as I have loved you, that ye love one another;" with the same freedom from prejudice, and the same strength of affection. Our Lord loved the sadducees and pharisees, the priests and the lawyers, the Jews and the Samaritans, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, *who believed in his name*: "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God: ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ

* Compare 1 John v. 2 with 1 John iv. 20, 21.

Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." He did not consider at all their previous origin, their habits, kindred, or caste; he considered their faith, and their reception of himself as their king, priest, and prophet; their redeemer, shepherd, and saviour: this was, and is, his love for his people, and has been so from everlasting, and will be so to everlasting. He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. The love of Christians must be, therefore, to Christians, like that of their master to themselves; they must not love in sects and divisions, in parties and denominations. Their business is, to inquire into the faith of those who call themselves Christians. Has a man received Christ? has he embraced *his* righteousness by faith, and, through that righteousness, has he received the remission of sins? has he been sealed with the spirit of promise? does he rejoice in the Lord Jesus? has he taken up his cross? has he escaped, or is he escaping the pollutions of the world, by the knowledge of Christ? has he given his heart to the Lord, and is his old nature dying daily under the reign and power of grace? Then, that man is a Christian; and if I am a Christian, I am bound to love him as I love myself; to lay down my life for him, if need be; to offer him all my affections, and to do him every act of kindness and good will in my power.

We see, then, that if a churchman loves a churchman, because he belongs to his party, because he is no dissenter, because he admires the prayer-book and the prelacy, he is no better than a Mahometan; he is an utter stranger to the "new commandment;" or if a Wesleyan-methodist loves his brother methodists, because there are staunch soldiers of the conference; or if a Baptist loves all Baptists in the union of adult immersion; or if a Quaker is attached to Quakers for their peculiarities; this is not Agape; it is not "the new commandment;" it is not the fruit of the Spirit; but is rather the old weed of the enemy, which he sowed long ago in the hearts of the Sadducees and Pharisees, and all the varied sects of heathen idolatry.

What, then, shall we report of Zion in these days, when we mark well her bulwarks, that we may tell it to the generation following? Shall we write it down, that the bond of union, like a wall of fire, is round the sacred enclosure, and that all men may know its holy citizens are disciples of Christ, because they love one another? Certainly, if we look at Christianity in its sects, if we take a view of it in its existing denominations, and do not single out true Christians, separating them altogether from the parties to which they belong, we have little to say of its lovely union, and beautiful harmony, in this generation. I can find the disciples of Jesus Christ amongst the Episcopalians, Methodists, Independents, Baptists, and Quakers, who do indeed love the brethren wherever they find them, and who, with a tender and expansive spirit, embrace all those who have found deliverance in the great Preserver, and forgiveness of sin in the great Redeemer, and joy and peace in the great Surety, without asking questions about sect and party; but I have never yet found any sect, or heard of any, which, viewed as a church of Christ, can be said to manifest the power of "the new commandment."

And first, of the church of England: this is the church of the nation, the puissant institution which, according to the assertion of its adherents, has conveyed *the Gospel* into every town and village in England: an assertion, which, for the present, we will let pass; but where is the Christian love amongst its members? where is "the communion of the saints?" a communion, which it proclaims unceasingly as part of the Christian faith, in its daily worship? All the members of the established church are, by

the theory of the prayer-book, members of the church of Christ ; they have been baptized and confirmed, and have a right to communicate at the Lord's Supper : the whole parish may communicate : the prayer-book commands, that the parish shall come to the Lord's table three times every year at least ; and we know that the communion has, till very lately, been a test of office, enjoined by act of parliament : how, then, in such a system, and such a church, is it possible that there can be the love of the brethren ? The prayer-book assures us, that all the baptised and confirmed parish is in a state of regeneration, and will inherit the kingdom of heaven. The whole parish, therefore, is to a churchman, the family of faith ; his brothers and sisters in Christ, by loving whom, " he knows he has passed from death unto life ! " Moreover, they communicate very diligently every Sunday at cathedrals. The deans, chapters, precentors, subdeans, and canons, are, every week, proclaiming their union with the body of Christ, by partaking of the eucharistic supper. But is love amongst *them* ? Do they love the brethren ? Are they ready to lay down their lives for their dear brethren ? Is the Agape of the gospel radiant, amidst the parade and ostentation of their empty ceremony ? It is, then, obvious to every one, that in the church of England, there is not, and cannot possibly be, any communion and fellowship of the saints ; their hearts are not " comforted, being knit together in love : " nor do any of the functions of the clergy, according to the rubric and canons, tend " to the perfecting of the saints, to the edifying of the saints, to the edifying of the body of Christ."

But we may go farther, and confidently assert, that the effect of the established church is, and must be, to create schism and disunion in the body of Christ. The clergy of the establishment, are, generally speaking, pre-eminently sectarian ; they attach a vast importance to their immunities and privileges ; they are bewitched with the phantom of their antiquity, and their idle dream of apostolical succession ; and they ridiculously suppose themselves to be the only true and authentic ministers of religion in the kingdom. The cup of the state has intoxicated the dominant sect, and it is drunk with pride and insolence. The language of the clergy about " their excellent church as by law established," is too well known in all the nation, to require any exhibition by quotations : for who has not heard or read their doctrine of intolerance, their exclusive self-admiration, and their angry denunciations of nonconformity ? Hence it must follow, that churchmen have love for churchmen only : theirs is the counterfeit or sectarian love : the party-union ; the old, and not the new commandment.

I have already said, that there are pious Episcopalians, who do love the brethren *as Christians*, in whatever circumstance they find them ; but I should also add, that some Episcopalians, of very high evangelical profession, are most deeply and lamentably beguiled in the delusion of sectarian fellowship. I could name a clergyman, well known and much respected, who made this awful confession of the state of his heart : " I could not bring myself to pray with a dissenter, however unquestionable his piety might be ; " and it is no secret, that the flame of bigotry and intolerance is burning most fiercely, in these days, amongst many of the evangelical clergy and their adherents, so that they exceed even the high churchmen in sectarian zeal. Amongst these persons, therefore, there is no love of Christ's brethren ; they love their sect, and the zealots of their sect ; but those, who are redeemed " out of every kindred," and who have been anointed into the royal priesthood, out of their own little enclosure, they love not ; they are, therefore, in this respect, exactly on a level with the followers of Mahomet ; they know not " the new commandment."

This is the effect of an established religion : it is a natural and inevitable consequence of a union between church and state : but still, a sectarian or counterfeit love must be engendered more or less, by a Priesthood, under any circumstances : and the stronger will this evil be, in proportion to the strength of the sacerdotal elements. Next to the church of Rome, the unestablished church of England, the Protestant Episcopalians, are the most sectarian of all professing Christians in the United States of North America ; because they believe themselves to be such as the English Episcopalians believe themselves to be, and are fully persuaded that prelatical ordination, and "the three orders," are indispensable in the Christian ministry.

The institutions of other sects are less favourable to intolerance, and, consequently, to sectarian exclusiveness and sectarian love ; but still it must be confessed, that the traces are very faint of the redemption bond, amongst dissenters, whether we view them as a general body of Christians, or whether we inspect the operations of the individual churches. And, indeed, if they had attained to anything like the evangelical agape, not only would every lamented deficiency disappear, but the church would itself be so strong, that it would rapidly overpower those high places of the enemy, which, at present, seem beyond all approach. The new commandment is to produce new effects ; the love of the church is the power of the church ; and it is only when it is in power that it can do wonders. When this rod of its strength is wanting, it is little more than a civil and respectable institution of men, capable, indeed, of inculcating a composed and grave canon of morals, and of introducing an appearance of dignity and decorum in society, but utterly unable to prosecute, or even undertake, the promised victories of the gospel.

The effects of Messiah's reign are to be something more than decent and comely in society ; they are to be wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." The changes that shall take place, shall be fundamental. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

But if we think that the church has done her duty, when she has established a standard of sobriety, courtesy, and honesty amongst men, we are grievously mistaken : she has to exhibit to the world all her children as one family, united as one close-knit and vital body, having one spirit and one life ; bound together, not in the ties of politeness, but of blood ; not in a treaty of civility, but in a family compact of kindred affection. What, then, are the effects of this mystical union ? Precisely that which is now wanting in the churches ; that all Christians should find their brethren in Christ, really and substantially their friends, protectors, and counsellors, in time of need, distress, and apprehension ; and that the church should be a port and refuge to the weary pilgrims, who are sore beset and buffeted with the tempest of adversity.

Christians are endowed with mighty privileges ; and are made partakers of the divine nature, that they might, by the resplendent and godlike virtues of their society, bring back the glory of God upon earth, manifesting him, as he has manifested himself to them, the God of love. For if we look upon the earth, out of the precincts of the church, we find it a desolation of selfishness, cruelty, and hardness of heart ; a waste howling wilderness of sin and death ; a habitation of miserable beings, who, without any choice of their own, have been thrust into life for labour and sorrow, for vanity and vexation of spirit, and whose sad unfriended condition has led many to entertain hard thoughts of the Creator and Ruler of such a

world, as if he was, indeed, the evil demiurge of Manichean theology. But Christians, the body of Christ, have received a commission, to display the Creator in the majesty and beauty of his second creation; to exalt, by their faith and conversation, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; and to shew, that earth may be a second paradise, in the light and glory of the sun of Righteousness. They have to prove, by the lovely operations of the church, that the second creation is the work of the same God, who, being himself essential goodness and benevolence, did, at the first, suffer the plenitude of his felicity to overflow in thousands of channels, receiving from none, but imparting to all, the joys and wonders of the first creation: and though an enemy has embittered the channels, and introduced a curse where there was a blessing, and sorrow where there was joy, and sin where there was innocence, and death where there was life; and though the earth is filled with wicked men, who, by their active crimes, plunge their fellow-creatures into distress, or, with pitiless apathy, pass them by unheeded, when distress is breaking their hearts; yet, the church, the nation of ransomed saints, have, in the gospel, and through the unction that teaches all things, received so excellent a plan for a universal restitution, that if they did but exactly follow that plan, and hearken to the instructions they have received, all evils, excepting disease and death, would disappear from amongst men, and the astonished world, in an acclamation of surprise and gratitude, would cry out, "Behold! again, the God that made all things, and pronounced them to be good."

First of all, then, harmony, peace, and perfect friendship, must be conspicuous in the church: it must be seen, that Christians love one another; that their union is a wonder-working phenomenon, which no wisdom of the world can counterfeit; that the gates of the Christian enclosure open into the sanctuary of love; that a man—that is, Christ, in his human nature joined to his brethren, and they in him—is a "hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest;" that when the storm is raging in all the world besides, there is peace there; that every believer is the brother of every believer; that they are all concerned in the temporal welfare of their brethren, and all deeply interested in their final and everlasting salvation.

But, Is it so at present? Alas! let any one, who is thoroughly acquainted with the churches, give the melancholy answer! There are, indeed, Christian societies, wherein the poor are treated with kindness and sympathy; or, in some places, a few of the church-members are united in a pious friendship; and brotherly love, *as far as it extends*, produces happy effects; but, generally speaking, there is a sad distance between the brethren. They know not one another in the bonds of the gospel; they are estranged by the cold and distant formalities of the ceremonious world; they are either too intent on the pursuit of their own interest, or too deeply embedded in the well-lined nest of opulent selfishness, to care for the labour and the sorrows, the beauty and edification of the church.

In some instances, the component members of churches are so numerous, that one half of them are ignorant of the other half; sometimes, the rich are totally indifferent to the poor, and the poor totally separated from the rich; and in too many instances, an undue regard is shewn, both in language and manner, to those persons who are called "respectable dissenters," meaning thereby, dissenters who are comparatively rich, and, *therefore*, "more respectable," than the poorer brethren, according to the creed and dialect of Mammon, which has a wider influence in this country than any where else on the face of the earth.

I know a numerous church, consisting of upwards of 600 members, managed under circumstances the most favourable; a church, in which the deacons and the worthy much-loved minister, strenuously endeavour to perform the duties of their respective stations, and to give a good account of their stewardship; but even there, taking into account also the zealous assistance of other pious individuals, shall we say that this is a Christian family? or rather, looking on the unfriendly, unlovely, conduct of scores of its members, and perceiving that the bond of union extends only to the minority, shall we not, with grief, confess, that a church in these days, bears but a small resemblance to a society of believers in the apostolic age?

But if these be our confessions, when all the circumstances are favourable for developing Christian principle, what must we expect to find, when the pastor has not the spirit of love, and where the deacons are content with the dry routine of their official duties? Alas! it is painful to think of the state of some churches in this respect, and to be obliged to acknowledge, that there are fraternities, gathered together under the name of Christ, in which not one single spark of the love of brethren is visible; not one little scintillation, which might possibly be blown up into a flame by the rough winds of adversity or persecution. I would here draw my bow at a venture, and let the arrow take its chance. I would put a question to any one whom it may concern, and who may happen to read this letter. Let me suppose that, by some unwonted tribulation, you were bowed down with a weight of sorrow; that the cup of tears were given you to drink in great measure; that many afflictions and many fears were pressing on your faith and patience, even to anguish; would you think of turning to that religious society, of which you are a member, for counsel and sympathy? do you feel so bound to your nominal brethren, and are you so confident of the strength of their Christian love, that you have no doubt of their affectionate commiseration and tender support? and do you believe that they are so anxious to fulfil the law of Christ, according to the apostle's epitome of that law (Gal. vi. 2), that you feel confident they will gladly bear your burden? Let every one answer this question according to his experience, his knowledge, and his serious belief.

But then, it may be asked, What is the cause of this cold estrangement amongst the brethren? A heathen writer may, perhaps, assist us to answer the question. "The lawgiver whom the Christians worship," says Lucian of Samosata, "has taught them, that they are all brethren; *they have an extreme contempt for all the things of the world: the expedition which they use, when any of their friends are known to be in trouble, is inconceivable; on such occasions they spare nothing; they despise death, and surrender themselves to sufferings.*"

When Christians have an extreme "contempt for all the things of this world," they will love one another: but when they are embarked on the vast and dangerous ocean of adventure; when they are deeply engaged in making fortunes for their families; when the various branches of trade are occupying their close attention; when their hearts are given to Mammon, and when their general conduct exhibits a deep-seated reverence for wealth; when, by their marriages, they are entangling themselves in the affairs of the world: then, it must needs be, that their love will wax cold to the church; that their private interests will preponderate; that some will think but seldom of their brethren, and many not at all; and hence the church, being a body of congregated, but not united materials, "the new commandment" will be utterly dead amongst them, and men will not know that they are, indeed, Christ's disciples, "because they love one another."

There are also other reasons to be taken into the account, but I do not here recapitulate them, as they are urged in the rest of these letters: for whatever is as it should not be, will tend to widen the separation amongst the brethren: nor would it be reasonable ever to expect a return of the primitive Agape, which, like Astroæa, has withdrawn from this wicked world, till the primitive order and government shall be restored to the churches. But if the love of the brethren is in this languid, inert, and almost extinct condition, within the precincts of each individual church, what shall we say of the aggregate of all the Protestant believers, who, though they profess a lively hope of meeting one another in heaven, and of their joining together in one company, are well contented to raise up and consolidate impassable barriers between themselves, whilst they are upon earth? What shall we say of the haughty and intolerant Churchman; the selfish and sectarian Wesleyan Methodist, whose polity is manifestly framed for purposes of power and exclusion; and of the virtual and unseemly separation between the Independents and Baptists, on the frivolous question of aspersion or immersion? It seems now to be well understood, in a general, though unexpressed, consent, that the body of Christ is infinitely divisible; that each sect is a complete system of Christianity; and that all without the sect, are to those within it, as heathen men and publicans. Hence has arisen a strange dogma of false honour; that a man is bound to stick to his sect, and that, if he seeks the society of *all* those who are sealed with the spirit of promise, he is wandering from his enclosure and going astray. But this is a wide field for discussion; I, therefore, content myself here with these few words, to shew that it is not altogether forgotten, and that it may remain for a future and more exact examination.

In conclusion, let me notice, as a curious proof of the little attention, which this subject has obtained in the minds of those who ponder deeply on the welfare of Zion; that I never yet was fortunate enough to hear a sermon, whether in church or chapel, on the important topic of the love of the brethren; nor have I been able, by diligent search, to find a published discourse* on the subject; so that, apparently, no doctrine has, of late years, been so much neglected, though there is none that requires more serious attention, if we desire to see the church in that condition, which may be taken as a proof of its obedience and love to its divine head.

* Amongst the many hundred sermons published in the "Preacher," there is one, indeed, by the bishop of Chester, on John xiii. 85; but the worthy prelate has given the text a wide and vague meaning, foreign to its spirit, by applying it to the *public charities* of Christian countries, and so drawing a contrast in favour of Christendom, when compared with the heathen nations! It would be almost impossible, for an Anglican prelate to preach on the love of the brethren, without throwing a slur on the church, of which he is a mitred dignitary.

LETTER XX.

ONE of the glorious titles of our Lord, the head of the church, is SURSALEM, "the Prince of Peace;" that Prince, under whose government the people are to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; and, in obedience to whose commands, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither learn the cursed science of war any more. The name of the officers of the church is declared in prophecy, to be emphatically PEACE (Is. lx. 17); and it is announced, that under the dominion of Christ, "violence shall be no more heard in the land, nor wasting, nor destruction in all our borders." When the wonderful child, expected for ages, was, at last, born, and when to us the Son was given, the company of heaven's messengers announced his birth to shepherds, with that famous anthem of love, in the skies, "Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good-will towards men." When this Prince of Peace executed his ministry and preached the gospel, he virtually preached against war in every sermon; "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God; I say unto you, resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" "he that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword."

One would, therefore, naturally suppose, that he, who should climb the gospel mount to enjoy a panoramic view of Christendom, would behold all its regions smiling in the golden tints of universal peace; all its borders blessed with a happy unity; and that "good and excellent" phenomenon, fraternal love, enriching every people with its miraculous influence, even as the dew of Hermon makes glad the mountain-ridge of Sion. But, alas! it is not so. They that call themselves Christians, have forgotten the title of their King, and turned his glory into shame. The gospel, which was meant to be a word of sovereign power by its own peculiar virtues; by its own strength, to go forth conquering and to conquer, and to be the rod and staff of Him, whose kingdom is not of this world, has, by the fleshly counsels and worldly compliances of its nominal disciples, been made to appear an instrument of human force, the religion of a warlike sect, the stimulus and the decoration of military renown. For if we first consider him, who calls himself the vicar of Christ upon earth, the bishop of bishops, the Roman pontiff, and the most ancient possessor of Christendom, we shall in vain search for any legacy of peace that He ever has left to the world: on the contrary, the Pope was the fomentor of almost every war that harassed Europe, till his influence in the cabinets of European potentates so declined, that it could no longer be exerted to create confusion and discord amongst sovereigns, who had become too wise to listen to the evil counsels of a despicable priest. The Pope can now only intrigue about jesuits and monks, or exert his diplomatic skill in the framing of a concordat, which any urgency converts into waste paper. The old disturber of nations is therefore now quiet, because he cannot be tumultuous, and he is peaceful, because he cannot go to war; and as he is, moreover, an insolvent debtor, and is unable to pay his own body-guards, there is no fear of his blowing

the trumpet of battle again, as he used to do in the day's of Europe's darkness. But still, the Roman Catholic religion is essentially warlike; for not only are the operations of war blessed by its ritual, but even the Virgin Mary is made, by them, a captain * of armies, and a commander-in-chief of the most ferocious soldiers, that have appeared on the field of battle since the crusades of Languedoc. There have been fighting Popes; Popes, who themselves commanded armies in person; there have been fighting bishops, fighting saints, fighting cardinals. Masses have been said on the field of battle; holy water, crosses, relics, standards, are said to have done wonders in turning the fate of contending armies; Popes and saints have preached "war to the knife," and "blood to the horses bridles." Saint Bernard, the seraphic Abbot of Clairvaux, whose works are a sort of test-book of sublimated devotion with the mystical school, exerted his vast influence in the papacy to excite the murderous passions of mankind, and his restless eloquence kindled the crusade of 1148, from which also emanated the luckless expeditions of the next century. Calmly seated in his cell, the gospels open before him, and with the events of the first crusade fresh in his recollection, St. Bernard thought that nothing was more praiseworthy or pious, than to lash the passions of the western nations to a new fury, for exterminating the infidel powers in the east."† His language is a strange instance indeed of studied iniquity. "Go forward," said he, "go forward, ye soldiers, and, with a dauntless mind, drive back the enemies of the cross of Christ; being assured of this, that neither life nor death *can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus*; and always remembering this, in every danger, that *whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's*. What glorious conquerors you will return from battle! what blessed martyrs will you die in the field! for a soldier of Christ, I say, kills in security and dies in security; he benefits himself, when he is dying in the field, he benefits Christ, when he is killing in battle." But sentiments like these, frightful and impious as they are, are by no means singular in the papacy. Saint Pius V.,‡ and divers other Popes of sanguinary memory, have written with a pen not less bloody, than that which the seraphic St. Bernard employed to excite mankind to havoc and slaughter; and, in one word, we may con-

* Don Carlos has nominated the Virgin Mary the commander-in-chief of his rebel armies.—In the days of Richard II., Archbishop Arundel complained of the Lollards, that they despised the Virgin Mary and put her aside as useless, to whose influence the victorious achievements of English arms ought chiefly to be ascribed!

† Fanaticism. By the author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm.

‡ The letters of this rabid and horrible saint have been published in Latin, and some of the worst of the collection have been translated into French, by De Potter. A passage from one of them will suffice to show, how the pontiff was the secret cause of the wars of his generation. He is writing to Louis Gonzague, Duke of Nevers, Governor of Champagne. "As for the aid of money, which you demand for the King of France, your master, you should know, that we have already had this matter laid before us by the king's ambassador; and we have promised his majesty, that he should always find us ready to help him. But as we have not any large sums at our disposal, having spent all that we had in hand, in aiding the emperor elect against the Turks, in assisting the Queen of Scots and the knights of St. Malta, and a great number of other contributions equally necessary, we shall be obliged to lay new imposts on the people of our states, which will cause some delay in sending the necessary supplies to the king, &c.

sider the Vatican as a school of blood and murder for all Europe, which, till the 18th century, was kept in a state of constant agitation by the intrigues of the priests of Rome.

The protestant Church of England is, like its mother and predecessor, warlike in a high degree. The Anglican episcopalians are a fighting sect; their liturgy is belligerent; their head is a soldier; their language is threatening and violent, and the sermons of their priests have frequently been preached, for the express purpose of exciting the martial propensities of a deceived and credulous people. Twice, every day, in every cathedral in England, do the clergy solemnly pray to God, that the queen "may vanquish and overcome all her enemies;" and up to this present hour, it never, perhaps, in one single instance, has been taught by any clergyman, that war is an illegal and impious trade for Christians. On the contrary, the American war, and the war against the French republic, were frequently commended from the pulpit, in impassioned harrangues; and not one dignitary only, owed his elevation in the church, to his servile zeal "for the just and necessary war."

The dissenters have, hitherto, copied the dominant sect in their belligerent propensities. The Independents came into the world at first, like Minerva, all armed. We know of them first, as a fighting sect of saints, following Oliver Cromwell in his "*crowning mercies*" of victory after victory; till they had placed their great captain on the throne of England's ejected kings. The language of the pious soldiers of the Protectorate, may well be placed, side by side, with the epistles of Saint Bernard, or Saint Pius V.

Thomas Harrison, one of King Charles's judges, a famous soldier and friend of Oliver Cromwell, used occasionally to write letters to his general from the camp, mingling in his correspondence notices of war and effusions of piety. "My Lord," said he, "let waiting on Jehovah be the greatest and most considerable business you have every day; reckon it more than to eat, sleep, or counsel together; run aside sometimes from your company, and get a word with the Lord. Why should you not have three or four precious souls, always standing at your elbow, with whom you might, now and then, turn into a corner? I have found refreshment and mercy in such a way. Here is little news; only Charles Vane is returned from Portugal, who left our fleet indifferently well. They have seized nine of the Portugal ships. The Father of mercies visit and keep your soul close to him continually; protect, prosper, and preserve you, is the prayer of," &c.

Thus does the profession of piety alternate with the profession of arms, like alternate layers of gravel or clay in the diluvial deposits.

After the revolution of 1688, the dissenters joined the war-party with all their hearts: their interests were bound up with those of King William: they were personal enemies of Louis XIV., and of the house of Stewart; and from the flight of James II. to the battle of Preston Pans, were as thorough advocates of battle, as could be found in the British realms. Dr. Doddridge is said to have enlisted a regiment for the service of government; and the warlike spirit observable in Dr. Watts's hymn book,*

- * "Go with our armies to the fight,
Like a confederate God:
In vain confederate powers unite
Against thy lifted rod.
- "Our troops shall gain a wide renown
By thine assisting hand;

proves, beyond doubt, that the dissenters had a martial echo in their hearts, responsive to the spirit-stirring alarum of drum and trumpet.

We see, then, that the fanaticism of the banner has been conspicuous amongst all the leading sects of Christendom; the priests of the Vatican and of Lambeth have excited wars of oppression; the protestant dissenters have never yet emancipated themselves from the great delusion, that it is meritorious to fight "for their God, their liberties, and their country." The new creation, covenanted to Jesus of Nazareth, has been retarded by the united efforts of papist, episcopalian, puritan, and methodist;* and the dove of peace, which came, with an olive-branch, to assure the world that the tide of carnage was now turned, has been driven backwards, by a strange concord of rival sects, to make way for the cruel eagle of war, the harbinger of oppression and desolation to the earth.

And the evil here is very great, if we remember that Christian pietists have not only tacitly permitted war, but have frequently defended and advocated it, by a miserable perversion of scripture, and dangerous sentiments of distorted devotion. "Some duties grow amongst thorns," says the pious Samuel Rutherford, as, "to be killed all the day long, and to take patiently the spoiling of our goods for Christ. Some duties grow among roses, and are honourable and glorious duties, as to *kill and subdue, in a lawful war, the enemies of God.* The former are no sign of wrath; nor the latter of being duly convinced of the excellency of Christ, except in so far as we use them, *through the grace of Christ, as becometh saints.*"†

'Tis God that treads the mighty down,
And makes the feeble stand.

"In his salvation is our hope,
And in the name of Israel's God,
Our troops shall lift their banners up,
Our navies spread their flags abroad!

"Oh, may the memory of thy name
Inspire our armies to the fight!
Our foes shall fall and die with shame,
Or quit the field with shameful fright."
See also ii. 3.

* John Wesley was a decided advocate of war: educated in the school of Ultra-Toryism, he never was able to perceive, that the profession of arms is incompatible with the gospel. He had high notions of the power of constituted authority; he prided himself that some of his chief followers were "good soldiers;" and thus let slip a golden opportunity for instituting a sect whose influence, by this time, would have well-nigh silenced the din of arms. The principles of peace are entirely unknown amongst the Wesleyan Methodists.

† Christ Dying, pp. 187. Edd. 1647.

The protestant religion has been established in Scotland by the sword: and to the sword, all the presbyterian ministers seem fully prepared to appeal "in defence of their religion." Queries put to Mr. Glas, by the Synod of Angus and Mearns, with his answers, April, 1728. "*Quer.* Is it your opinion that it is unlawful to defend the true religion by arms, or not? *Ans.* The true religion cannot be defended by arms, as may the natural and civil rights and liberties of mankind. It must be defended another way." Eph. vi. ii. 12, 13. 2 Cor. x. 4. Glas's Works, i. 149. The question and answer should both be noticed. The question put by the synod was to ascertain whether Glas opposed war as a help of religion, a doctrine of which he was suspected; the answer pleads guilty to the *heresy*, but admits that it is lawful to fight for the civil liberties of mankind.

Jeremy Taylor, in his "Ductor Dubitantium," has laid it down as a canon of Christian morals, that lying, deceiving, and dissembling, besides the ordinary acts of violence, are lawful in war; and has undertaken to point out the lies, that may, or may not, be told by generals, who are endeavouring to outwit one another.

So that the reputed teachers of the gospel have not laboured to establish the principles of their master, in that splendid singularity, which is their beauty and power. They have not placed the strength of the evangelical kingdom, in the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, but have gone down to Egypt for help; and have taught, that the wisdom of the gospel is in perfect harmony with the ancient code of force. But this is shamefully to deride and mock the Lord of glory: for he, whose kingdom is not of this world, and who declined the help of twelve legions of angels, cannot but look, with grief and pity, on his servants, who seek to make themselves stronger than he was in the days of his flesh, and to turn "the faith and patience of the saints," into a system of injurious violence and opposition. It is a vain effort, which the churches are making to convert the world to Christ, unless they shall first fully adopt all the principles of the gospel: and though, in the opinion of many, the days are approaching, when all eastern people shall bow themselves before the footstool of the Most High God, and shall "surname themselves by the name of Israel," yet no such blessed æra shall dawn upon us, till the missionaries go forth as accredited heralds of universal peace, and till all nations shall understand, that the gospel preaches peace, not only to a man's heart, but to whole nations; and that the voice of them who published the glad tidings of salvation, silences the roar of battle, whilst it proclaims "peace on earth, good-will towards men." "For, he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Let us leave the spurious and adulterate *gospel of battle*, to Rome and her children, but let it be our labour to prove, that the *gospel of Christ* is, indeed, a new thing upon the earth; that it is not framed upon the maxims of a flexible morality, nor can accommodate itself to the pressure of cupidity, patriotism, or ambition; but that it has come from heaven, to command and not to obey, to teach and not to hearken, to lead and not follow. Let us throw down all the obstructions, which have hitherto prevented the river of peace extending itself to the church (Isaiah lxvi. 12); and then "shall the glory of the gentiles be like a flowing stream;" but as long as we tolerate, or do not oppose, the detestable doctrine of war; as long as we accede, with tacit compliances, to the sanguinary delusion under which the whole earth has hitherto groaned, it will be a vain, an idle, almost an *impious* task, to make it seem that we heartily believe in the glory of that King of Righteousness whom we preach.

We pray for a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit on the churches; we are importunate for revivals, and we talk much of the latter-day glory, as if an overwhelming Pentecost were to extinguish all the evils that are done under the sun: but there have been liberal showers already from heaven, which we would not receive; the doctrine of Emanuel has already dropped as the rain; his spirit has distilled as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb; and we have rejected it. Had we accepted *all* his word with joyfulness; had we been indeed the children of peace, the fruit of peace would, even now, have been comely and beautiful in all the earth, and the

enthroned company of prophets would not yet be waiting in heaven, to behold the accomplishment of those predictions, which they learned from the Holy Ghost. Let us not then, in antinomian indolence, look upwards for a miracle, but inwards for repentance; knowing this, that the way of the divine dispensation is, to give blessings on the church when she is obedient, and to shut her up in straits and difficulties when she herself is limiting the Holy One of Israel. The doctrine of peace is eminently the doctrine of faith; for when can faith be in such lively exercise, as when the Assyrian is in the land, and Israel is without arms? "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." We will remember that name, not to make it a watch-word for the battle; not, through it, to give a deeper intonation to the war-whoop; not to marshal, by its awful spell, the multitudinous chivalry to deeds of prowess; but, in the humble trust of Christians, we will sit still while the war is hot around us, and in every pause of the onset, we will preach Jesus Christ and him crucified; Jesus the humble, the enduring, the patient; Jesus the sufferer, the king of martyrs, the friend and helper of the poor, the liberator of prisoners, the restorer of paths to dwell in, the repairer of the breach, the prince of peace, of the increase of whose government and *peace* there shall be no end. We will show, that the gospel is the light of the new creation, that it has new maxims, doctrines, and ideas; that it has the sceptre of a new king, and that all old things are to fade away before the brightness of his rising. To all the arguments of force or fear, we will preach faith; we will shew, that war is "the gross darkness of the people," the strength of Satan, the life and quickness of all the evil done under the sun. And then, if we work righteousness, the Lord will meet us, and the Holy Spirit will indeed come to heal, to renew, to revive again: but the Head of the church expects us to do our part; for as he was manifested, amongst us, to destroy the works of the Devil, so has he gone up, on high, to leave his vice-regal sceptre upon earth, in the hands of his saints; that body of kings and priests, which is called "The Church." To them, has he entrusted the task of destroying the works of the Devil; he looks to them, to gain the victory over evil; and if they look in faith to him for help, they shall be victorious. The greater the difficulty in opposing ancient opinions, so much the greater glory in lifting up the standard against them: the deeper rooted the prejudices, which we endeavour to eradicate, so much greater will our strength appear, when we shall have uprooted them. Let us then to the work; not by miracles and signs from heaven, but by the holy reluctations of Christians against evil; by the testimony of their work, by their faith, their zeal, their patience, and their prayers; by their stirring, and example, and evangelical excellence, which, through the grace of God, shall do wonders as great in the moral world, as the finger of Jehovah wrought in vanquishing the physical obstacles of Egypt.

In this matter, then, I must report, that the body of Christians have forgotten their privileges: but it is time now to awake; and there are already signs of awakening, for which we should feel thankful; and when the truth is perceived, it must be acted on, not remissly and negligently, but with zeal and alacrity. *The principles of peace must be incorporated in church discipline.* The trade of war must be denounced, and a soldier must be excommunicated from the churches as an offender. Let war, offensive and defensive, be Anathema Maranatha in all Christian societies; and then, but not till then, may we declare that we love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.

I urge the subject with some anxiety, at present, because I anticipate

that the time is coming, when there may be "a war of opinion," on the continent; when the principles of liberty may shake the thrones of despotism in a bloody strife. When that day shall come, dissenters will, by all their habitual feelings, take a lively interest in the struggle: but then will be the time to bring forth the shield of faith; then, will it be our duty, to turn a deaf ear to the temptation of force, and, in the hour of national excitement, to preach peace to a tumultuating people. To do so, will be, apparently, to render a negative aid to the despotic party; but let us not despair, but rather abide by the gospel; place the issue in the hands of the Lord, and *stand still to behold the salvation of God.*

LETTER XXI.

AMONGST the afflicting evils, which the wickedness of man has established upon earth, the greatest beyond compare is slavery: indeed, its consequences are so dreadful, the sins which it engenders are of such gigantic proportions, and all its accompaniments are so loathsome and hideous, that the minds, even of benevolent persons, seem to revolt from contemplating it, as offering a spectacle of crime and cruelty too deep for a remedy, and too vast for sympathy. Slavery is an infinite evil: the calculations of its murders, its rapine, its barbarities, its deeds of lust and licentiousness, though authenticated by the most unquestionable authorities, would produce a total of horrors too great to be believed: and to narrate the history of these cruelties, which have been perpetrated by American slave masters, within the last five years, or in Jamaica; even since the passing of the fraudulent act of pretended "emancipation;" would be to tell idle fables, in the opinion of those, who have not deeply studied this tragical subject. But though the evils of slavery are incalculable, and though the contemplation of it is exquisitely painful, it is, nevertheless, a paramount duty imposed on Christians, to grapple with the monster-crime; both because the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ is implicated in its successful overthrow, and because it is, at this present time, fostered in its strength of iniquity, by those, alas! who not only profess to have discovered the quintessence of liberty, but to have surpassed all Christians in an overflowing measure of godliness.

I pass over, for the present, slavery in other countries,—and that barbarous metastasis of slavery, the system of Apprenticeship in our West Indian and South African colonies and the Mauritius—to set my foot in the United States of North America, where the outcry against slavery is greater than in any other country under heaven; because it is in that country, that we hear more of liberty and equality, more of religion and revivals, more of the bustle and machinery of piety, than in any other land where the name of Christ is named. For, if that mighty continent were a satrapy of despotism, if it were crouching under the sceptre of some lawless autocrat, and its people were but herds and flocks at his sovereign disposal, then, perhaps, we should but give the passing tribute of a sigh, to America disgraced with a population of slaves; but when this country sets itself up as a beacon of freedom, to cast a light of superiority across the Atlantic, on the enthralled, or imperfectly emancipated, nations of the East; when we remember that neither king, nor priest, nor noble, can either oppress or plunder in all its wide domain; that the regal talisman has there been broken, which formerly bound the popular Spirit, and that equality is the Alpha and Omega of the national institutes; then does slavery, amongst such a people, appear transcendently wicked; a sin, which, in addition to its usual cruelty and selfishness, is, in them, loaded with hypocrisy and ingratitude; with hypocrisy, as it relates to their pretensions of liberty, and with ingratitude, as it relates to that God, who gave them to be free. And, indeed, this sin makes all the institutions of America, civil and religious, little better than a solemn mockery, a tragical jest for the passers-by

of other nations, who, seeing two millions and a half of slaves, held in fetters by vaunting freemen and ostentatious patriots, wag the head at the disgusting sight, and cry out deridingly to degraded America, "Art *thou* too become weak as we; art *thou* become like one of us? the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."

But if America were only politically defiled by slavery, and a system of gross injustice to its free-coloured population; if it had only debased itself down to a level with Russia, the scourge of Poland, or had only imitated the Turkish tyranny, it would not be a subject for animadversion in these letters. There is still a more serious view of its criminality; a view of it, as it is seen in connexion with the Christian religion, which heightens the infernal tints of the picture, into an intensity of guilt too fearful to contemplate: nevertheless, it *must* be contemplated, and with care and minuteness too: for recent events have, in a manner, made the English appear to join hand in hand with the American churches, and, with a most convenient aberration of vision, to wink at the iniquity of the transatlantic slave-drivers and revivalists.

But here, first, we should remember the extraordinary, and to us almost incredible, position of very many of the American churches, with regard to slavery; we should remember, that a vast number of Christian ministers are slave proprietors; that many deacons, ruling elders, local and itinerant preachers, and many Episcopalian church-officers are slave masters; that they buy and sell slaves, separate husband, wife, and children, "to make a good lot," without the least remorse when the temptation offers, and that, too, in many instances, where the poor slaves are their brothers or sisters in Christ, members of Christian societies, who have been admitted into Christian fellowship, on a due consideration and acknowledgment of their piety and their faith in the Redeemer. But the mere act of Christians buying and selling Christians, is not the only crime for our consideration; all the concomitants of slavery are, of necessity, to be taken into the account. A master of slaves cannot but be corrupt; his daily life is one of injustice and contempt of the laws of God; his conscience is either hardened and reckless in the commission of sin, or he wilfully and wittingly does that, which he knows to be wrong. Shall I quote here the well known story of a popular minister flogging his household slaves on a Sabbath morning, leaving them tied up to the beams of the house whilst he was preaching and praying to his congregation, and then returning to finish the incomplete punishment by a second flogging after sermon? * Shall I quote

* One of the most recent stories of this sort, that I remember to have seen, is of a minister, who, *in a quiet way*, sold his slave, a member of his church. He wished the transaction to be managed in such a manner as not to attract attention. The purchaser of the poor slave told his victim, "that his master had ordered him to accompany him to such a place." The slave saw through the plot, and cried out, "Oh! Sir, I know our Minister has sold me; he has not courage to tell me so himself; but I know I am sold to you now. Well; God forgive our minister!" It is, perhaps, to be taken as a sign of a better era approaching, that these wicked wretches begin to be ashamed of their iniquity.

In Mr. Abdy's tour, there is a frightful story of a baptist minister "of the name of Andrew Marshall, and possessed of property, supposed to be worth 40,000 dollars. He was living at Savannah, with his wife and children; *the latter, with their mother, were his slaves*. A planter, in the neighbourhood, solicited this man's daughter to live with him. She refused, and when urged *by her father* to accept the offer, alleged as a reason for not complying with their joint importunities, that her affections were engaged to a coloured man,

another authenticated story, or rather history, of a living "pious" female, who has built and handsomely endowed a costly chapel, with schools, alms-houses, and all the et-cætera of devout munificence, but who always insists on flogging her slaves with *her own hands*, because she suspects either the mercy or the inefficiency of the usual executioner? Shall I mention "pious" persons leaving legacies of slaves, in trust, for the benefit of a chapel? or of "pious" persons making speeches, and composing pamphlets to prove that Paul's epistle to Timothy was written for the express purpose of preventing the manumission of slaves? Shall I quote the book of the Reverend Simon Clough, Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Laws, in which he undertakes to justify slavery from the Scriptures, and to prove, that all clergymen who advocate immediate abolition, are false teachers, and ought to be dismissed their congregations? Shall I record the green curtain of Dr. ——'s chapel, and of divers other chapels, to separate the goats from the sheep; to place a veil of contumely between the dark-skinned and fair-tinted Christians? But, indeed, examples like these, though at hand to an infinite amount, if wanted, are mere drops in this raging ocean of iniquity; for we must remember the whole system of savage laws and practices in the slave states of America, of which all, who are slaveholders in that country, must share the guilt; their codes of cruelty and studied oppression, which not only define* slaves to be brutes, but studiously endeavour to prevent a master shewing mercy to his slave; which make the education of a slave felony, and order the magistrates to flog any slave, who, by any means, endeavours to instruct himself in reading or writing. In North Carolina it is the law, that if a freeman shall sell or give a slave *any book* (Bible not excepted, indeed they dread that the most), he shall pay a fine of £200; but if the offender is a free person of colour, he shall be fined, flogged, and imprisoned! In Georgia, any justice of the peace may, at his discretion, break up any religious assembly of slaves, and, without trial, order every individual of the congregation to receive twenty-five stripes, *well laid on*; so that, with laws like these, it is no wonder to hear the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, in December, 1833, give the following dismal description of slavery.

"Who would credit it, *that in these years of revival, and benevolent effort, in this Christian republic, there are over two millions of human beings in the condition of heathen, and in some respects in a worse condition. From long-continued and close observation, we believe, that their moral and religious condition is such, that they may justly be considered the heathen of this Christian country, and will bear comparison with any heathen in any country in the world. The negroes are destitute of the gospel, and ever will be, under the present state of things. In the vast field, extending from an entire state beyond the Potomac to the Sabine river, and from the Atlantic to the Ohio, there are not twelve men exclusively*

whom she had promised to marry. Her plea and her entreaties were equally unavailing. The wretch *sold her* to the less guilty seducer, and she was then living, the mother of nine children by this forced concubinage."

* A slave is one, who is in the power of a master, to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, his labour: he can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire anything but which must belong to his master."—*Louisiana Code*, No. 3.

"Slaves shall be deemed, taken, reported, and adjudged, to be chattels personal in the hands of their masters and possessors, to all intents and purposes whatsoever."—*Law of South Carolina*.—*Brevard's Digest*, 229.

Inquiry into the character of the Colonization Society, by W. JAY, pp. 122.

devoted to the religious instruction of the negroes. In the present state of feeling in the south, a ministry of their own colour could neither be obtained nor TOLERATED. But do not the negroes have access to the gospel, through the stated ministry of the whites? We answer, NO. The negroes have no regular and efficient ministry; as a matter of course, no churches. We know of but five churches in the slave-holding states, built expressly for their use: they are all in the state of Georgia. We may inquire, if they there enjoy the privileges of the gospel in their own houses, and on *our plantations*? Again we return a negative answer. They have no bibles to read by their own firesides; they have no family altars; and when in affliction, sickness, or death, they have no ministers to address to them the consolations of the gospel, nor to bury them with solemn and appropriate services."

If the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia had gone one step farther, and had pledged themselves, not only that all the ministers and elders constituting the Synod, should immediately emancipate the slaves "on their plantations," that no slave-holder should be retained in their churches, and none admitted for the future, they would indeed have done themselves honour; but that was too much to be expected from the reverend doctors of the Synod. It is one thing to preach the gospel to slaves, and another to renounce some thousand dollars by letting the oppressed go free.

To America, then, thus groaning under cruel task-masters, who profess to worship Jehovah, the emancipator of Israel, did the English congregational churches lately send out a solemn deputation of Christian inspectors, to take note of the state of the American churches; to communicate such sentiments as they might deem expedient and proper; and to report, on their return home, what they had seen and heard, as faithful witnesses. The result of that mission has been laid before the public, in the "Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches, by Drs. Reed and Matheson;" and it is to this book that I would now draw your attention; though I beg to observe, that I should not have thought it worthy of the slightest notice, if either it had been a publication of an individual in his private capacity, or had it not been accepted and acknowledged by the parties for whom it was written: but, as it stands before the world, the authenticated, accepted, and approved* report, of the Congregational Union, and has been stoutly defended in dissenting publications, against some just and some very unjust attacks, which it has provoked, I look upon it as speaking the mind of the congregational churches, and, on that account, deserving the most serious examination.

The matter of religious institutions and operations, the college commencements, and the revivals, as reported in the "Visit," are here foreign to my purpose; neither do I feel the least concerned in the copious descriptions of scenery, which, in my opinion, had better have been reserved for the pages of a novel. My subject here is slavery; to examine the acts of the deputation in this searching question, and to see whether the

* "Dr. Reed presented to the chairman a copy of the 'Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches, by the Deputation from the Congregational Union of England and Wales.' The Rev. T. Binney moved, 'That the best thanks of this assembly be presented to the Rev. Gardiner Spring, D.D., for his sermon: and also to his honoured brethren and associates, who have this day represented the American churches amongst us, and that each of those beloved brethren be requested to accept a copy of the Narrative of our deputation, as a humble memorial of the delightful transactions of this day.'"

Minutes of the fifth annual Assembly of the Congregational Union: pp. 13. 14.

English churches have, through their deputies, assisted or retarded the holy cause of emancipation; whether they have exhibited the church of Christ, in an attitude of opposition to the greatest of crimes, or have virtually passed it over without protest or reproof.

But we must not forget, that the deputation reached the United States in a time of high excitement, owing to the active operation of the newly-formed associations of abolitionists, aided by the itinerant labours and stirring oratory of Mr. George Thompson; and that this excitement was greatly increased by the angry opposition of the Colonization Society, a body in possession of the field before the abolitionists, and organized for the express purpose of doing acts of oppression and injustice* to the coloured population, under the specious names of humanity and philanthropy! In this crisis, therefore, the duty of the English churches was clear and distinct, to send out deputies, whose principal duty should be to ascertain the extent in which their transatlantic brethren are implicated in the crime of slavery, and to convey such messages of exhortation as the enormity of the sin imperatively demands: for if we dispatch Christian ambassadors from this country, merely to inspect colleges, to assist at revival meetings, to hear and preach sermons, to join in prayer-meetings, to pay and receive compliments, to sit at feasts and festivals, and to bring back the amaranthine crown of a doctor's degree, whilst a sin so frightful, so appalling, so unparalleled as slave-driving, in the hands and hearts of "pious" Christians, is entirely passed over; then, indeed, we have done that, which will pass current with the world; we have well acted the courtly ceremony of international politeness; but the sword, which our Lord left as a legacy in the hands of the church (Matt. x. 34), we have allowed to rust in the scabbard, that we might maintain a polite peace with Satan and his loyal subjects.

Now, on turning to the pages of the "Visit"—which, without circumspection, may be called Dr. Reed's book—what information do we gain on the guilt or innocence of the American Christians with regard to slavery? What do we learn of the scandalous injustice and pitiful hatred, manifested by vast multitudes of Christians towards their unhappy compatriots, the colour of whose skin excludes them from the benefits of freedom, though they carry about with them the name of freemen? Does Dr. Reed expatiate on the moral plague of the country? Does he narrate some of the shocking circumstances of malignant prejudice and hardness of heart, manifested towards the coloured population, which, if he did not see with his own eyes, he certainly must have heard of everywhere? Alas! on these subjects, Dr. Reed's book is altogether silent; and silent to such an extent, that he who should read the "Visit," and the contemporary Tour of Mr. Abdy, must come to the conclusion, that either Mr. Abdy's Tour is a book of fables, or Dr. Reed's a volume of *suppressions*.

Dr. Reed does, indeed, occasionally tell a story of slavery, and occasionally sprinkles his narrative with sentences of abhorrence of the sin; but he takes good care, that the story shall not touch the consciences of any "gentleman" in America, and that the sentiment of abhorrence shall fall harmless in the depths of space, with all the glitter and innocence of a sky-rocket. For who, in these days, does not mouthe against slavery in the abstract? What promoter of oppression dares to do otherwise, than to declare he abominates slavery? Does not Lord S * * * say so much?

* If any one yet doubts the true nature of the Colonization Society, he must read Judge Jay's anatomy of it; a little book which has been republished in this country.

do not Elliott Cresson and Mr. Breckinridge? do not the Liverpool speculators, some of whom, at this very hour, are receiving eleven per cent. for their money employed in the illicit slave trade? A general sentiment of abhorrence of slavery is, therefore, a mere figure of speech, a flower of rhetoric, a sprig of fashionable euphuism; but when the speaker or writer descends from generalities to particulars, when he specifies the district, the town, the villages, when he names the men, the sect, or the preachers, who are implicated in the crime, then he becomes vulgar, then he is a fanatic, an incendiary, a firebrand, &c., &c., "he turneth the world upside down;" and Dr. Reed is no incendiary.

The epitome of Dr. Reed's observations may be seen in the following sentence, which, though guarded with cautious vagueness of phraseology, is still capable of analysis: "All the northern states have entirely washed their hands of slavery and the slave trade; and the middle states are free, or *will quickly be so*. The religious, of every name and every place, are prepared to admit and deplore *the evil of slavery in itself*, and are expressing an anxious desire for any remedy that might be effectual."—(Vol. ii. p. 286.)

"The religious," that is, the people who call themselves so, or are so called, by courtesy, "in the Visit to the American churches," are prepared to admit and deplore, the evil of slavery in itself; not that they either deplore or admit, at present, the evil of slavery; on the contrary, they uphold and cherish it, both in theory and in practice; it is the guilt of thousands who are called "religious" in America; but then they are "PREPARED to deplore;" in the way to repentance; approaching to that state of mind when it will be possible, some time or other, to convince them of their guilt; on the road to clear-sightedness, no matter how far off, but still on the road; so that, judging from this statement, we may hope, that at some future period, of which we cannot venture to fix the date, these pious people will be in a fair way to conversion, and will, at last, acknowledge that sin is sinful! Now, supposing that Dr. Reed had said, that the clergy of the establishment were *prepared* to admit the evils of the union of church and state—which he or any one else might say if the controversy required it—how much nearer should we be to the mark of *separating* church and state, than we are at present? "Preparation," therefore, is but poor news; we want to hear of something much more advanced and decisive; we would gladly behold something much more substantial and comprehensible, than this meagre phantom of a hope.

But, alas! even this poor assurance fails us, when more closely examined; for "the religious in America" are, even in the *magnus annus* of their conversion, only to admit and deplore the evil of slavery *IN ITSELF*: they will deplore it as a general proposition, as an abstract principle, as a moral deduction; but they will be very cautious, they will keep to generalities, and not descend to particulars, or admit the evils of their own slavery; they will make brisk use of the racket, and when the ball of accusation is approaching to give them a blow, dexterously strike it off to their neighbours; just as dissolute men will very patiently hear sermons preached against sin in the abstract, taking it for granted, that a generality does not apply to themselves.

So much, then, for "the religious" of America, their preparations, and their abstractions: we come now to something more precise and tangible; for Dr. Reed, with all his prudence, could not entirely avoid the question of immediate abolition. "I would not," says Dr. Reed, "be understood to complain of the *great principle*, which the Anti-Slavery Society adopts, but of the methods, by which it has sought to give it predominance." To

complain of the great principle would, indeed, have been a strong measure for a deputy of the English churches; Dr. Reed, therefore, only complains of the methods, adopted to carry out that principle. When the principle is, by the shouting and hallooing of the abolitionists, compelled to break cover, when it can no longer creep into holes and hiding places, but must, per force, take the open country, then Dr. Reed complains of the methods adopted by the abolitionists, and for the following reasons: "Had the Anti-Slavery Society *calmly* and firmly announced, on religious grounds, that all slavery is sin against God, as well as an offence against society, and that, as such, it requires, without delay, to be abolished; and had it refused to come down from this high vantage ground, to deal in personal invective and *exaggerated statement*, it would have won its way *unresisted*, over the whole portion of the *religious* and philanthropic community."

Dr. Reed requires, therefore, "calmness" of the abolitionists; and if they had been calm, he says, the cause of abolition would have been admitted in all the Union, at least, by all the religious and philanthropic of the Union, *without resistance!* A most surprising assertion indeed; for, in the first place, there is the Colonization Society already in the field, with its scheme of deep-laid fraud and intricate falsehood, warmly embraced "by the religious and philanthropic" slave-drivers, as a method for extricating themselves out of the scrape of abolition; then, there is the whole array of the southern and most of the middle provinces, deep in the crime of slavery, a busy, profligate, hard-hearted population of merciless tyrants, many of them very "religious and philanthropic," many of them crying out loudly, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" then, there are the representatives in Congress, even of the northern parts, fearful of giving offence to the southern slave-drivers, and voting, with the rest, to *continue or extend slavery in newly-incorporated states*.* there is a slave-driving President, and all the people, from Dan to Beersheba, insulting and oppressing the free people of colour; and yet, against all this, "a calm declaration of the sin of slavery, would have won its way *unresisted*, throughout the whole union!!!"

But let us for a moment suppose, that a calm course of sermons against slavery, had been preached by the deputation, in Georgia or the Carolinas, can we suppose that they would have escaped Lynch law before their mission was ended, and that the exaltation of Haman would have been the reward of their labours?

Dr. Reed proceeds: "the Anti-Slavery Society has allowed nothing to prejudice, nothing to interest, nothing to time." Here the caution of the balancer fails him; he throws too much weight now on the other side, and falls into the arms of the slave-drivers; for it appears, that if the Anti-Slavery Society had made allowances for the *prejudices and interests* of the slave-drivers, and had given them *sufficient time*, it would have been well; but they have not done so, and therefore have erred. "Prejudices, money, and time!" and that, from an abolitionist; one, who has nothing to say against "the great principle;" one who, a minute before, had remarked, that the proper course to be observed was, "calmly and firmly to announce, on religious grounds, that all slavery is a sin against God, as well as an offence against society, and that as such it requires, WITHOUT DELAY, to be abolished."—p. 260.

But Dr. Reed has still graver charges against the Anti-slavery Society:

* Congress, in incorporating the territory of the Arkansas, this year, into the Union, has guaranteed the full exercise of slavery in this new limb of the State! What, then, becomes of Dr. Reed's flattering picture of "preparation."

"it has borne on its front defiance *and not conciliation*, and this not merely against slavery, but against the slave-holder: means, leading to the result, and *remuneration consequent* upon it, instead of being considerably discussed, are peremptorily denounced."

So, then, at last, we see the scheme of the deputy of the Independent churches: slavery and the slave-driver ought to have been conciliated; "remuneration" ought to have been discussed; prejudices and interest ought to have received their due allowance, and time ought to have been given the slave-holders; and then, these religious and philanthropic people would have, "without resistance," become emancipators; just as our West-Indian slave-holders hated slavery, when they pocketed twenty millions to persuade them to change its name into apprenticeship!

I would ask, therefore, Ought the congregational pædobaptist dissenters of England, to be contented with the achievements of their deputation? May they not, with reason, complain, that the English churches, by the management of their ambassadors, have been made to appear indifferent to the crime of slavery? and that they, who are most anxious to come forth boldly in the cause of abolition, have been kept within the trenches, by the too cautious policy of their plenipotentiaries? Why should not the truth be told? why sacrifice the character of all the churches to the ease of individuals, who, in the opinion of very many, have failed in pressing the objects of their mission? and why, rather than make a confession, which might afford perhaps a momentary triumph in certain quarters, allow future generations to believe, that the English Congregational Societies of 1836, approved the conduct of a deputation, which must be condemned the more it is examined?

The Congregational Magazine has, indeed, undertaken the defence of Dr. Reed's book; but in what does the defence mainly consist? In giving large quotations of the author's descriptions of American scenery, and in holding up to admiration sundry novel-like passages, which, with whatever elegance they may be written, ought certainly never to have been introduced in such a book, and which are so common in the works of modern fiction, or in the pages of fashionable tourists, as to pass for mere ballast in these days.

If I were to concede all the merit claimed for these passages, and were to pass over some glaring instances of bad taste,* still, this question is to be answered, What have the English churches to do with romantic descriptions of woods, hills, dales, gliding streams, moonshine, and waterfalls? and in what respect are they edified by this sentimental eulogy of nature, which might be smiled at in the pages of a Christmas "Annual," but is something more than ridiculous from a grave deputy of "the Conventicle;" "a budge doctor of the Stoic fur?"

The dissenters had a right to expect a very different book, and if ever they should send forth another deputation, we must hope and believe, that they will select for the mission, individuals, who can both act and write in the plain straightforward way of the olden times; who will not be coaxed into an injurious silence, by a little valueless hospitality, nor think it one duty of their mission, to collect the scattered rays of admiration into a focus on their own persons.

* I purposely omit any further remarks on these subjects, reserving them, if required, for some future occasion.

LETTER XXII.

It has been singularly unfortunate for the honour of England, that the deputation of her congregational paedobaptist churches, should have been immediately succeeded by a deputation from the baptist churches, as little disposed as their predecessors, to speak the language of uncompromising abolition to the slave-driving "Christians" of America.

Doctors Cox and Hoby, the baptist deputies, have published the narrative of their visit; in which they have, at considerable length, spoken in the defensive and explanatory style, of their conduct on the other side of the Atlantic; knowing very well, that the honest and resolute spirit of their English brethren, would certainly recalcitrate against the timid manœuvres of their mission. I, for one, must express myself not a little satisfied, that they have thus been put on their defence, and have been compelled in many speeches, not less than in their narrative, to elaborate an apology for the satisfaction of their brethren; for it is a proof that the English baptists, in whose zeal we may generally place reliance, are as hearty as ever in the holy cause of abolition, which cannot be deserted by Christians in the present alarming crisis, without bringing disgrace and judgment on the churches.

The first fact established by these repeated explanations is, that the deputies were as prescient and cautious, as their constituents were thoughtless and imprudent; for it now appears, that Doctors Cox and Hoby had fully made up their minds, not to meddle with abolition, *before they left this country*; that they had duly considered all the danger and difficulty of taking the bull of slavery by the horns, and were determined to go through the Union quietly and comfortably, in the worshipful style of ambassadors, undisturbed by the heat and dust of "agitation." This is evident; 1st, from the following passage in the Narrative, "My colleague and I were not pledged, by any expressed or understood engagement, to attend the anniversary of the Anti-Slavery Society. The document, with which we were entrusted, and by which we were sent to America, abstained from all allusions to the subject of slavery, expressly that we might go unfettered, and act according to our judgment in any emergency" (p. 113): and, 2dly, from the following passage in a speech of Dr. Cox, before the Baptist Union, held in London last June, "That letter* was not given to the deputation, in character of instructions; for *the last* declaration which I uttered to the committee, before leaving them, was this, that if they would not place confidence in the ability and zeal of the delegates, *even at the eleventh hour*, let them choose others in whom they could entirely confide."

The committee ought not to have fallen into this snare; they ought to have answered the deputies to this effect, "Your declaration, at *the eleventh hour*, does, indeed, surprise and perplex us; for it is manifest to us, that if you had not secretly determined not to act according to these instructions,

* Alluding to a well written letter of instructions, which the deputies thus cleverly set aside.

you never would or could have made this demand, for what you call our entire confidence: confidence, we, indeed, have placed in you, as brethren and as Christians, and for that very reason have selected you, to bear our testimony against the enormous sin of slavery, believing that you would, without fear or favour, make the English churches speak the language of truth, justice, mercy, and evangelical morality. It never can have been a secret to you, that the task is a difficult one, and such as cannot be executed without giving great offence, even as it once was a very dangerous task to preach the gospel in this country; but such has been our unlimited confidence in your characters, that we never have doubted for a moment, your ability and wish to undertake the task, and that without reserve or hesitation: for we cannot consent that our deputies should march through the length and breadth of the United States, and not divulge to all the world, that we English protestants have a hatred and horror of slavery, which, in professing Christians, is inexpressibly detestable and intolerable, and cannot be retained without bringing a dreadful opprobrium on the holy body of Christ. This is a message, which our deputies must publicly deliver; it is part of that great and glorious truth, that God is light and in him *is no darkness at all*: let other religions play at hide and seek with sin, we dare not do so; we must not retain a wedge of Achan, for if we do, the axe will be laid to our roots, and, with that wedge, we shall be split up for the burning. If the Americans are given to prayer and preaching, and yet keep their brethren, God's sable children, in bondage, their prayer is sin, their sermons are condemnation; and you, as our deputies, must go and tell them so, and if they will not hear you, then shake the dust of your feet against them; for it shall be more tolerable, far more tolerable, to Sodom and to Gomorrah, than to them and their cities, if they reject your word.

"To ask for our 'unlimited confidence in your zeal and abilities,' therefore, and to reject this letter as your instructions, is a proof to us, that you do not intend to act by them; for if you did, you would not make the demand. True, it is *the eleventh hour*, and all is ready, and you have kept secret your views up to the eleventh hour; but rather than entrust our mission to persons, whose caution is so painfully conspicuous, we shall defer this ambassage till we can find persons who, without reserve, will indeed take our letter as their instructions."

The deputies, however, sailed, without any instructions; "unlimited confidence" was placed in their "zeal and abilities," which terminated in very evident aversion to the cause of abolition, and very evident liking to the Colonization Society; that society, which possesses irresistible attractions for all those, who are ashamed of seeming to oppose emancipation, and who fear or dislike the monster abolition.

Dr. Cox has very plainly confessed, that these were his feelings; for of

* In giving Dr. Hoby's words from the Narrative, it is to be observed, that they are printed precisely as he has sent them forth to the world. The obscurity of the sentences is his and not mine.

"At this interview Mr. Thompson clearly intimated, that my opinion in favour of compensation, not as proposed in Britain, but on loss being actually proved to be sustained by a change of legislation, and, also in favour of forming a black republic on the slave coast of Africa, apart from all that is objectionable in the American Colonization Society, were the reasons why, as he said to me, 'we did not want you.' To this it could only be replied, 'Then why include me in the censure?' Mr. Thompson was aware, before he left England, that these were the views entertained, I and it is to be regretted that such opinions are never admitted in the discussions of American abolitionists."—p. 108,

the Abolition Society he uses these words, "respecting which we entertained *serious doubts*;" but of the Colonization Society he says, "*we did not wholly disapprove it.*" (p. 103) This is bad enough; but Dr. Hoby, who of course is included in the "WE" of the words just cited, has for himself* taken the trouble to inform us, that his idea of abolition is coupled with compensation, and a new Liberia, which he calls "a black republic on the Slave Coast of Africa;" that is, money for the slave-drivers, and a black republic to receive three millions of persecuted men and women, who are to be exiled from their native land to appease the hatred of their persecutors. Dr. Hoby, indeed, says, that his republic is to be "apart from all that is objectionable in the Colonization Society;" but how that is to be effected is not set forth; for it is as if he were to invent "a new species of gout apart from pain," "a new sort of affliction apart from sorrow." He that cherishes a scheme of wholesale banishment "apart from all that is objectionable," has either grossly deceived himself, or calculates, with too great confidence, on the credulity of mankind.

It is, however, satisfactory to observe, that the American abolitionists have, in the vestibule of their agitation, repudiated* all ideas of "compensation;" for not only is such a plan scandalously unjust and iniquitous, but we have seen its evil working too clearly in our own West Indian Colonies, ever to desire the repetition of such an experiment.

The ambassage of the English Baptists having been unwarily entrusted to deputies entertaining unsound sentiments, it is no wonder that the mission was one of mere compliments and congratulations, and that Christian Heralds, solemnly sent forth from the churches, passed through the land of bondage, without once lifting up their voice against a sin, of which no parallel is to be found in all the gloomy records of ecclesiastical history.

We have nothing to do with the private acts of the deputies: they may, and, I believe, did, express themselves against slavery, in their social intercourse with their slave-driving "brethren;" they could not but open their mouths in reproof, when they were sitting under the same roof with "dear and reverend brothers," who notoriously bought and sold Christian slaves; they *did* expostulate with these wicked men, and pointed out the enormity of selling men and women, with whom the sellers were in the habit of partaking of the eucharistic table; but, as for any public ambassadorial acts, they were totally silent, and have carefully suppressed in their narrative, many of those instructive instances of "Christian" oppression and villainy, with which they became personally acquainted.† And this is called prudence! and Dr. Cox has printed letters from American ministers, in approbation of his *judicious conduct*, which these gentlemen declare "will raise him high in the esteem of the wise and good of all

* Declaration of the National Anti-Slavery Convention: Philadelphia, Dec. 1833.
 "We maintain that no compensation shall be given to the planters emancipating their slaves, because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle that *man cannot hold property in man*; because, slavery is a crime, and therefore is not an article to be sold; because, the holders of slaves are not the just proprietors of what they claim; because, if compensation be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves, and not to those who have plundered and abused them."

† One sentence only in the Narrative, inadvertently confesses the guilt of the American churches: "Those who commissioned us knew perfectly well, that our American brethren were **LARGELY IMPLICATED IN SLAVE HOLDING.**" (p. 117.) These few unguarded words are worth many chapters of the Narrative; for it acknowledges a fact, which we might in vain look for amidst long descriptions of chapels, prayer-meetings, colleges, and revivals.

parties," (p. 123) and make him stand forth in bold relief, when contrasted with the egregious folly of his countrymen"!!!

What, then, have the English Baptists gained by their unfortunate mission? Hear it from Dr. Cox's own words, uttered before the Baptist Union; "No man in America doubted of the Baptist churches in England being abolitionists; nothing that the deputation had ever said or done, would have produced the impression that they were *not* abolitionists."

Dr. Cox did not venture to assert, that he and his coadjutor had done anything to make it believed, that the English Baptists were really abolitionists. No; that would have been too audacious: all he asserts is, that they have done nothing "to produce the impression that they were NOT abolitionists." They did not contradict a negation; that is, they did nothing at all on the subject; they wrapped up their talent in a napkin, and restored it to its owners clean and unused.

And true it is, that no man doubted that the English Baptists were abolitionists; but that is not the question: the question is, whether the English Baptists were determined to grapple with the crime in a Christian warfare. No one doubts that a seventy-four gun ship is a man-of-war; but the question is, will that man-of-war *fight*? Will it come forth and bombard the enemy, or are all its guns spiked, and are orders given that it shall by no means go out to sea? If the English Baptists keep their abstract hatred of slavery locked up in their own bosoms, as an esoteric secret of the sect, they are, to all intents and purposes, not abolitionists; and this is exactly the position they have been compelled to assume, by the policy of their deputation, which, in my opinion, had far better never have left the shores of England. To talk of love, and piety, and revivals, and camp meetings, and of having "formed a link of connexion between the Baptist churches of America and England" (p. 117); and to boast, that the deputies have succeeded in "calling forth the kindest emotions, the warmest affections, the loveliest spirit, towards THEMSELVES, towards England, and *mankind*," (i.e. slaves and people of colour always excepted) p. 72, is surely making a very poor estimate of the right feelings of the English Baptists: for may they not most justly complain, that they do not wish to be "linked" with these slave-drivers; that to be bound up in the bundle of life with them, is any thing but desirable, lest they, too, should be brands with them for the burning; and that their object in sending the deputation was, not merely to pay compliments and number the strength of a sect, but to ascertain the truth of those frightful reports, which had been wafted across the Atlantic to our shores; and then, by all the bowels of mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord, by all the tenderness of the God and Father of Jesus Christ, to implore in a public, solemn, serious, and holy message, that these professed disciples of the righteous Jesus would, at last, awake to righteousness and sin not.

I will not here stop to untwist the puzzle of casuistry, which Dr. Cox has fabricated, about "the political question of slavery;" for I feel confident, that any plain intellect can master the sophism; nor will I lengthen this letter, by decyphering the complaint against "foreign interference, and foreigners," (i. e. Mr. George Thomson,) repeatedly urged in the pages of the Narrative: these are arguments, such as might be expected from persons, who "do not wholly disapprove of the Colonization Society." But I hasten to conclude this protracted subject, by a passage extracted from the *Patriot* newspaper, well written, by an old and faithful advocate of the slave. "The peculiar aggravation of American slave-holding, is *not*

that it is the sin of the Federal government, and, therefore, implicating the whole nation, who are pledged by the terms of union to be partakers, by more than connivance, in the sin of the slave-holding States; not, that it is a national sin, so much as that it is, in America, **THE SIN OF THE CHURCH.** This is the horrible fact, which renders even our fraternizing with slave-holding churches, and slave-flogging pastors, a questionable, or, at least, an embarrassing position. That slavery existed in the southern States, we always knew; but the extent to which Presbyterian, Baptist, and Wesleyan churches, were directly implicated in upholding the system, was not by any means generally understood in this country, till very recently. That slaves were *the property of churches*, was not even dreamed of. How could it be supposed, that while the northern States were glorying in having abolished slavery—no great surprise to virtue, however, as slave cultivation is confessedly a very unprofitable sin in such latitudes—the very churches of the middle and southern States, were trafficking in the blood and sinews of their dark-skinned fellow-countrymen and fellow-Christians? Where is the dissenting church in the three kingdoms, that could, for a single day, tolerate this ineffable outrage upon the members of Christ's body." (June 22, 1836.)

To this passage may be added one more, by the same writer, I presume, in the "Eclectic Review;" to which it will be quite unnecessary for me to add one word.

"The time is come, when it behoves British Christians to lift up their voice in loud and emphatic reprobation of the wickedness, in which all religious denominations in the United States are more or less involved; to make their voice be heard across the Atlantic, in the language of firm, uncompromising remonstrance. It is high time, to bring the whole force of public sentiment in this country, to bear upon the unjust and unchristian prejudices, which steel the professed followers of Christ against the plainest dictates of his word, and to give the *the utmost support of our sympathy and encouragement, to the noble band* who, alive to their country's shame and danger, are striving to diffuse a better feeling through the American community.

"It seems to us, that the truth of the Christian religion is implicated, in the issue of the struggle of principles, in the United States." August, 1835; No. lxxx.

LETTER XXIII.

THE society of Wesleyan Methodists is well worthy the attention of the historian and the philosopher, not less than of the Christian theologian; for the progress of this famous society, will furnish, not only, a most important chapter in modern history, but will supply matter for deep inquiry to those philosophers, who would find a solution for the moral changes of the human race, in the movements of mental phenomena.

My subject requires of me to notice Methodism only in one view; its present tendency to advance the kingdom of Christ upon earth, and to mitigate the abundance of evil, which everywhere prevails. With this view, then, let us first make all due acknowledgment to Methodism as a benefactor, and cheerfully confess, that England and America owe a large debt of gratitude to the illustrious founder of this powerful society: let us, who are Calvinists,* and that, too, of the rigid school, cast away our Gomaritan telescope, when we would look at the world that lieth in wickedness, and, instead of viewing one or two favoured spots of our little creed, behold, with expanded view, all the kingdoms of the earth from the rising to the setting sun, oppressed with the powers of darkness, and condemned to hopeless bondage of sin and death, unless the armies of the church shall go forth to their rescue. With this view, unless our hearts be indurate with bigotry, we must bid God speed to Methodism; for we see what it has already done, and we know full well, that much of the plentiful harvest would be lost, for want of efficient hands, if the Wesleyan labourers should retire from the field. Let us remember that, owing to Methodism, justification by faith, with the other fundamental doctrines of the gospel, are preached in many villages and towns of this kingdom, and in various portions of the old and new continents, which, without these preachers, would never hear a sound of the gospel. I do not say, that all Methodist ministers preach the gospel; for some of them certainly do not; but, generally speaking, we have every reason to believe, that wherever there is a Methodist chapel, there, sooner or later, and by reason of the frequent change of the preachers, the truth will be declared, and men will listen to the word of life. Let us remember the multitudes that have been brought, by the labours of Methodism, from a state of gross sensuality and brutal ignorance, not only to comparative virtue and knowledge, but to that frame of mind, which takes a lively interest in the spread of the gospel all over the world. Calvinists may think the doctrine of Methodism deficient, or may perceive that some of the Wesleyan tenets, by the inevitable deductions of sound logic, terminate in the mysteries of Brahminical absorption; but still, remembering the manifest good that has been done by this society, they must acknowledge, that the Almighty does not wait till Christians have adopted a perfect creed, and a perfect form of church government; but, requiring only truth in the inward parts, and faith in Christ crucified, as the Redeemer of

* I do not here intend to include my friend to whom these Letters are addressed, but those Calvinists who, though now decidedly in the minority, would appeal to Dr. Owen as a sound expositor of their creed. In that minority I rank myself.

sinner, that turn to God through Him and commit their souls' salvation to his grace, sends down a liberal blessing on those, who, in all essentials, thus seek to promote the glory of God through the Son of his love. And, indeed, unless we admit this to be a truth, we must at once confess, that the church of Christ is nowhere upon earth, and that there is no salvation anywhere; for nothing can be more certain than this fact, that there is nowhere to be found a church of Christians, which has a perfect scriptural creed, together with a perfectly scriptural form of church government: imperfection is amongst them all; but to all of them—to some more liberally than others—has been entrusted a measure of the seed of everlasting life, and it will be found, at last, that this seed has been sown by Episcopalian, Calvinistic dissenter, Methodist, and Quaker; and that the sun of righteousness has fructified the seed, without respect to the paltry barriers that now keep sects apart, and sadly prevent all interchange of brotherly communion. Merciful, indeed, is it for this miserable earth, that God in Christ is not a God of sects, but above sects, and that all who believe in the Lord our righteousness, “have an access by one spirit unto the Father.”

On the other hand, however, if we look at Methodism in its human arrangements, we find it abounding with imperfections: its church-government is not framed according to any pattern authorized in Scripture: the Wesleyans do not pretend, that their arbitrary oligarchy of priests, resembles the order established in the primitive churches. The constitution of John Wesley is an edifice, built up entirely by the imagination of man, and, in this respect, has no more claim to our reverence, than the fabric of Jesuitism, or the government of the Papal hierarchy: it may be useful and clever, and, to certain ends, may wisely apply certain means, but this is all we can say of it, if we examine it either by the gospel or any decent code of morals; and it is extremely probable, that persons who understand the trick of government, might contrive another constitution more clever and more artful, than that which at present “feels along the line” of Wesleyan Methodism:

The master secret of the society, is the consignment of a boundless power to an oligarchy of clergymen, whilst the people are allowed to play with the forms of power, in the reality of which they have no share. Conference is a camarilla of priests, who, with closed doors, make all the laws by which the society is regulated, and, to the high prerogative of expulsion or suspension of any member of the society, add the still more important one of voting, levying, and applying all the taxes, without consulting the people. In other words, absolute power is vested in the hands of a self-elected oligarchy: a form of government, the most arbitrary and powerful that can be imagined; as may be seen by comparing John Wesley's system with the now fallen government of the state of Venice.

With all this apparatus of dominion, there is, however, a large allowance, of the forms and semblance of power, to the people: they have their district meetings, class-meetings, stewards' and leaders' meetings, and, in various other ways, are permitted to put forth their energies without opposition, so long as those energies are employed in a way agreeable to their masters. And it is this dexterous arrangement, which makes Methodism popular with the multitude; for every one who has any desire to be active, may immediately find a field for his activity, by taking a part in the complicated business of his sect, and, in some way or other, may so occupy himself, as to appear to his own eyes, at least, of some importance.

All the while, however, there is the jealous eye of authority anxiously watching the busy movements of the incorporated workmen; and if, perchance, they trench on forbidden ground, if they question a decree of Conference, if they demand any reform, or resist any ordinance of their superiors, or even, by remote tendency, seem to desire an enlargement of popular influence, immediately a stern and inexorable superintendent quashes all their proceedings, and makes them feel, that though Conference sits only once, and that for a short time, in every year, yet it never slumbers nor sleeps, so as to drop the sceptre which it received from John Wesley's hands. In vain is it for the remonstrants to battle out their cause, however clearly justice may be on their side, through all the various courts of appeal, which Methodism seems to offer to its oppressed members: some bar of authority, some interstice of the net of power, embarrasses them at every turn; and, at last, a grand and verbose epistle from Capreæ cuts off the remonstrants, as putrid limbs of the body, and consigns them to the dogs and sorcerers, who are for ever shut out of the walls of Wesleyan Methodism.

The instances of these unsuccessful struggles have, of late years, been so numerous in the Methodist Society, and have so uniformly ended with one catastrophe—triumph and increase of power to the rulers, and defeat and heavier chains to the remonstrants—that we may conjecture the experiment will never again be repeated. They that wish for reform in Methodism, cannot hope to effect it, but by altering the very constitution of the society. There is, obviously, but one remedy; a change from the sacerdotal to the popular form of government; and that not according to the ingenious fancies of man, but according to the pattern discoverable in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul. Christians may not select constitutions from the pigeon-holes of Abbé Sicyes's office; they may not amuse themselves, with inventing this and that form of ecclesiastical polity, according as their prejudices preponderate for the regal, aristocratical, or popular pattern; they have the New Testament before them, and, according to that book, they must legislate, however much it may militate with the prejudices of their education or the decrees of their sect.*

To appeal to Conference on this subject, and to require them to renounce the exorbitant dominion which they at present enjoy, is evidently hopeless: we cannot reasonably expect, that they could ever be persuaded to renounce their profitable prerogatives, or, from lords and rulers, to become "servants, and least of all;" nor can we expect them to heed those signs of deterioration, which a tyrannical government must, sooner or later, exhibit, and which certainly are now discoverable by those, who will take the trouble to look beyond the outward array of the society. The primitive simplicity of Methodism, in this country, is fast fading away;

* The tyranny of Conference has produced various sects and epi-sects of Methodism, so many, that it would be long to name them; but all of them, without exception, have adhered to the ideas of the sect from which they have seceded. To perfect John Wesley's platform, has been the aim of all the Methodistical seceders; hence, amongst the Primitive Methodists, Kilhamites, Protestant Methodists, and others, we find the same machinery of a conference, class meetings, district meetings, stewards' and leaders' meetings, &c., &c., though there is not the slightest authority in Scripture for any one of these contrivances; a striking instance of the superstitious attachment of man to the sectarian notions in which he has been educated. It is, indeed, surprising, that not one of the sects produced by the arbitrary power of Conference, has ever taken up this opinion, that in seeking reform, they ought to reform according to the New Testament, rather than by the ideas of John Wesley.

the preachers are a different race of men from those, who endured the persecution of the nascent state of the sect; many are beginning to talk about talent, and to set a high value on the ornamented and rhetorical style of pulpit oratory; the high tone and enormous prerogatives of Conference have too much exalted them, and the love of power increases with the increase of the whole body; wealth and influence, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, have produced the usual harm amongst Methodists, and there is already a want of a second John Wesley amongst them, to preach against those secular corruptions, which a profound ecclesiastical historian has declared, could never yet be kept out of any body of Christians for forty years together.

In the large towns there are numerous Methodists, who ought never to have been admitted into the body; their lives and occupations do little credit to Christians, and it would be a strange mistake, to *take it for granted*, that a Methodist is in these days a pious man. The language of piety is, perhaps, familiar with them all; but, alas! there are too many, whom it is painful to contemplate as the members of any Christian community. This evil is to be traced to an undue anxiety for increasing the numbers of the sect; an anxiety, which late rebellions and convulsions have excited amongst the rulers. There is, apparently, a wish amongst them, to present the imposing spectacle, of a vast multitude of partizans arrayed on the side of Conference; for, on no other theory, can I account for the influx of numerous members in certain places, who surely do no credit to Methodism, and who, in the opinion of some of the stricter of the sect, ought never to have been admitted. This is an evil produced by a vicious government; if there were no fears at the seat of authority, there certainly would be less anxiety to swell the regiments of the society, and, by numerical force, to overpower resistance, and awe into submission.

In the meantime, however, amidst much that is objectionable, good is always somewhere in progress amongst the Methodists; they have many strifes, many rebellions, much oppression; their acts of religious worship are sometimes very extravagant;* but still, on the main, a fair portion, perhaps a majority, of the ministers, are pious men, desirous to do the

* It is part of the policy of the Wesleyan government, to allow unbounded latitude in the pulpit, and to tolerate occasionally the most grotesque and tumultuating orators, whose doings could not possibly be imagined by any one that had not witnessed them. There are many really excellent preachers at present amongst the Wesleyans; men of grave and sedate deportment, whom it is pleasing as well as profitable to hear, and whose style and manner could not possibly offend the most fastidious. On the other hand, there are some itinerant revivalists, men of no fixed location, who travel about the country to stir up the slumbering embers of zeal with the bellows of excitement. One of these persons, a man well known in his vocation, I once heard; but how shall I describe his sermon, his prayers, and his acts and deeds in the pulpit? The violence of his expressions, the mummery and buffoonery of his gesticulation, the drollery and broad farce of his stories, the excessive profaneness of his language, and the studied boorishness of his manners and dialect, produced an exhibition, such as no mimic on the stage could, by an elaborate imitation, possibly caricature. Much of this man's scandalous harangue I wrote down, but need not print, for it can do no good to publish proofs of a distorted religion and a depraved taste. A stormy and uproarious prayer-meeting followed the sermon, a very tempest of devotion, in which the respectable inhabitants of a large town seemed to take a part. Surely scenes like these can have no other tendency, than to turn religious worship into a comedy. I believe, however, that the Conference-clergy, the standing army of Methodism, much disapprove these episodes of excitement, and would gladly prohibit them, but for fear of the murmurs and discontent of the people. As long as "revivals" are cherished amongst the Ranters and the other seceders from Methodism, it would be an impolitic measure, to prohibit them, in the parent society.

whole work of evangelists, and to live and die for the glory of God; and, by their efforts, many sinners are, through divine grace, converted, and turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God: and many there are amongst the Methodists, at this present time, who are examples to all, of sincerity, devotion, humility, and love.

Much has been said of late, of the tendency of the Methodists to unite with the Church of England, and to support it in the day of its troubles: the church clergy seem to desire this union, with all their hearts; but the Methodists never could hearken to such a scheme, for they know full well, that such union could not take place, without making large concessions to the pride and ambition of the Prelates. To unite with an episcopal government, can mean nothing else than to profess obedience to Bishops; and it is well known, that no persons love power more than our English Bishops, unless, indeed, we except the clergy of the Wesleyan Conference. It never can be supposed for a moment, that Conference would allow prelatical fingers to meddle with the machinery of their sect; and, indeed, what can be conceived more ridiculous, than his grace the Lord Archbishop of York, metropolitan of England, amidst the pomp and glitter of Bishopthorpe, holding counsel with his chaplains about love-feasts and band-meetings, or driving, in his coach and six, to a camp-meeting on the Wolds! Will, then, the Bishops yield to Conference or Conference to the Bishops? In what possible way, can this union be effected, but by altering the form of church government on one side or the other? In America,* where they have the world before them to make their choice, the Methodists and Episcopalians keep wide apart; there is no sort of union between them: the supposition of such a catastrophe is, therefore, quite absurd, and is only entertained by those terrified clergymen, who are ready to catch at any straw in the hour of difficulty.

But let not the clergy deceive themselves: they ought to discover this truth, that the Methodists are in reality, far more injurious to the prelatical fabric, than the dreaded Independents and Baptists. They ought to perceive, that Methodism, particularly in the northern manufacturing districts, spreads with astonishing rapidity amongst the people, in the proportion of three to one, perhaps, compared with the Calvinistic dissenters, and that he who is joined to Methodism is irretrievably lost to the church; that he goes no more to church; that he separates himself from the church clergymen; that he owns new rulers, joins himself to a new people, and loses all love and esteem for that system, which is dear in the eyes of a clergyman. The internal arrangements of Methodism, naturally create an extreme distaste for the church of England; for in he one, all is excitement, bustle, activity, and mutual help; whilst in the other, all is cold formality, inaction, supineness, and neglect. A poor Methodist feels that, in his own sect, he is a living member, but in the church of England, he is as little regarded as the bench on which he sits: he comes and goes, to hear sermons and the reading of printed prayers, but this is all; and when the ceremony of worship is concluded, he is forgotten, neglected, and despised. I have, consequently, ever observed, that the poorer class of Methodists have an insurmountable dislike to the church of England; not, indeed, on the grounds assumed by an Independent, not on the sound and wholesome argument of the Lollards and Puritans, but from personal dislike and disgust to that which, by experience, they have discovered to be highly

* The tendency of Methodism to swallow up the Episcopalian sect, may be seen in America, where the Methodists, a sect of yesterday, are 668,000 in number; whilst the Episcopalians, the sect of ancient authority, are only 60,000!

unpalatable. Now, as Methodism sweeps in the poorer class into its capacious net, by vast shoals at a time, it is easy to perceive, that it is rapidly undermining the church of England, and that every newly-built Wesleyan chapel is, in fact, a newly mounted cannon to bombard the establishment.

In the meantime, however, because the Methodistical rulers will not allow their people to take any part in the great controversy between the church and the dissenters, and rigidly enforce the strictest neutrality, the clergy are led to believe, that the Methodists are anxious to unite with the church; and they too often express this opinion, with an eagerness, that betrays the vividness of their apprehensions. For who does not perceive, that this eagerness for an impossible union is, in fact, a confession of deplorable weakness on the part of the church; and that they who, but a few years ago, preached and printed against the Methodists, and incited mobs to pull down their chapels, could not now be coaxing and flattering them, unless they perceived their own alarming predicament, which renders assistance acceptable from any quarter? If the clergy of the establishment could annihilate the question of church reform, we may be quite sure, that their next desire would be to annihilate the Methodists.

The rulers of Methodism have, of course, from the very first, perceived the secret of this ridiculous friendship, proffered to them by their old persecutors; and it is apparent, by occasional sneers and sly remarks in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, that the camarilla secretly enjoys the perplexity of the dominant sect.

The fact is, that Conference perceives the signs of decadence in the established church; it expects, as all other classes of society do, the downfall of the establishment, and is wisely resolved, to observe a strict neutrality in the workings of this great catastrophe. The Methodists could not begin a warfare against the church, without materially perplexing and impeding the smooth course of their own affairs; for, if Conference were to allow their people, to meddle with the inflammatory matter of church reform, they could not be surprised to see their own house taking fire in the progress of the warfare.

“Nam tua res agitur, paries quum proximus ardet.”

It would be an act of insanity in the rulers of Methodism, to allow their vast body, which, even now, is with much difficulty kept within bounds, to agitate such questions as are of necessity involved in a controversy with the church; for who does not see, that if once they were permitted to attack priests, tithes, church rates, and the arbitrary power of the clergy, and to investigate the scriptural foundations of the establishment, that they must, of necessity, go a step farther, and conclude, that Conference itself is a mere usurpation and an invention of man's artifice? It is, therefore, the obvious policy of Conference, to avoid this controversy, and we need not be surprised to see them expelling, without mercy, those members or ministers, who have temerarily handled the burning coal of “church and state.” Conference stands as much in need of conservative management, as the church of England itself; the Wesleyan rulers are wise in their generation, and thoroughly understand the art of avoiding what is dangerous, as well as of adopting what is politic.

In spite, however, of this extreme caution and vigilant forethought on the part of Conference, it is probable, that they will ultimately be compelled, to admit the people to a just and moderate share of power, and to yield to force, that which they have hitherto pertinaciously refused to concede to reason; for it is difficult to suppose, that so many myriads of freemen will continue blindly to obey three or four hundred preachers,

and to consign, without question, their consciences, their liberties, and their purses, to a self-elected body of irresponsible priests. We ought all to wish for a change, or rather a revolution, in the government of Methodism, and desire to see the day, when the present state of things shall be completely remodelled according to a scriptural pattern; for then, this powerful society would become more powerful, and, purged of the evils which a vicious government has introduced, would, with unimpeded efforts, assist in advancing the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

I close this letter with an extract from the Methodist Magazine for May, 1836, which will sufficiently manifest the disinclination of the Wesleyan managers, to enter into the schemes of the church clergy. In commenting on "the Pastoral Epistle from his Holiness the Pope, to some members of the university of Oxford," the editor makes the following remarks: "It is well known that within the last few years, a series of tracts, professedly adapted to the present times, has emanated from Oxford, defending the claims of what is usually understood by high churchmanship, and embodying principles respecting *apostolical succession*, ministerial authority, the power of the sacraments, &c., which ill accord with either the letter or the spirit of Protestant Christianity, and which exclude from the pale of the church of Christ, and all hope of salvation, a *large portion of the best men in the land*. It is a bad sign, when ministers lay great stress upon an assumed 'succession' from the apostles, which *not one of them can prove*, and overlook the great and attainable qualifications of apostolical piety, self-denial, zeal, and humility. We should be glad to see the *boasted* sons of the apostles imitating Peter and John at Jerusalem, and Paul at Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Antioch, and Rome."

It is presumed, that after this passage the British Magazine will cease to pay its monthly compliments to the Methodists, as a "highly respectable body."*

* From the *Falmouth Packet*, Oct. 1836. "During the recent progress of Bishop Phillpotts through Cornwall, a circumstance occurred at St. Ives, which has occasioned a very strong sensation in the town. The Rev. J. Malkin, a clergyman of respectable character, curate of St. Ives, went to meet the bishop, as was his duty, at Lelant. His Lordship, having listened to secret accusers, told the reverend gentleman, that he had a serious charge to make against him, for he had been credibly informed, that he (the curate of St. Ives) *was in the habit of attending the conventicle*. To this the curate replied, he had not been in a conventicle for the last two years. His lordship then said, that he had been informed that his wife and family went to those places. The curate rejoined, that he could not dictate to his wife, or prevent her occasionally attending a Methodist meeting, if she felt inclined to do so. The bishop then expressed himself to this effect: 'If you cannot command your wife and family, sir, not to visit such places, you are not fit to be a minister of the establishment.' The curate, thus publicly addressed by his diocesan, indignantly replied, 'My Lord, I received this gown from your lordship's hands, and I now return it to you without a blemish.' The inhabitants of St. Ives have subscribed a handsome piece of plate to be presented to their ejected curate."

Here, then, we see the total failure of the projected union between the Prelatists and Methodists! This notorious Bishop is one of those, who have said much about the necessity and comeliness of this union, and yet, behold, he ejects a curate from the ministry, because the curate's wife attends the Methodist meeting! How many Methodist meeting-houses would the Bishops allow to darken their dioceses, if they had the power of pulling them down?

In other respects, this story may serve to shew the church of England in its true light. What a doleful church must that be, in which such things can be done with impunity!

LETTER XXIV.

A HIERARCHY, framed on despotic principles, cannot fail to produce priests attached to despotism; men, for whom force and injustice have more powerful attractions, than the claims of the helpless and distressed. An attentive consideration, therefore, of the constitution of Methodism, would naturally lead one to expect, that the Wesleyan Conference must have a tendency to engender clergymen of despotic predilections; and such is the case; for it will generally be found, that the Wesleyan clergy range themselves on the side of power, when any striking event elicits their political principles, and that their feelings and affections are decidedly in favour of that policy, which, in a very suspicious nomenclature, is dexterously called "conservative." Arbitrary maxims are congenial with their taste: the illustrious founder of their sect went out of his way to write against the emerging liberties of North America; and the clergy, who now occupy his chair, are not a whit the less advocates of a strong, and, if need be, of a violent government. The Wesleyans have a strong government in their own house, and they admire one wherever else they can find it.

The parliamentary investigation of last session, instituted for the purpose of inquiring into "the Caffre war, and the death of Hintza," has brought to light the curious fact, that the Wesleyan missionaries of Southern Africa, have been the zealous promoters and secret counsellors of some of the most objectionable acts of an evil government, which, though it has perpetrated mighty wrongs on an afflicted and prostrate nation, does not seem to have accomplished all the dreadful wishes of one, at least, of these belligerent missionaries. Lord Glenelg, in his admirable despatch to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, a governor of dismal celebrity, notices *that "Messrs. Shrewsbury and Boyce, the Wesleyan missionaries, have, in an address signed by themselves for the whole Wesleyan body (of the Cape) supported the measures of the colonial government, and pronounced an unqualified condemnation on the Caffres." His Lordship, however, very significantly intimates, that "the tone and character of that address," do not give it much weight in his mind; evidently meaning, that he thinks it discreditable to the authors. And well he may, for this address of the missionaries is marked with the usual injurious calumnies against the natives,† ascribing all manner of crimes to them, and all manner of

* "Caffre-war and Death of Hintza"—*Parliamentary Returns*, No. 279. Lord Glenelg's despatch cannot be praised too highly. It is a masterly comment on the last scene of that long tragedy, which we have seen acting in Southern Africa. The concluding sentence of the despatch is an unrivalled specimen of bitter irony: "I am persuaded that your sentiments fully concur with my own, on the general principle on which these instructions are founded; and it affords me much gratification to know, that as you have been called to the discharge of severe and unwelcome duties, so now the more agreeable task will devolve upon you, of carrying into effect his majesty's gracious intentions, which I have the honour of communicating to you in this despatch!"

† "We know, in common with our countrymen, that the Caffres were themselves the aggressors; and that they most wantonly, cruelly, and ungratefully, commenced this war, with a people WHO SOUGHT AND DESIRED THEIR WELFARE AND PROSPERITY!!!—Address signed by Messrs. Boyce & Shrewsbury."

virtues to the colonists; but omitting to trace the origin of the war, or to point out those frightful acts of violence and injustice, which have been long stimulating the miserable Aborigines to attempt reprisals on their oppressors.

It would have been well, however, if these reverend gentlemen had restricted themselves to the courtly task of penning addresses to the colonial government; for one of them, Mr. Shrewsbury, appears, in the parliamentary returns, as the counsellor of measures so violent, as to startle even Sir Benjamin D'Urban.

"It may not be irrelevant," says the Governor, in a despatch to the Colonial Office, dated June, 1835, "to cite the opinion of a *most benevolent and humane clergyman*, Mr. Shrewsbury, chief of the Wesleyan mission in the colony, long resident among the Caffres, &c. Although the author of this opinion is a *man of peace and religion*, a teacher of the gospel, and, as all who know him will vouch, in every regard a most pious and exemplary christian minister, *I think my measures are not quite so severe as those, which he, in his conscience, considers necessary, and openly recommends.*"

After this official testimony to Mr. Shrewsbury's benevolence, humanity, and piety, we should hardly be prepared to hear, that he transmitted in January, 1835, to Colonel Smith, a paper containing his own private plan for dealing out justice to the Caffres. This plan is drawn up in six articles, which, excepting only the six articles of Henry VIII., are unparalleled in the history of oppression.

Article 1. "The chiefs who had invaded the colony, to forfeit their chieftainship, their arms, and their property; this accomplished, the righteousness of British law, and the equity of British judges, *may decide the rest.*" In other words, the native Princes are to be deprived of their power and dignity (Peers ousted of their peerage and robbed of their estates); the people are to be driven out of their country, their lands to be seized, and all their arms and personal property to be taken away from them; and then, when this shall have been fully accomplished, "the righteousness of the law" comes in, as a sort of holy bezom to sweep all clean, if, indeed, any thing should remain to be swept away after such wholesale pillage and devastation. The reverend missionary seems, however; to have had in view a special commission of judges, to be sent on a penal tour into Caffraria: for certain it is, that "the righteousness of the law and of the judges," must be something peculiarly terrific from the pen of such a writer.

Article 2. "Deserters from the British government, who may have taught the Caffres the use of arms, *to be punished with rigour:*" which is, being interpreted, to be hanged or shot.

Article 3. "The actual murderers of British subjects to be everywhere demanded, and when obtained, *executed on the spot**; that the Caffres

* Mr. Shrewsbury's suggestions seem not to have been thrown away on Sir B. D'Urban; for, three months afterwards we find him in his ultimatum to Hintza, the unhappy chief of the Caffres, thus expressing himself: "I demand that the murderer of William Purcell be immediately brought to the condign punishment of death by the Caffre authorities, *and in presence of commissioners whom I shall appoint to witness the execution*, and to whom Hintza will cause to be delivered 300 head of good cattle, for the benefit of the widow and family of the murdered man." A subject of Hintza murders (it is said) a British subject; Hintza is commanded to execute the offender, whether he can find him or not, and, in addition, to pay 300 oxen for an offence committed by one of his subjects! How many oxen shall be paid for the murder of Prince Hintza?

may see, that murder with Britons is an unpardonable crime. Every chieftain to be informed, that if he substitute innocent persons for the really guilty, the chieftain himself will forfeit his own life, *as being himself the friend of murderers*, and the cause of shedding innocent blood, under the colour of law and justice.

They that know any thing of the weights and measures in the scales of Cape-Town justice, will easily comprehend, that an enquiry into "murder," would all be on one side; that such an inquisition would be terrible to the Caffres, who, in a war of reprisals, have fought for their lands, houses, cattle, and people, violently taken away from them by Christian oppressors, but that none of the colonial felons would be called to give an account of their enormities. If murder is "an unpardonable crime" with Britons, how many of the English settlers would not now be food for the vultures of the region? if there must be a diligent inquisition for blood, and if murder is never to be pardoned, who is to atone for the death of the Prince Hintza? who shall be executed to make an equal account for the blood of a voluntary hostage? how many hecatombs of oxen shall our guilty nation furnish, as a penalty for so great a crime? nay, if the "friend of murderers" is to be excluded from mercy, what is to become of the author of the six articles? "*Put up thy sword into the sheath: he that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword!*"

The author of the six articles is, however, an amateur of executions: "they are to be excuted on the spot." The landscape is to be ornamented with executions; the gibbet is to give visible proof of our "righteousness;" the gallows, even in pastoral retreats, are to shew that we know not how to forgive.

In the 6th article, there are two clauses, which I leave as I find them, for it would be quite superfluous to comment on the cruel and vindictive spirit they exhibit. "Caffre offenders, *whose lives may be spared*, to be employed in making high-roads in every part of Cafferland; if necessary, even to Port Natal; their labour as convicts, being a visible proof of the punishment *mercifully inflicted on those, who might have lost their lives*. A universal registration of Caffres to be effected; every man wearing on his own neck *a thin plate of tin*, containing his name, and the name of his chief."

It is but justice to the Wesleyan body, after such a shocking exhibition of premeditated violence, to record the following animadversions of the committee of the Wesleyan missions, on the conduct of Mr. Shrewsbury. "The committee feel themselves painfully, but imperatively compelled by a sense of public duty, to record their most entire and unqualified disapprobation of the steps unhappily taken by Mr. Shrewsbury on this occasion. They judge, that the advice given by him to the commander of the forces, then about to proceed against the Caffre invaders of the colony, if understood in its obvious and literal meaning, was, in various particulars, most unwarrantable, and revolting to the feelings of humanity and religion; and even if it were possible, for a moment, to suppose that any circumstances would have justified such recommendations as he gave, it was still highly unbecoming the station and character of a minister of the gospel of peace; and contrary to the standing instructions which, this society gives to all its missionaries, that he should interfere at all, even though requested by the military authorities, in the discussion of questions of this sort!" These are good and forcible words; but will they be followed up with measures suited to the occasion? and will the offending party meet with such discipline from the Conference, as may prove to all the world, that the

Wesleyans are determined to repudiate their emissaries, who pervert the office of evangelist ?

Mr. Boyce, the assistant missionary, is, in this deplorable affair of the six articles, most happily isolated from his coadjutor. The articles are dated January, 1835, but Mr. Boyce did not return to the colony from England till the month of February, so that he is entirely exculpated from any knowledge even of Mr. Shrewsbury's letters to Colonel Smith. It is, however, abundantly in evidence, by the publication of the parliamentary papers on "the Caffre war and death of Hintza," that Mr. Boyce is a promoter of that species of colonial policy, which may be called *D'Urbanism*; for, in these papers, we have a document drawn up by the reverend gentleman, entitled "Miscellaneous Remarks on the State of the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony," as well as the address of thanks to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, signed by him and Mr. Shrewsbury. The former of these documents, Sir Benjamin D'Urban quotes, in a despatch to the Earl of Aberdeen, with the following complimentary expressions to its author: "To this I also add the opinion of the Caffre character given by another *humane and very excellent clergyman*, Mr. Boyce, long resident in Caffreland." After such an eulogy from so high a quarter, one cannot but be anxious to know the character of the Caffres as depicted by Mr. Boyce, and we find it to be this: "A Caffre chief knows of no restraint upon his desire for the property of his neighbours, except that, which the want of power to seize and retain imposes on him."* A compliment, for which the Caffre chiefs can never be sufficiently grateful, and which will, doubtless, never be forgotten by their nation, as long as a Wesleyan missionary shall be located amongst them by the Cape-Town bayonets.

Having thus seen the affectionate admiration, which Sir Benjamin D'Urban professes towards the Wesleyan missionaries, we have but to contemplate the tender love which the Wesleyan missionaries profess for Sir Benjamin D'Urban, and then this interesting picture of friendship will be complete. "Lamentable and distressing as the events of the Caffre war have been," say Messrs. Shrewsbury and Boyce, in their address to the Governor, "as well towards the Caffres themselves as the colonists, we are yet consoled with the reflection, that so far as the colonial government is concerned, *it has been conducted in accordance with the principles of justice and mercy*. To your Excellency's fatherly care, some of us are mainly indebted for the preservation of our lives; and the arrangements your Excellency made for our safety and comfort in the camp, and in travelling to the colony, *and the condescension which has marked your Excellency's intercourse with us*, whenever circumstances have rendered an interview with your Excellency necessary or desirable, all lay us under a lasting debt of gratitude, which, we feel, cannot easily be repaid. May the God whom we serve, reward your Excellency with his eternal love and favour."

Although we have it upon this high authority, that the late war has been conducted on "the principle, of justice and mercy," yet assuredly we, in England, who know nothing of the principles of *colonial* justice and mercy, must come to a totally different conclusion; for Sir Benjamin D'Urban, in summing up his exploits, in this terrible campaign, thus

* Another touch of Mr. Boyce's pencil produces somewhat a ludicrous effect. "The fact is," says he, "the Caffres are like other men, governed by *their sense of the best method of serving their own interests*." Had this remark been pointed at the clerical body, it would have been more intelligible than when applied to the Caffres, who unwisely barter their cattle for the trinkets with which we cheat them.

describes what he has done : "The loss of the Caffres during our operations against them, amounts to four thousand of their warriors ; ours, fortunately, has not, on the whole, amounted to one hundred, and of these only two are officers. There have been taken from them also, *besides the conquest and alienation of their country*, sixty-thousand head of cattle, almost all their goats, their habitations every where destroyed, and their gardens and corn-fields laid waste : they have been therefore chastised, NOT EXTREMELY BUT SUFFICIENTLY." And so think the missionaries ; and this will enable us to form some idea of their "principles of justice and mercy." But we have still further evidence of the peculiar doctrines held by the missionaries ; for Sir Benjamin D'Urban in his despatch to Lord Aberdeen, informs us, that the missionaries, not at all inaptly, compare the Caffres to wolves (which, in truth, they resemble very much), which, if they be caught young, may be brought (for their own interest and gratification in the matter) to an appearance of tameness, but which invariably throw it off, and appear in all their native fierceness of the woods, as soon as the temptation of blood and ravage, which never fail to elicit their natural ferocity, presents itself to their instinctive "thirst for it." At every turn, therefore, in this history of woe, we find the Wesleyan missionaries ; we find them in private memorials calumniating the Caffres, and stimulating the angry passions of their enemies ; we find them advocating the military system, and deprecating a reduction of the army as a great* calamity ; we find one of them devising plans of sanguinary revengc, plunder, and servitude ; we find the severe governor praising them as men of "benevolence, humanity, and piety ;" we find, that when the war is over, the missionaries hasten with an encouraging address to the governor, to assure him, that the war has been conducted on the principles "of humanity and justice ;" we find the missionaries comparing the Caffres to "wolves," and the governor joyfully embracing the simile, and enlarging it with all those touches of eloquence, in which his very scanty knowledge of the English grammar will allow him to indulge : in one word, we find the governor and the missionaries in full accord on this one point, that the Caffres ought to be visited with total ruin ; and mutually rejoicing, that a war, executed "on the principles of justice and mercy," has been followed by a happy peace, the silence of the grave, and the tranquility of desolation !

* "If on any reliance on the schemes of benevolent speculative men, some of whom never saw a Caffre, or if from any expectations of economizing the colonial expenditure, the colonial government should make a serious reduction in the military force of the frontier, the consequences would be disastrous, both to the Caffres and the Europeans."—*Boyce's Paper*, pp. 45.

LETTER XXV.

THE Quakers, who, for a century at least, have been allowed to enjoy the repose of their secluded and sequestered sect, disturbed only by the annual pillage of the state-clergy, have lately been called on to abide the assault of controversy, and to defend the very fundamentals of their creed, against a formidable muster of opponents. By some strange perverseness in their fortunes, they have been charged with alarming heresies and dangerous tenets, in that very period of their history, when they had visibly relinquished the primitive fanaticism of their society, and had, in various ways, silently amended much that was originally objectionable.

I cannot here enter into the controversy relating to their doctrine, farther than to state my conviction, that some of the original opinions of the Quakers, not only tended to mysticism, but were the very exaltation of mysticism. It would be easy to shew, by large quotations from the sayings and writings of their early friends, that they taught doctrines subversive of the Christian religion: and that the master-key of their mysteries was to substitute *conscience* for Christ, and to make it appear, that the voice of conscience is and always has been, the true Christ, which bringeth salvation. Their enemies, who congregated against them, from all sects, made most of this heresy, and plainly charged them with infidelity, ranking them amongst unbelievers, who deny Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. The violent external pressure of the surrounding sects, frequently forced them to put forth statements, and make use of words, more consonant with the general belief of Christians; but they still clung to this inner secret of the initiated, that mankind may be saved by following the dictates of *conscience*, which, in their mysterious and hieroglyphical phraseology, they were pleased to term the LIGHT and the SEED.

It is obvious, that this doctrine, if carried out into its fair deduction, overthrows the whole Christian system, turns the life and death of our Saviour into a useless story, abrogates justification by faith, and cancels the redemption. If the heathen may be saved by their conscience, then, certainly, it is needless to preach unto them that man Jesus, who was born of a woman under the law, who was slain on mount Calvary, in the reign of the emperor Tiberius, and who after his resurrection, was seen and handled by his disciples. The Quakers never, indeed, taught such a doctrine, plainly and without circumlocution; but in the heat of argument, they asserted that many of the heathen, such as Seneca, Cicero, and others, were saved by "the inward light," and thus really embraced the gospel. Their enemies, who were determined to contemplate their opinions in the most unfavourable view, did not wait to see whether the Quakers believed the corollaries of their propositions, but took it for granted that they did, and condemned them without scruple, according to the deductions of logic. But poor frail man is, in his religious opinions, very careless of logic, and will resolutely adopt contradictory propositions, without heeding the obstacle of a confutation: and thus it was with the Quakers; they held opinions, which could not possibly be

reconciled; they believed that mankind may be saved by obeying conscience, and yet they repudiated, with pious horror, the accusation continually brought against them, that they rejected Jesus Christ, who was born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary. Hence, those who study the writings of the old Quakers, will sometimes find them using the language of orthodoxy and plain sense, but more frequently unfolding the interminable mazes of mysticism and allegorical obscurity.

Professing to be daily disciples of the Holy Spirit, and to know no other teacher, they did not admit the reading of the Bible in their religious meetings, nor allow the instructions of stated preachers and prepared sermons. They waited for the words of the great Teacher, through the mouths of his chosen servants, and whoever rose up to speak in the spirit, became to them a delegated teacher of the Lord. Hence, men and women were ministers of the sect: for whosoever had received the word of utterance from the Lord of Life, was a teacher of the truth. This doctrine cut up all forms of the priesthood by the roots; no priest could stand on such a foundation; for there could be no settled priesthood, when the ministry depended not on any choice, preparation, or appointment of man, but simply on the divine appointment, manifested by a spiritual illumination and gift of teaching. Hence, the Quakers denied the lawfulness of any settled body of priests or ministers according to their ordinary ideas, and denounced those priests or ministers, who receive money from their flocks, as "hirelings" condemned by the Scriptures.

Now, though their enemies charged them with all manner of infidel tenets, yet it seems pretty clear, that the exasperating doctrine of Quakerism was the attack on a paid ministry; and I cannot doubt, that if they took so much pains now as they did at the beginning, to propagate this "heresy," they would be as much hated, reviled, and abused by all sects, as in the days of their tumultuous youth.

No sect that ever appeared in the world, has met with a larger share of hatred and persecution, than the Quakers. They were the Ishmaelites of Christendom: every man's hand was against them, and, in a certain sense, their hand was against every man: for their doctrine and church government were such, as to give a mortal offence to every Christian society then existing. The calumnies heaped upon them by the Puritans, themselves no small sharers in the portion of persecution, exceed all bounds. The most spiritual writers of the old Calvinistic school, cannot let the name of Quaker pass, without some bitter expression of contempt and scorn: and they were, in the full sense of the word, "the off-scouring of all things." And yet, in all this mighty storm of hatred and abuse, it is evident, to a disinterested observer, that George Fox and his disciples were benefactors of the human race, and the propagators of some precious truths, which, though sown in blood and nurtured in tempests, will not be lost, but will rejoice the earth, at last, with fruits of righteousness and peace. We must remember the time, when George Fox appeared as a teacher of new opinions; we must remember the dismal outward aspect of Christianity in this land; the wars, tumults, and confusions amongst sects; the loud and angry quarrels of controversialists, their mutual persecutions, recriminations, and accusations; the ferocity of dogmatism; the fiery disputes about church government; the avarice and rapacity of sectarian leaders, when power enabled them to be rapacious: and the too great eagerness of all, even the most pious professors of the gospel, to appeal to the sword for the solution of controversy. In this chaotic uproar of sects and schisms, George Fox arose.

Having attentively considered the evils that then desolated the earth, and the frightful confusion amongst those, who called themselves the followers of the Lamb, he perceived, that every thing was fundamentally wrong; that the precepts of the gospel had but a surface influence on society; and that now, indeed, the evangelical axe must be laid to the root of the tree. To alter and amend any existing sect, he knew was hopeless: he gave himself up to the guidance of that which he supposed to be the truth, and, with extraordinary strength of mind, determined to follow that guide, divested of all prejudice and preconceived opinion. Hence it will be found,—that his system has no reference to any thing existing in his days: it is not a fabric, amended and beautified, but a new creation. Quakerism might, by its friends, be compared to an aerolithe, that descended from the heavens, of materials unlike any thing to be found upon earth; by its enemies, to the strange and portentous work of a magician; and it was to this resolute determination of following no man's book or creed, of casting behind the back, and trampling under foot, all dogma and tradition, that led George Fox and some of his followers into some errors, as well as some unappreciated truths. Opposition, persecution, personal cruelty, and detestable slanders, exasperated the spirits of the early Friends, and gave a tragic tone to their denunciations, and a recklessness to their opinions, which could not possibly be sustained when the pressure of persecution was removed. The Quakers of those days, were men of a daring, heedless perseverance; their women caught the contagion of exasperation, and faced their persecutors not only with courage and constancy, but sometimes with contempt and defiance. Death, by prison and exile, and loss of all worldly goods, by repeated acts of legal robbery, were so common amongst the sect in one period of their history, that every Quaker, who had made up his mind to adhere to his creed, might look for it, as a probability, to pass many years in a dungeon, and to lose all his earthly possessions. In such a state of things, though faith and patience would be sweetly manifested in multitudes, yet, in some of an ardent or gloomy temperament, the stern features of fanaticism would be sure to make their appearance. And this *was* the case; violence beget violence, and cruelty engendered provocation. Hence, the rugged manners and grim deportment of some of the early Friends; hence, "The signs" for the people, and hence, the testimonies against "the hirelings" in "the steeple-house," or in the Dissenters' chapels.

I rank, amongst the truths discovered and bequeathed by the Quakers, and on which the church of Christ will soon build much of her strength, and reap some of her fairest laurels, the doctrine of universal peace, exclusive of defensive and offensive war; the non-resisting opposition to priests, by refusing, in every possible way, to acknowledge the legality of their existence; and the general principle of their church-government, which certainly is the most plausible imitation of the primitive order, and the most consonant with the evangelical discipline of any we know of. To this should be added, a perfect level of all ranks and conditions of men within the fold of the church; the cancelling of titles and of false imaginary superiority by carnal birth, and the reduction of the church upon earth, to that state of equality, which is required in the presence of the great King.

I have mentioned the passive opposition to priests, as one of the peculiarities of Quakerism; by which is meant, the denial of the order of priests, in declining their help in any act of religion, and withholding

from them the payment of tithes, oblations, church-rates, or any form of plunder connected with the sacerdotal caste. This "peculiarity" has laid upon the society of Friends, a burden grievous to be borne; for, to say nothing of those losses of their property, by seizures for the clergy, which they suffer to this day, we should remember that severest of all persecutions, which they endured, before their marriages were made legal by act of parliament. Their principles would not allow them to acknowledge the priestly character, in the sacerdotal rite of the established church; and yet no other door for a lawful marriage, was open to them, in this land of clerical dominion. They were, therefore, reduced to the cruel alternative of solemnizing their marriages in their own way, which, according to the tyrannical interpretation of the law, made their children illegitimate and their wives concubines.* Relying, however, on the honour of the sect and the strength of their principles, they despised the priest and his false prerogative, which could alarm only those who were ill grounded in the truth, and who knew not what it was to suffer for conscience sake; and, with a rare exhibition of Christian courage, they trusted to the Head of the church to protect them, in this their contention for his honour, in that blessed union which he has made holy and indissoluble. And, surely, if we here compare them with the other dissenters, we must confess, that the Quakers deserve no small praise; for this "grievance," the greatest that could be well imagined, they bore for a long time, rather than sacrifice the integrity of their principles; whilst the Independents and Baptists were, till lately relieved, fretting and chafing under the same temptation, to which they uniformly succumbed! Much have we heard of late of the dissenters' grievances; and the article of marriage was the most prominent on the list, for the remedy of which all sorts of delusive recipes have been proposed; but, nevertheless, not one instance—no, not one—has ever been recorded of a Baptist or Independent venturing on matrimony, without bowing the knee to a priest of the dominant sect. I leave others to draw their conclusions on this phenomenon; the facts cannot be disputed.

They that moulded the sect of Quakers did, however, commit one capital error in the rules of their church government—for all that comes forth from the hands of man is imperfect—and by that error or oversight, allowed the inroad of an evil which seems incurable, without a revolution. In a society of such high spiritual pretensions, to allow every child of a Quaker to become, by mere hereditary right, a member of the society, and to permit the carnal birth of those born merely "by the will of man and the will of the flesh," to enjoy an equal share of all Christian privileges with those who are born in the spirit, was, to join things human and divine together in melancholy disorder; and after having purged away all dregs of men's inventions, to retain the worst arrangements of the church of Rome and the church of England, or even of the heathen Brahmins!

The effect of this law or custom has been twofold; to introduce a majority of mere moralists, totally unacquainted with the life and power of the gospel, and gradually to infuse a tone of thinking unlike that which influenced the society in its first æra. Hereditary membership in a Christian sect is sure, sooner or later, to create a generation that forgets, and, at last, denies the creed of its origin. The Quakers of the nineteenth

* That worst of men, Judge Jeffereys, said from the bench, in a question connected with Quaker marriages, "the Quakers come together like brute beasts."

century adopted the opinions of *human nature*; they were, with the exception of the spiritual minority, a *tabula rasa*, as to spiritual matters; and though they adhered to all the external peculiarities of their sect, they were in a state to receive a new order of religious impressions. In this crisis, Joseph John Gurney, of Norwich, arose amongst them, a deservedly popular preacher and religious author. His writings have had a vast influence on the society; and although there is in them a slight conventional tinge of the old Quakerism, yet it is so modified and subdued, as to be little more than a pleasing exposition of devout Arminian theology. It would, nevertheless, be a great mistake, or a gross calumny, to assert, that piety has prevailed only amongst those, who may be ranked in "the new school." Long before the birth of Mr. Gurney, there were amongst the Quakers many spiritual and humble Christians; many, who went out of this world clad in the marriage garment, and many ministers, whose preaching was blessed in the conversion of souls.

The present tendency of the Quakers is decidedly to what we call evangelical doctrine, or, rather, to lay aside the hieroglyphs of mysticism: a fact well known by all who have taken the trouble to examine the operations of their society. With the evidences of such a tendency, visible to lookers on, but more markedly to those who are members of their community, it is matter of surprise, that within the last three or four years, some Quakers should have entertained a retrospective fear of their ancient opinions; as if the incursion of some most pernicious heresy were at hand. Perhaps this alarm has been excited by the too successful efforts of Elias Hicks, who, in America, congregated round the standard of ultra-mysticism, a very large secession from the body of transatlantic Friends. Isaac Crewdson, of Manchester, published, not long ago, a book entitled "the Beacon;" in which he placed the errors of Elias Hicks in a very prominent light, with scripture confutations appended to them; and it seems evident, that the intended effect of this book was to point out the tendency of Quaker doctrine. The publication of "the Beacon" produced answers, replies, and rejoinders. New writers have discovered new errors, and it has been confidently asserted, in the course of this controversy, that the metaphysical theologues of the Brahminical school, the later Platonicians, the disciples of Jacob Behmen, Madame Guion, and the Quakers, have all one and the same religion, and that Ellas Hicks may be safely followed as the great teacher of them all.

Some respected Quakers, men of supposed piety, have, in consequence of this controversy, left the society, and, by a most wonderful act of courage, leapt headlong into the undrained bog of the Established Church, sinking over head and ears into all the depths of Archbishops and Bishops, tithes and pluralities, simony and semi-popery; giving their unfeigned assent and consent to the prayer-book, and, without any visible qualms of conscience, sitting down as docile disciples at the feet of the clergy, according to the faith prescribed by act of parliament. Of such a monstrous transition we can only say, that it is as if a butterfly were to reverse the order of nature, and change itself into a grub; or compare it to one, who, being angry that he was supplied with rain instead of hard water, should, in a pet, betake himself to the town-sewer for his beverage! It will, however, generally be found, that a seceding dissenter can admire that which churchmen secretly despise. *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

In casting up the grand account, and looking at the general result, it may safely be asserted, that no Christian community has a discipline better adapted to enforce the practices of integrity, justice, and general

morality, amongst its members, and that the internal laws of this peculiar republic seem based on this excellent axiom, "that those know God who keep his commandments." If we may recognise a good tree by its fruits, we may safely say, that some of the branches of the true vine are to be found amongst the Friends, and that these are indeed well ingrafted on it, because they bring forth much fruit. Whither should I turn, in all the world, for examples of active benevolence, munificent charity, and self-denying philanthropy, with greater confidence, than to some of the spiritual Quakers? and where should I seek, with greater alacrity, for an answer to a deriding sceptic, when he desired me to shew him a real disciple of Jesus of Nazareth?

On the whole, we are certainly indebted to the Society of Friends, as the guardians of some precious principles: their entire rejection of human priesthood, their fidelity on the subject of war, their testimony against oaths, their clear views of civil and religious liberty, and their steady examples, by which, through many generations, they have proved their sincerity in the profession of their peculiar principles, clearly entitle them to a high place in our esteem and regard.

The time seems at hand, when Christians will be obliged to copy from the Quakers, some important opinions and practices, necessary to be acknowledged, if the New Testament is to be accepted, without deduction or excision, as a rule of *Christian conduct*.

LETTER XXVI.

CONGREGATIONAL Dissenters are in the habit of urging the question of church reform against the establishment, as if they themselves were in possession of a perfect form of church government, exactly on the model bequeathed in the New Testament. This is, however, a delusion; for the Congregational churches have made no greater progress to perfection, than consists in rejecting some things positively bad and of Popish origin: they are far from that state, which might justify them in referring to their own system as an example for others. The deficiency in the Congregational churches is, indeed, serious: it is no less than a total change of the ministerial office, by consigning that to one person, which ought to be the prerogative or duty of many; a change, which has produced a state of things, as different as possible from the primitive order. The Congregationalists have not, by any new invention emanating from themselves, introduced this change; they have inherited it: they have it from the church of England, which received it, as a very profitable legacy, from the church of Rome. It is the work of the old apostasy, not of the Dissenters.

The following evidence of my assertion must be unexceptionable, and I shall leave it, to convince by its own weight. "I shall never oppose this order," says Dr. Owen, "but rather desire to see it in practice; namely, that particular churches were of such an extent, as necessarily to require *many elders*, both teaching and ruling, for their instruction and government; and that, among these elders, one should be chosen by themselves, with the consent of the church, not into a new order, not into a degree of authority above his brethren, but only into his part of the common work in a peculiar manner, which requires some presidency. Hereby, no new officer, no new order of officers, no new degree of authority or power, is constituted in the church, only the work and duty of it cast into such an order, as the very light of nature doth require." And again; "the nature of the work whereunto they are called, requires, that, in every church, consisting of any considerable number of members, *there should be more elders than one*: for the elders are to take care of the walk or conversation of all the members of the church, that it be according unto the rule of the gospel." "It is difficult, *if not impossible*, on the supposition of one elder only in a church, to preserve the rule of the church from being prelatical or popular. There is nothing more frequently objected unto those who dissent from diocesan Bishops, than that they would every one be Bishops in their own parishes; and, unto their own people, all such pretences are excluded on our principles, of the liberty of the people, *of the necessity of many elders in the same church in an equality of power*, and the communion of other churches in association; but practically, where there is but one elder, one of the extremes can be hardly avoided."

Innumerable are the testimonies of a like nature, that I might adduce from the old writers; but this that follows may suffice, as one worthy of

much attention. Calamy, in his list of ejected ministers, says of Mr. Giles Fermin, ejected from Shalford, "that he was a general scholar, eminent for his skill in the oriental tongues, and in the controversies with Papists, Socinians, Arminians, and, in particular, in those between the Episcopal party and the Presbyterians and Independents. His judgment was, *that there ought to be more elders or presbyters than one in a church*, which is what he attempts to prove in his book, entitled "The Question between the Conformists and Nonconformists truly stated, by instances in eight churches mentioned in Holy Scriptures, wherein there were diverse elders, viz. Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica, besides those general texts that speak of many elders, Acts xiv. 23, Titus i. 5." He thought also, "that one of those elders was, in the Apostles' times, primate or president amongst them, for order's sake, and this for life; and that from the abuse of this constitution came Prelacy, and at last, the Pope."

Taking it for granted, then, that all candid Dissenters,* who have examined the question of church government, must come to this conclusion, that there was, in the first age, a plurality of ministers in separate churches, the conclusion ought to be, most certainly, that the Congregational churches are themselves in a state to require reform: for if the argument of Scripture has any force against the Episcopalian, it must also be available against the Congregationalist. "Paul, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops (or overseers) and deacons." Here, we see, that one church in a town had its bishops; a conclusive proof that "the bishops" could not possibly have been diocesan Prelates; for there were many in one church; and, equally, a conclusive proof, that there was not one superintendent only, or minister, or overseer, *but many*; and thus equally opposed to the diocesan and dissenting order.

Now, these truths, which are pretty generally understood amongst dissenting ministers, certainly ought not to slumber; nay, it would be sinful, wilfully to pass over a question of such vast importance; for if ever we are to solve the problem of church government, surely it can only be done, by bringing forth and employing those truths which we know to exist.

To restore a plurality of ministers to the churches would, however, under existing circumstances, be something more than a reform: it would be a revolution; for I see not how it could be accomplished, without giving up the idea of a paid ministry of learned men, unless, indeed, the churches were suddenly to become ten-fold more munificent than at present we know them to be. But this should be no bar to a restoration of the primitive model: if a faulty system has produced difficulties, it is our duty to face those difficulties. The Church must take up the cross, which she has brought upon herself by wandering out of the right way.

Till, then, the original order of church government shall be restored, this will stand as an unconfuted truth, **THAT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES ARE NOT YET ACCORDING TO THE PRIMITIVE MODEL.**

A due consideration of this subject ought to cool the zeal of some Dissenters, who look on their own system with a sort of idolatry, which, acknowledged perfection could hardly justify. They have every reason to be thankful, that they enjoy an order in their churches, freed from numerous and glaring evils of the dominant sect, and that, in this order,

* Dr. Pye Smith, in his controversy with Professor Lee, has acknowledged the plurality of ministers.

they may quietly and peaceably worship God without parade or superstition, uncontrolled by the tyranny of Prelates, and uninfluenced by the will of earthly potentates : they may rejoice that, in some slight degree, they are a community of Christian brethren, or that, at any rate, there is amongst them a recognized distinction between the church and the world : but if they sit down in this system, as in an abiding city ; if they look upon it as more than a day's march towards something better ; if they begin to think that they must not "go forward," till they find the old ways, till they possess the truth ; then are they in the captivity of that mental error, which, if it be not pure superstition, is more like it than any thing else I have noticed in the moral world.

We know enough of the order of the apostolic days, to see clearly three facts : 1st. That the churches were congregational or independent, in their general arrangement. 2nd. That there was a plurality of ministers in the churches. 3rd. That there was a conventional union amongst the churches, not expressed, perhaps, in any law, but well understood in the general feelings and propensities of the whole body, which led them, as a matter of course, to consult the church corporate in any emergency, and to abide by their decision. Thus did the church at Antioch ; and the decision of "the apostles, elders, and brethren," at Jerusalem, was accepted by the church of Antioch, and "they rejoiced for the consolation."

But so high an idea of the present state of isolation, is entertained by many, and so greatly is it revered as something perfect, that any approximation to a closer union, is looked upon with dread and suspicion, as fraught with all the evils of the most alarming tyranny. To seek the advice and accept the decision of the whole church, in an emergency, would be considered a surrender of individual liberty, to which they would prefer all the evils of abiding contention and dispute. If the divisions in an English Independent Church are not composed internally, there is no alternative but a ruinous explosion ; for neither of the contending parties could, by any means, be persuaded, to appeal to the whole body and abide by its judgment. What is this, again, but a blind attachment to a sectarian tradition, which "stands on no warranty of the word of God," and is plainly contrary to the spirit of Christianity ? Why should a church at Bristol, for instance, be more jealous of its privileges than the church of Antioch ? or what new views of the Christian character influence us in these days, that we should not look upon the whole body as our brethren, counsellors, and friends ? This idea of absolute unalterable segregation of each church, was a chimera, engendered by party heat, when the pressure of episcopal tyranny drove men into extreme opinions in opposition to their oppressors. The Dissenters had been so long worried by the Bishops, that they were determined, in their own arrangements, to ward off the possibility of any interference ; and they thought there was no surer mode of accomplishing this, than by never soliciting it. Hence, each church stands by itself, and, if it falls, falls by itself. If an Independent Church is in peril, and cannot right itself, it must be lost. The assistance of their numerous brethren, would be deemed little better than the help of Cornish wreckers.

The Congregational Union, an experiment of very recent origin, cannot be expected to introduce a better order of things ; for it is the fundamental rule and principle of this *quasi*-parliament, that it shall not, in any case, be considered a court of appeal ! I do not seek to scare this assembly in its infancy, with left-hand vaticinations ; but I may, perhaps, hint my fears, that a parliament, thus ushered into the world, without power and

prerogative, and, even in its weakness, so suspected by some, that they keep aloof from it, as a stalking-horse of despotism, will never be able to do much good to the churches, nor give much trouble to ecclesiastical historians in recording its illustrious or even its useful deeds. It seems not improbable, that its chief effect will be, to congregate numerous Christians, who dare not trust one another, to compose the differences and remedy the disorders of their particular communities.

LETTER XXVII.

WE have done now with the varied denominations of Christians; we bid farewell to the stately sect of authority, and the several dissident communities; and our final reflections are on the company of believers in the aggregate, the Church of Christ as distinct from the world.

What shall we say of "the righteous nation that keepeth the truth?" What judgment must we pass on its present appearance? Are the noble promises of prophecy evolving and fulfilling, in the actual history of believers; and may we now, at last, in the nineteenth century, behold the swelling of that spring-tide, which shall fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? Or, has the Gospel come to a stand, and is the ark of the hopes of man still labouring in her difficulties, "tossed with tempests and not comforted?" In seeking to answer this question, we will first turn to that part of the landscape, which is brightened with pleasing tints, and remark, that Christians are now in a condition to exert their influence with new and peculiar energies; they have now command over a powerful coadjutor, of whose help, till lately, they made but a poor use. This coadjutor is the press; which was indeed a discovery, or rather a providential gift, of God to man, a little before the Reformation, that the Beast might receive his deadly wound with a two-edged sword; but how long were Protestants in discovering the right use of this engine! How long were they applying it for the purposes of intolerance and persecution, and for waging war amongst themselves, in the worst spirit of spiritual dogmatism! The great auxiliary of the church against the powers of darkness, is the word of God; but the Bible Society is not forty years old, though the Protestant Church has been established for nearly three centuries: it is only, therefore, within this generation, that Christians have availed themselves of this sovereign help. There are those now living, who first bethought themselves of this incalculable benefit. The church, before that happy era, made use of the press for controversy, or, at best, for publishing theology, for promoting the opinions of men, many of them indeed very valuable, but none of them perfect, and some of them highly injurious.

Now, it is no small matter, that Christians should have learned, not only to use but also not to abuse, this instrument of good or evil, which Providence has placed within their reach: though there are still to be found two sects, one of which will always apply the tone of a despot to rebels, against all that do not agree with it; and the other will threaten, with no less unchristian bitterness, as long as it lives in dread of the moths and thieves. But the rest of Christendom has by this time learned, that a persecuting spirit is a hideous demon, and that it is as foolish as it is wicked and mischievous, to threaten and rail against those, whose ideas of religion do not seem to coincide with the orthodox creed, or the supposed orthodox creed of church government. The church of Christ is made, by her Lord, to prosper in a full blaze of light, and in the serene atmosphere of perfect justice. It is impossible, that the press can publish too much

for her. Let all manner of publications teem forth with exuberant copiousness : let that dreaded deluge, of universal education and general knowledge, burst forth out of the great deep ; scaring exceedingly the priests and oligarchs, who flee, like birds to their mountains, at so strange a sight : the church is rejoiced on beholding the spreading flood ; for she has the palladium of truth in her sanctuary, and nothing that can be published or printed by man, can either inflict on her any permanent injury, or ultimately fail to increase her power. She does not lean on the elements of darkness for her strength : she has no need of the Forum, the sharp wit of lawyers, the severity of judges, or the inhibitions of statutes, to silence her opponents : her victory is guaranteed in the very constitution of the human mind, which, in its weakness, must fly to her for strength ; in its inquisitiveness, must embrace her revelation ; in its darkness, solicit her light ; and in its misery and inevitable death, embrace her peace and rejoice in her immortality. It is true, that there are, as there always have been, many sceptics ; sceptics of science, sceptics of psychology, and sceptics of ignorance or gross depravity ; and they will have their talk, and their theories, and their impieties, or their whimsical substitutes for religion, which occasionally deceive and destroy some supposed members of the church ; but none of their theories last half a century : another generation comes, and they are forgotten, their fallacies laughed at, their false logic detected, their magisterial decrees despised, and all their celebrated labours consigned to hopeless oblivion or perpetual ridicule. But the Gospel "hath foundations ;" it is not the handy-work of a theorist, who has joined a score of truths to a score of uncertainties ; but of One, who, having the means of an omniscient contemplation of universal principles, and, withal, foreseeing every contingency, has, in the Gospel, dictated a system correctly calculated to suit the faculties and energies of the human mind, in the path of truth and wisdom.

Whatever, therefore, is true or wise, is an element of the church's power. Mankind cannot be too wise for her : nothing is against her but ignorance and superstition. Ignorance, even in the physical world, has done her injury, because it has been made a prop for superstition : there is, therefore, no secret of nature that she would not see unravelled : there is nothing that the human mind can possibly learn, that she would forbid to be learned ; unless it be some of the hidden things of dishonesty, which it is a shame even to mention.

As, then, this is an age of science and knowledge, and of great labours of the press, the Church rejoices and will rejoice. Her desire is to march forth with science, *pari passu* ; and to shew men, how, only, they can be happy in this life, and in that which is to come : whilst others are teaching them to subdue the material world, and, in power and wisdom, to take a station, but a little lower than the angels.

Christians may also rejoice in this generation, because, in it, the missionary spirit has gone forth victoriously, to bring in the Heathen to the footstool of Jehovah and of his Christ. The Independent, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopalian, have, each with some success, proclaimed salvation to the ends of the earth : or rather, viewing them as one body, we may say, that the church has thrown down many idols ; not with the fire and sword of the Inquisition ; not with the masked idolatry and profound juggling of the Jesuits ; but, with the word of truth, and the pure preaching of the grace of God, has ruined the old Dagon and Devils of the Heathen ; has famished the Gods of the earth ; and exalted, in a

religion of purity and spiritual obedience, Jesus Christ the righteous, the living and eternal High Priest of the Great God.

The church, moreover, is conferring benefits on mankind, by cleansing the atmosphere of the social system; and, by infusing more or less her holy morality into the code of natural ethics, she has somewhat softened the violence of opinion, and curbed the tyranny of dogmatism in the public mind. Flagrant evils, which once used to brave all censure, she has, in some sort, reprovèd and repressed: men in high stations, whether of wealth, rank, or power, dare not indulge in that excess of wickedness in which they once used to expatiate without restraint: the "good old times" of Satan are gone by, and there is an exterior decency in morals, and an outward respect to religion, which are ultimately of importance: for though much of this may be sheer hypocrisy and a closer concealment of sin, yet the mere absence of daring and unrestrained wickedness, is to the people at large a benefit: it makes open vice vulgar and disgraceful; it compresses it into the lowest rank of society, and thus establishes a maxim generally understood everywhere, that virtue is honourable and respectable, and frontless depravity scandalous, disreputable, and plebeian.

No one can walk through the streets of London, and compare what he there sees and hears, with what he would see and hear in the streets of Benares and Cairo, and not perceive that the Gospel has done much for England. There is, indeed, a dismal superabundance of wickedness in London, or in any of our large English cities; but still, the religion of England is that of the Bible; it is not an idolatry or an imposture; vice and sensuality do not constitute a part of public worship; there are no hidden mysteries of iniquity; no unclean and beastly Shasters; no legends of impurity; no scriptures of profligate Gods and Goddesses; no cruel code of morals, and no gross and sensual heaven. The frame of society is not polluted by polygamy; the Bible is such a book that, though it is interpreted variously by various sects, yet it has taught them all a consistent and elevated conception of the divine character; it urges precepts which restrain and curb the passions, bridle the appetites, and inhibit, "all the works of the flesh;" in a word, the one great book of our religion teaches us "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

And lastly, the church is ever increasing her strength with men, as with a flock: the labours of the pious workmen of all the Protestant persuasions, are daily adding to the company of the faithful, and reducing stubborn and disobedient aliens into a cordial submission to the grace of the Gospel. We constantly hear, that pravity of manners or a cold secularity of character have been transformed, by divine unction, into the comely holiness or self-denying zeal of the true Christian; we constantly hear, that our fellow-creatures have, after a life of penitence and piety, gone forth in the full assurance of faith, into an after-state of purity and bliss.

But, then, on the other hand, there is much to regret; much to make us confess, that the church is in a state of debility and suspense. She is confronted, in battle array, with her enemy the world, which is not strong enough to drive her back into the wilderness, whilst she is quite unable to advance on the enemy.

It is clear, that the abundant prophecies of Scripture portray the kingdom of Christ, as one of conquest and change; and it is impossible to interpret those prophecies, into anything like a sober system of accomplishment, without acknowledging, that they indicate a total renovation of society, and that the present habits of mankind must be fundamentally

altered, to give any semblance of reality to the description of Shiloh's kingdom. Moreover, it might be clear to any one, who would take the trouble to examine only the preceptive parts of the Gospel, with a view to their complete and general reception in Christian countries, that they would, if so received, necessarily put a stop to much, that is not only tolerated, but even admired now, as the strength and glory of England, and of many other civilized countries of Christendom. I feel, indeed, that this is a subject, to which I could not do justice in any such limits as remain to me, and, therefore, perhaps, had better not even explain my meaning by any illustration, which, left in its own strength without preceding argument, might appear paradoxical: but I will only remark, as one example, that if we learn in the Gospel, that the love of money is the root of all evil, and that covetousness is idolatry, it never can be within the scope of evangelical law, that the present system of extended manufactures, and all those strenuous efforts, which the nation is making to accumulate money by its busy and multitudinous speculations, is admissible or even tolerable. I have read some very able treatises on the philosophy of manufactures, but on their Christian tendency I have seen nothing: nay, in one of the most useful books written upon this interesting subject, and that too by a worthy member of a dissenting church, it is altogether forgotten and entirely omitted, that our cotton manufactures are the fomenting cause of American slavery; that nine-tenths of all cotton imported into this country is slave produce, and that every article of cotton ought to remind us of this horrid and woeful crime: But, from external slavery, encouraged by our manufactures, we might turn our eyes to the internal evils of the manufacturing system; to the dense population accumulated in great towns, and occupied in works most incongruous to the human frame; to the sensual habits notoriously engendered amongst the operatives in times of prosperity; to their penury, discontent, and reckless violence in times of adversity. To me, a great manufacturing town, even in its sunshine days, is a most lamentable spectacle. I see, indeed, there, myriads of animals well fed, with abundance and superabundance to eat and drink; but where are the shepherds for this deserted flock? Where is their religion? What process is going on in their minds, to draw them from the gross present to the past or the future? Where are the means, the twentieth part sufficient, for their education or instruction? and what are they, but multitudes of rational machines, used merely for the acquisition of wealth, and then left to perish as the beasts?*

Consider the amusements and relaxations of these poor people; study their habits and inclinations; inquire into the culture of the infant mind, in these thronging hives of Mammon; look at them in their general demeanour; and then candidly say, whether a Christian ought to wish for the continuance of this modern magic for producing gold, the manufactures of England.

* I know a great manufacturer who, in forty years' close attention to his business, has amassed an enormous fortune: his workmen, in one establishment alone, are about fourteen hundred in number; they receive the usual wages, which are more than sufficient for all animal wants, but no sort of attention is paid to the moral or religious condition of this army of operatives; there is no school for children, no mental help of any description for the adults. They do their work, and receive their wages; for the rest, they are utterly neglected and left to themselves. There is no law of the land violated here; but is not the law of the human family violated, and is not the Father of all the Judge of all also? Money hardens the heart: how many hearts are not hardened by our gigantic manufactures?

But, alas ! Christians are, themselves, too deeply engaged in manufacturing speculations ; they are far too closely interested in joint-stock companies, in railroads, in mining adventures, and the other ten thousand inventions for making fortunes, to listen to any warnings, forebodings, or expostulations on this subject. I have heard too much of the rhetoric of cupidity, and the plausible sophistry of our money-heaping professors, ever to expect, from their lips, a confession on the subject, which would require a sequence of heart-searching and self-denying sacrifices : herein, indeed, appears the deterioration of the Christian family in the present day, their tendency to conform to the world, and their evident aversion to take up the cross of humiliation and self-denial.*

We want preachers for all sects, to proclaim with earnestness, themselves being examples of what they proclaim, that "no one can be a disciple of Jesus Christ, unless he take up his cross daily." Oh ! for a company of Protestant mendicants, some fraternity of evangelical Franciscans, to go forth and lift up the voice against the secular repose and calculating tranquility of Christians ; to unveil the "creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel ;" and, with a dauntless eloquence, to expose, confute, and denounce those demure sophisms, with which, "respectable members of churches" defend themselves, in their fastnesses of worldly policy. But, who will go on this mission, and who will take up this word ?

Certainly the church is now most strangely unlike its first and original pattern : there were, in the days of the Apostles, reproach and shame with the Gospel ; poverty, hardships, and difficulties. They had need of patience, then, for the patience of all was tried to the uttermost ; but now, the Gospel is too often an avenue to honour, wealth, ease, and comfort : the church is in a panoply of worldly armour ; she is strong in the elements of secular power ; she is in the high tower, not of faith and endurance, but of carnal security ; and though we might concede, that some of this, her gala appearance, is to be attributed to days of peace, and the friendly protection of a Christian country, yet we must also take into the account, the worldly conformities of believers, and the avoiding or evading those labours of opposition, which would bring upon them no small share of trials and crosses, if they were indeed to gird up their loins for the contest.

And conformity to the world, is to be traced in various particulars : for there is, generally, a disposition observable amongst Christians, to compromise what is most peculiar and obnoxious in their profession ; to court the good will of the stranger ; to stand in a favourable and commanding view with the aliens of Israel's commonwealth ; to partake of the *strobula* of their sacrifices ; and thus to avoid the shame and uneasiness of a singular and perhaps an antagonist position. But all this, of which only the briefest hints are here offered, will probably not endure much longer : the time for an external movement is, perhaps, at hand, and the inert elements of a more perfect obedience to the author of our faith, will then

* "These men of secular habits and meagre religious belief, insensibly surrender, point after point of their first convictions, until they become in all respects like others, except the disadvantage of a profession, which serves only to overcloud the hours of reflection, and to sully their public conduct. Yet it is such, in an age like our own, that *by tens of thousands*, extend the front and give splendour to the array of visible Christianity. May it not be conjectured that, at the present moment, where we shall find one man, who is both sober-minded and truly spiritual, we shall meet with three pusillanimous religionists and twenty secular believers ?"—*Saturday Evening*, p. 218.

be set at work. The means are in the hands of the King of Zion, and "all the churches shall know, that it is he which searches the reins and the hearts."

But, at present, we have to observe, by a reference to a few obvious facts, that the influence of Christianity, though productive of some external advantages to society, has not produced that fundamental change, which can, in the least, enable us to say, that these are the days of righteousness, or that the grain of mustard seed has become the largest of all the trees. Let us, in an hour of calm reflection, consider only the crime and misery prevailing in the metropolis of this country, which may well be called the nurse and protectress of the Gospel, and we shall then soon perceive, that the old evils of corrupted humanity, are still at the very foundation of the social system. Who can recount or even imagine the despair and anguish, which, daily, fill the hearts of thousands in enormous London? Think of the myriads of prostitutes, and the great and varied multitude of visible offenders there congregated; the many, whom deceit and treachery have robbed of their worldly possessions; the numerous failures in trade; the destitution of thousands, who suffer unknown, unseen, and unpitied; the hearts broken by desertion; the children left orphans; the wives rendered desperate by the drunkenness and profligacy of their husbands; the groans of the prisoners; the lives of many spent in devising and executing wickedness; the desperate struggle and scramble of a hungry population to gain a livelihood by any means, honest or dishonest; the luxury, licentiousness, and selfishness of the rich; and the five hundred thousand souls, who never go to any place of worship at all; and then declare, if Christianity has yet achieved what we are led to expect of it. Does this at all resemble the city, great and fair, the holy Jerusalem? Is this the new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness? Does the desert yet blossom as the rose; and do streams of joy break forth in the wilderness? Do the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and do all the trees clap their hands, to see a spectacle like this? Alas! alas! shall we not rather call to mind the tears of Him, who, when he beheld the city, wept over it? and shall not *our* tears too flow, as we contemplate this theatre of crime and tribulation? Let others rejoice in the pomp of architecture, and the increasing magnificence of our stupendous Babylon, resounding with the din of her accumulating opulence: we, cannot find here a cause of exultation: we, see the curse, that comes in the train of all this wealth and grandeur. The Prince of Peace imparted not these things; but all is from the store-house of the Tempter, who giveth these things to whomsoever he will.

The time will come, when all that we deplore will cease; but society must first be fundamentally changed. The time will come, when all that is highly esteemed "amongst men," will become their "abomination;" and the world, renovated and remodelled, will turn, with aversion, from her present puerilities and delusions. The inequalities of rank, the pride of power, the designs of conquest, the science of war, the insatiety of commerce, the rage of speculation, the splendour and pride of cities, the chains of slavery, and the idols of superstition, will all be discarded and loathed as the bitter dregs of darkness. Patriotism, strange to say, will, some day, be a weakness; for all the world will be our country, and all mankind our brothers: and the church, the whole body of Christians, will be made instrumental to effect this: nay, the work will be all theirs; they will go forth conquering and to conquer; but they must be purged, visited, and refined for the work: there is neither strength, magnanimity,

nor devotedness, in the ranks of actual Christians, sufficient for the undertaking : the refiner of the house of Levi will cast them, first, into the furnace, to purge away their dross, and take away all their tin ; and then, coming forth from the searching process, as new creatures, they will wrestle to the uttermost against all the powers of evil, and not retreat from the strenuous conflict, till the all-absorbing kingdom (Dan. ii. 44) be immoveably established.

And then, when the crooked has been made straight, and the rough places plain, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Having brought these letters to a conclusion, I offer them to your consideration, and to the consideration of other Christians, with a prayer, that a blessing may accompany them ; that their faults may be forgiven ; and that, if they contain any thing right, true, and useful, it may not be uttered in vain.

And in the bonds and love of the Gospel,
I subscribe myself, your sincere friend,

R. M. BEVERLEY.

A P P E N D I X .

NOTICE OF MR. BICKERSTETH'S REMARKS ON LETTER XVIII. OF THE FIRST EDITION (LETTER XX. OF THE SECOND EDITION).

*Extract from "Remarks on the Dangers of the Church of Christ," by the
Rev. E. Bickersteth, Rector of Watton, Herts.*

"It is my assured conviction, that to look for the promised millennium, full, as it shall be when it arrives, of spiritual blessedness, before the great day of tribulation, and the personal coming of our Lord Jesus in visible glory, is both unscriptural and dangerous. One form of these unfounded hopes, the fruit of a half-infidel spirit, ignorance of God's word, and a spurious philanthropy, may be seen in the cry of Peace, Peace, by multitudes living in worldliness and sin. The professed aim, for instance, of the Peace Society, is to produce universal peace, by urging the abstract unlawfulness of all war, offensive and defensive alike. This with many seems to be a new specific, to expel the mighty spirit of evil, to beat the swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks. War is, indeed, God's most awful scourge, and the tremendous fruit of man's sin, to be dreaded and avoided by all Christian means; but righteousness and truth are not to be sacrificed in a vain attempt to attain peace. A writer of some note amongst the dissenters, undertaking to prescribe for the diseases of the Christian church, ascribes all past failures to neglect of this maxim.

'The new creation covenanted to Christ, has been retarded by the united efforts of Papist, Episcopalian, Puritan, and Wesleyan. Christian pietists have not only permitted war, but frequently defended it by a miserable perversion of scripture, and dangerous sentiments of distorted devotion. The principles of peace must be incorporated in Christian discipline. The trade of war must be denounced, and a soldier excommunicated from the churches as an offender. Let war, offensive and defensive, be Anathema Maranatha in all Christian societies, and not till then may we declare that we love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.'

"What groundless hopes, what ignorance of history, prophecy, and sound doctrines, these fancies betray! Well does the prophet describe them: '*They have healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace.*' The Baptist, it seems, was grossly ignorant when he told the soldiers, '*Be content with your wages;*' he ought to have said, '*Renounce the wages of iniquity;*' and a Peace Society would have been a better herald of the Messiah. The inspired Apostle then was grossly deceived, when he said of the magistrate, '*He beareth not the sword in vain;*' he ought to have said, '*to bear it at all is wickedness.*' Our blessed Lord himself is thus brought under the charge of ignorance of the real course of the gospel to its full triumph, when he said, '*I am not come to send peace but a sword.*' The eighteenth and other Psalms, inspired by the Spirit of God, are specimens of distorted devotion, for they celebrate the victories of David over his enemies. Caleb and Joshua ought to have been excommunicated for their zeal, and others who by faith '*turned to flight the armies of aliens,*' should have been cut off, as

unfit for the pure communion of our Peace Societies, and reformed congregational churches. To sift these maxims and expose their shallowness and folly, would be too long, however easy in itself, but their very currency is a proof how scanty is the range and compass of truth in many professed Christians, and how this ignorance is exposing them to the most ungrounded hopes and transparent delusions of Satan. The rebuke given to Jehosaphat, 2 Chr. xix, 2, applies to them with ten-fold force; the warning in Deuteronomy xxix. 18, 20, to their infidel confederates; and one sentence of God's word stamps the whole scheme of fancied peace with the brand of delusion. *'The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, but casteth up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.'*" (pp. 29-30.)

To remark, on this and many other passages of Mr. Bickersteth's multifarious works, that he is an unfair writer, would come far short of the truth; rather should we say, that, owing to the hitherto unrebuked indulgence of theological intemperance, and to an abuse of the general confidence reposed in professedly religious characters, Mr. Bickersteth too often seeks to overwhelm his opponents with accusations of infidelity, sinfulness, and ignorance of the word of God. Any text of awful import, uttered in ancient times against the enemies of God, any charge of wickedness, or threat of future condemnation, any tremendous sentence that can express the bitterness of the *odium theologicum*, this gentleman hurls, without hesitation, against those persons who do not coincide with him in sentiment; and having, in the passage before us, no arguments derived either from scripture or reason, to urge in plea of his opinions, he has recourse to the poor expedient of clerical denunciations. Mark the number and the fierceness of these denunciations. 1. Mr. Bickersteth's opponents (or, rather, those persons who have had the misfortune unintentionally to differ with him) are animated by a "half-infidel spirit," are "ignorant of the word of God," and "live in worldliness and sin." 2. They are false prophets; "they have healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace." 3. "The ignorance of these *professed* Christians exposes them to the most ungrounded hopes and transparent delusions of Satan." 4. "The rebuke given to Jehosaphat applies to them with ten-fold force:" this rebuke runs thus, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord." 5. Mr. Bickersteth is not content with this rebuke in its simple force, but, in his wrath, he adds ten times to it; "applies to them with *ten-fold force*." 6. Mr. Bickersteth's opponents are those wicked persons, who are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; his God says, that there is no peace for them. 7. Mr. Bickersteth, not content with thus fulminating against the advocates of Peace, chooses to tie them up in the bundle of death, for the fire, with certain imaginary "infidel confederates;" and on them he thus pours forth his texts: "If the man bless himself in his heart, saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."

The first argument, or rather, the first sneer, of Mr. B. in this controversy, is founded on John the Baptist's admonition to the soldiers. But does, then, Mr. B. intend to teach us, that the Baptist's ministry was that of the gospel, and that his baptism by water was as valid as the baptism by the Holy Ghost and by fire? Would he lead us to suppose, that

John's converts were converted Christians, that they had received of the Spirit, and brought forth the fruits of it? The fruits of the Spirit (and if a man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his) are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" and where these fruits are, men will not go forth with swords, instruments of death, drums beating and colours flying, to murder one another. But with the baptism of John, there were not the gifts of the Spirit; and therefore, they, who had been baptised with his baptism only, were baptised again, by command of the Apostle Paul, because "they had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost." (Acts xix. 2-5.) And this, methinks, may be sufficient answer to Mr. Bickersteth's sneer, for the kingdom of God and of his Christ is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" not the kingdom of repentance only, but of the Spirit, ruling in the hearts of God's elect, and instructing them "to be perfect, to be of one mind, and to live in peace, that the God of love and peace may be with them." (2 Cor. xiii. 11.) Mr. Bickersteth next applies the text, "I am not come to send peace but a sword," as a conclusive proof that our Saviour authorized and approved war. Can it be requisite to refer to the context, to refute so absurd an argument? "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword: for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. x. 34-36.) Who would seriously urge, that these words are applicable to the military service, and that "the sword" of this text is that instrument of steel, with which belligerents slaughter one another in the battle-field? Surely a child in a Sunday-school might easily correct this error, and teach us, that the peace and the sword in question, relate not to the soldier's trade, but are figurative expressions, illustrating the domestic discord and distress, which were to be expected by the introduction of evangelical principles in family circles.

"He beareth not the sword in vain" (Rom. xiii. 4), spoken of the magistrate, to whom is consigned the power of capitally punishing offenders against the laws of the country, and therefore applicable to Judges and not to Generals, Mr. B., without hesitation, makes use of to defend his military predilections. The rest of his arguments are from the Old Testament and from the Apocrypha, from the examples of Caleb, Joshua, and David, and of the Maccabees, who "turned to flight the armies of aliens." But are we, then, to begin, in these days, to shew that the dispensations of the Law and the Gospel differ, and that many things lawful under the Mosaic dispensation would be unlawful now? True, David fought many battles; he was a man of blood, and therefore was not permitted to build the house of God, as it is written, "David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God: but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight" (1 Chron. xxii. 7, 8): and when he sacked Rabbah, the royal city of the Ammonites, "he brought forth the people that were therein, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes, and made them pass through the brick-kiln; and thus did he unto *all* the cities of Ammon:" and Caleb and Joshua performed terrible deeds with the sword; and when Jericho was taken, "they destroyed all that were in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword." (Josh. vi. 21.) But will Mr. B. gravely urge these examples, to

justify such practices under the gospel? If Mr. B.'s examples are right and holy for a *Christian* minister to adduce, he must be content (and possibly he is fully content) to allow an imitation of David's acts, even to the cutting in pieces the inhabitants of fortified cities, with saws, and axes, and iron harrows; neither must he hesitate to authorize an indiscriminate carnage of men and women, young and old: for if he makes a difficulty of any of the horrors of war, we must turn upon him with his own *arguments*, heap upon him his own texts, crush him under his own denunciations, and put him under the ban of "infidelity," as he himself does all those, who insist on the doctrines of peace as characteristic of the kingdom of Christ. I would only stop here, one moment, to take a passing notice of that return to Judaism, observable in Mr. B.'s line of argument; a return, too common with all those, who find themselves perplexed with the inhibitions of the gospel. But though Mr. B. is content to return to the Law, for war, and for tithes, and priests, is he prepared to follow out his principles; to offer up sacrifices, and to sustain the heavy yoke of all the ceremonial ordinances, not omitting that indispensable initiation, which the baptism of believers has abrogated? (Col. ii. 11, 12.) If Mr. B. hesitates in these *agenda* of Judaism, can he give any satisfactory account for his capricious selections and rejections of the Mosaic dispensation?

Mr. B. concludes this subject with a text from Isaiah, which, he says, is sufficient "to stamp the whole scheme of fancied peace with the brand of delusion." He might also have added, and to brand those persons who do not agree with Mr. B. with the charge of wickedness; for the text cannot possibly have any other application in the case before us. (Isaiah lvii. 20-21.) To pretend that, in these words of scripture, an abstinence from war by the sword, is marked as a sin under the gospel dispensation, is a gloss too daring even for the Talmud. But whilst Mr. B. is thus trifling with the words of scripture, he has not found it expedient to explain some other texts, which, without any fantastic distortion, seem most evidently to condemn the practice of war in the Christian economy: "Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword," (Matt. xxvi. 52.) are words, which, spoken by the blessed Saviour, bear strongly on the subject. Indeed, it would require no ordinary ingenuity, to avoid the force of the injunction, which Calvin, in his commentary, has fairly acknowledged; "But here a question arises," says he, "whether it may be lawful, on any occasion, to repel *unjust violence* by violence; for although Peter was engaged with impious and wicked robbers, he is nevertheless condemned because he had taken the sword. *If, in this act of his, the exception of a moderate defence was of no avail, Christ appears to tie up the hands of all men:*" Si, in hoc factio moderatæ defensionis, exceptio non valet, videtur Christus omnium manus ligare. Again, the words of the Prophet ought to have some force; "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. ii. 4; Mic. iv. 3.) Is not the rebuking of many people, in this passage, connected with that very sin, which Mr. B. defends as something of inestimable value, in his theological scheme; even to the charging of infidelity, on all those who testify against it? And if, in the glory of the Gospel light, "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither learn war any more," can it be very monstrous, is it indeed, the mark of an infidel, to *teach* them not to fight? How shall nations *learn* this blessed truth, unless there are persons to *teach* them? "How shall they hear without a preacher?" And does not Mr. B. take a strange

course to prove his gospel mission, by defending, with fiery anathemas, this chief sin of the earth, which the Prophets plainly declare is to be brought to nought by the gospel? Disregarding, therefore, the taunts and the denunciations of Mr. B. and bearing, with what composure I can, his charges of "ignorance of history, prophecy, and sound doctrine," I shall, till favoured with more convincing instructions, persist in inculcating these opinions on the subject of war; being fully and conscientiously convinced, that "history, prophecy, and sound doctrine," all bear against the military trade with irresistible force; that the general precepts of the gospel, the Christian virtues of love, gentleness, meekness, kindness, patience and forbearance; the name and attributes of the Redeemer, the offices of the Holy Spirit, and many express texts in the word of God, condemn that, which it grieves me to see defended with animosity, by any professed preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But what, it may be demanded, is the secret cause of Mr. Bickersteth's excitement on this subject? The solution is to be found in the millenarian theory, which, as explained by this gentleman, compels him to take the line of argument before us. In the "Practical Guide to the Prophecies," a work in which Mr. B. has placed himself at the head of one section of the Chiliasts, he has drawn out a scheme of future events, which cannot be maintained, but by adhering to war, not only as a necessary, but as a most righteous and holy practice. In this scheme, strange to tell, Mr. B. has not been content, with describing war as a tolerable evil, but insisting on it as a godly occupation for the saints; affirming, that Christ himself, as their leader, is to fight great battles on the Earth, and to plead with all flesh by *fire and sword*. I transcribe the whole scheme, that it may be fairly seen, what strange things *can* be said by theologians, in these our days, and by clergymen of the church of England. After describing the beginning "of the day of the Lord, in a series of desolating judgments, the overthrow of Popery, Mohamedanism, Infidelity, &c." Mr. B. proceeds: "When the times of the Gentiles are passing away, the Jews are visibly recalled into the Church of God, partake of his renewed favour, are restored to their land, and become peculiarly exposed to the wrath of the apostate Gentiles, who, under the last Anti-Christ, come against restored Israel: then the signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars are manifested; soon the sign of the Son of Man himself appears in the Heaven; he raises the dead, he changes his living saints, they rise *to be with him in the air*. The beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gather together in their rage, enmity, and blindness, *to make war against the Lord and the armies that follow him*, [they being in the air!] he pours his judgments on Anti-christ and his adherents, *pleading with all flesh by fire and sword*. The character of this dispensation is discriminating, punishing, and purifying. Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. The Jewish nation are preserved, [are they not *Infidels*?] the progress of that fire [lasting, we presume, a thousand years] consumes the heavens, and the elements, and burns the earth: soon the Lord descends visibly on Mount Olivet, [after the burning of the heavens and Earth] with his glorified saints, in the sight of his people Israel; these, humbled at length by their great afflictions, and brought to penitence by beholding their pierced Saviour, welcome his return. Satan is then bound. The glorious millennial reign begins, the glory of the land of Israel is manifested, &c., but Satan is again loosed for a little season. Our Lord reigns till he has put all enemies under his feet. Satan is at last cast into the lake of fire. The final judgment takes

place. The new heavens and the new earth being *now* perfected, and *there being no more sea*, the holy city descends, and the happiest state arrives, when the mediatorial kingdom terminates, and God is all in all." (8th Edition p. 207.)

To offer any comment on these outrageous extravagances, would be superfluous. Lest, however, it should be surmised, that Mr. B. means a spiritual and figurative contest of Christ and his saints, with the wicked, we must see his words in other passages: "These varied quotations," says he, "all bear on one point, that the Lord Jesus will personally and visibly come, *not only for the destruction of his enemies*, but also in mercy to his people Israel." p. 139. "The King of kings and Lord of lords *goes forth at the head of his armies*, to the overthrow of all his enemies." 289. Far be it from me to combat such statements as these. "The spirit of a sound mind," in all enlightened believers, will reject them with firmness; and pity for the aberrations of the human mind, will suggest the propriety of passing them over in sad and solemn silence; but we have enough before us, to comprehend the outpourings of that theological attack, which has been the subject of those remarks.

The matter between Mr. B. and myself, being here legitimately brought to a conclusion, I have only one additional remark to make on that license of accusation, which this gentleman allows himself in his theological excursions. The charge of "infidelity," is the weapon, with which Mr. B. generally makes his attacks. Thus I find (Dangers of the Church of Christ, p. 7) that he charges the dissenters with "infidelity," because they are "indifferent to creeds and forms of worship;" a charge, with which the dissenters need not to be the least discomposed, as they may rest assured, that the Christians of the first and second centuries were equally "indifferent to creeds and forms of worship." With the same weapon, does Mr. B. assail another section of the Christian Church; "I cannot but see the same spirit [infidelity] in a yet more refined state, among a community of Christians who have lately risen up, called the Plymouth Brethren; who, by their efforts to proselyte, have troubled faithful ministers [i.e. clergyman of the established church] in different parts of our country. Their main principle, though bearing a shew of spirituality, is, in fact, a practical denial of the power or purpose of divine truth to redeem all human relationships for God and his service, *and thus gives them up to the power of evil.*" (*id.* p. 1) Here Mr. B.'s favourite mode of argument is strikingly illustrated: he first classes as infidels, those who differ with him in opinion, and then gives them up to perdition. The calumny, and the cause of the calumny, embodied in this passage, are obvious; but whilst Mr. B. is thus busy with his *argumentum ad Gehennam*, had he not better examine his own creed, to see whether he himself is not a Dissenter; and whilst he is thus zealous for creeds and forms of worship, compare *his* views of the resurrection with the resurrection indicated in the creeds of the church of England; and satisfactorily determine, for himself and for others, whether the *one* resurrection of the symbols of his faith ecclesiastical, can be reconciled with the *two* resurrections and all their portentous appendages, of his own private views? And then let him, finally, and in the character of a churchman, weigh well the decision in the articles of the *Protestant Church of England*, as drawn up in the reign of Edward VI. "They who endeavour to revive the fable of the millennarians, are therein contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and do cast themselves down into Jewish dotages."

LORD DURHAM'S REPORT ON CANADIAN RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

[Reprinted from "The Inquirer" for April, 1859.]

THE following opinion of Lord Durham, on the vital question of a Church Establishment, in the present state of the controversy, is of the highest importance; and certainly must be taken as one long step at least to that most desirable of all political catastrophes, the total separation of church and state. Lord Durham does not deliver this opinion merely as a private person; but it should be remembered, that he speaks as the representative of the majesty of the British crown, the Lord High Commissioner, and, *alter ego*, of her most gracious majesty the Queen. Thus it has come to pass, that one representative of the crown returns from the Colonies an avowed partizan of the voluntary principle, and another representative, Lord Fortescue, goes to his new viceregal government, with sentiments openly unfavourable to a protestant establishment. All this, therefore, seems most certainly to indicate, that the day is approaching, when nominal protestants must be compelled to renounce one of the most valued jewels stolen from the papal tiara.

"The great practical question, however, on which these various parties have for a long time been at issue, and which has within a very few months again become the prominent matter in debate, is that of the clergy reserves. The prompt and satisfactory decision of this question is essential to the pacification of Canada; and as it was one of the most important questions referred to me for investigation, it is necessary that I should state it fully, and not shrink from making known the light in which it has presented itself to my mind. The disputes on this subject are now of long standing. By the Constitutional Act, a certain portion of the land in every township was set apart for the maintenance of a 'protestant clergy.' In that portion of this report which treats of the management of the waste lands, the economical mischiefs which have resulted from this appropriation of territory are fully detailed; and the present disputes relate solely to the application, and not to the mode of raising the funds, which are now derived from the sale of the clergy reserves. Under the term 'protestant clergy,' the clergy of the church of England have always claimed the sole enjoyment of these funds. The members of the church of Scotland have claimed to be put entirely on a level with the church of England, and have demanded that these funds should be equally divided between both. The various denominations of protestant dissenters have asserted that the term includes them, and that out of these funds an equal provision should be made for all Christians who do not belong to the church of Rome. But a great body of all protestant denominations, and the numerous catholics who inhabit the province, have maintained that any such favour towards any one, or even of all the protestant sects, would be most inadvisable; and have either demanded the equal application of those funds to the purposes of all religious creeds whatsoever, or have urged the propriety of leaving each body of religionists to maintain its own establishment, to

repeal or disregard the law, and to apply the clergy funds to the general purposes of the government, or to the support of a general system of education.

“The supporters of these different schemes have long contended in this province, and greatly inconvenienced the imperial government, by constant references to its decision. The Secretary of State for the Colonies proposed to leave the determination of the matter to the provincial legislatures, pledging the imperial government to do its utmost to get a parliamentary sanction to whatever course they might adopt. Two bills in consequence passed the last House of Assembly, in which the reformers had the ascendancy, applying these funds to the purposes of education; and both these bills were rejected by the Legislative Council.

“During all this time, however, though much irritation had been caused by the exclusive claims of the church of England, and the favour shown by the government to one, and that a small religious community, the clergy of that church, though an endowed, were not a dominant priesthood. They had a far larger share of the public money than the clergy of any other denomination, but they had no exclusive privileges, and no authority, save such as might spring from the efficient discharge of their sacred duties, or from the energy, ability, or influence of members of their body. But the last public act of Sir John Colborne, before quitting the government of the province in 1835, which was the establishment of the fifty-seven rectories, has completely changed the aspect of the question. It is understood that every rector possesses all the spiritual and other privileges enjoyed by an English rector; and that though he may have no right to levy tithes (for even this has been made a question), he is in all other respects in precisely the same position as a clergyman of the established church in England. This is regarded by all other teachers of religion in the country as having at once degraded them to a position of legal inferiority to the clergy of the church of England; and it has been resented most warmly. In the opinion of many persons, this was the chief predisposing cause of the recent insurrection, and it is an abiding and unabating cause of discontent. Nor is this to be wondered at. The church of England, in Upper Canada, by numbering in its ranks all those who belong to no other sect, represents itself as being more numerous than any single denomination of Christians in the country. Even admitting, however, the justice of the principle upon which this enumeration proceeds, and giving that church credit for all that it thus claims, its number could not amount to one-third, probably not a fourth, of the population. It is not, therefore, to be expected that the other sects, three at least of whom—the methodists, the presbyterians, and the catholics—claim to be individually more numerous than the church of England, should acquiesce quietly in the supremacy thus given it. And it is equally natural that the English dissenters and Irish catholics, remembering the position which they occupied at home, and the long and painful struggle through which alone they have obtained the imperfect equality they now possess, should refuse to acquiesce for themselves in the creation of a similar establishment in their new country, and thus to bequeath to their children a strife as arduous and embittered as that from which they have so recently and imperfectly escaped.

“But for this act, it would have been possible, though highly impolitic, to have allowed the clergy reserves to remain upon their former undetermined and unsatisfactory footing. But the question as to the application

of this property must now be settled, if it is intended that the province is to be free from violent and perilous agitation. Indeed, the whole controversy, which had been in a great measure suspended by insurrection, was in the course of the last summer revived with more heat than ever by the most inopportune arrival in the colony of opinions given by the English law officers of the crown in favour of the legality of the establishment of the rectories. Since that period the question has again absorbed public attention; and it is quite clear that it is upon this practical point that issue must sooner or latter be joined on all the constitutional questions to which I have previously adverted. I am well aware that there are not wanting some who represent the agitation of this question as merely the result of its present unsettled character, and who assert, that if the claims of the English church, to the exclusive enjoyment of this property, were established by the imperial parliament, all parties, however loud their present pretensions, or however vehement their first complaints, would peacefully acquiesce in an arrangement which would then be inevitable. This might be the case if the establishment of some dominant church were inevitable. But it cannot be necessary to point out that in the immediate vicinity of the United States, and with their example before the people of Canada, no injustice, real or fancied, occasioned and supported by a British rule, would be regarded in this light. The result of any determination on the part of the British government or legislature to give one sect a predominance and superiority would be, it might be feared, not to secure the favoured sect, but to endanger the loss of the colony, and, in vindicating the exclusive pretensions of the English church, to hazard one of the fairest possessions of the British crown.

"I am bound, indeed, to state, that there is a degree of feeling, and an unanimity of opinion, on the question of ecclesiastical establishments over the northern part of the continent of America, which it will be prudent not to overlook in the settlement of this question. The superiority of what is called 'the Voluntary Principle,' is a question on which I may almost say that there is no difference of opinion in the United States; and it cannot be denied that on this, as on other points, the tone of thought prevalent in the Union has exerted a very considerable influence over the neighbouring provinces.

"It is most important that this question should be settled, and so settled as to give satisfaction to the majority of the people of the two Canadas, whom it equally concerns; and I know of no mode of doing this, but by repealing all provisions in imperial acts that relate to the application of the clergy reserves, and the funds arising from them, leaving the disposal of the funds to the local legislature, and acquiescing in whatever decision it may adopt. The views which I have expressed on this subject sufficiently mark my conviction, that, without the adoption of such a course, the most mischievous practical cause of dissension will not be removed."

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