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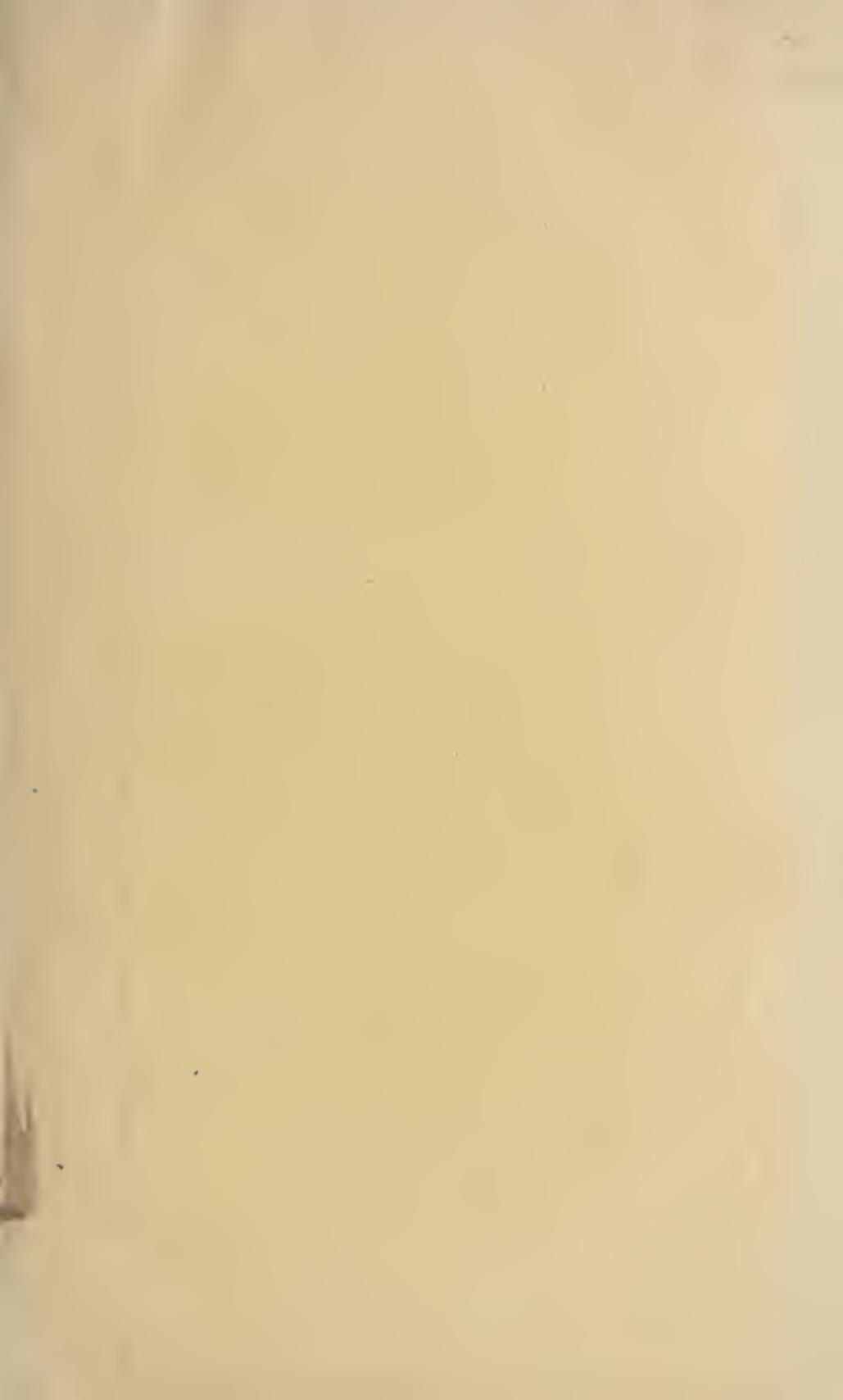
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The call upon the church
considered in two essays





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THE CALL UPON THE CHURCH.

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✓
THE CALL UPON THE CHURCH

CONSIDERED

IN TWO ESSAYS

✓
BY W. ROBERTS, Esq, M. A.
AND THE REV. W. NICHOLSON, M. A.

TO WHICH THE PRIZE OF TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS WAS
AWARDED BY THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE SOCIETY.

PUBLISHED BY R. B. SEELEY AND W. BURNSIDE;
AND SOLD BY L. AND G. SEELEY,
FLEET STREET, LONDON.
MDCCCXXXVIII.

THE Committee of the CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE SOCIETY having, in the Autumn of 1837, offered a prize of TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS for the best Essay “ On the Character, Qualifications, and Conduct requisite in the Ministers of Religion, as pointed out in the Holy Scriptures (whether by express precept or necessary implication) with reference especially to the offices of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, in the Established Church of England and Ireland;—the high duties and weighty responsibilities attaching both to the persons who appoint and to those who are appointed

to these holy offices;—the great evils arising from unsuitable appointments, which all who love God and desire the best interests of their fellow-countrymen have in many instances to deplore; and the plans in accordance with the spirit of our Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution, whereby, under the Divine blessing, these evils might be obviated, and the benefit of a faithful, zealous, and spiritually-minded ministry be obtained for every parish throughout the land;”

And having requested the Rev. HENRY RAIKES, A. M. Chancellor of Chester, and the Venerable GEORGE HODSON, A. M. Archdeacon of Stafford, to be Arbitrators as to the respective merits of the works offered for such Prize; the said Arbitrators did on the 11th of April 1838, report to the effect,—

“ That the two Essays inscribed respectively ‘Jachin,’ and ‘*Σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ Θεῷ ἐργατην ἀνεπαισχυντον*—2 Tim. ii. 15,’ possess, in their judgment, each, very superior excellences, and conjointly exhibit—the former by an energetic inculcation of principles, the latter by

the copiousness of its practical details—very just and impressive views of the Christian ministry, of the impediments to its effective exercise in the existing state of the United Church of England and Ireland, and of the means whereby those impediments may, without innovation, and without any disorganization of our Ecclesiastical system, be safely and effectually removed.

“ They recommend, therefore, that the prize be divided equally between the two Essays first specified, and that they be published together in one volume, in the order in which they stand in the preceding paragraph.”

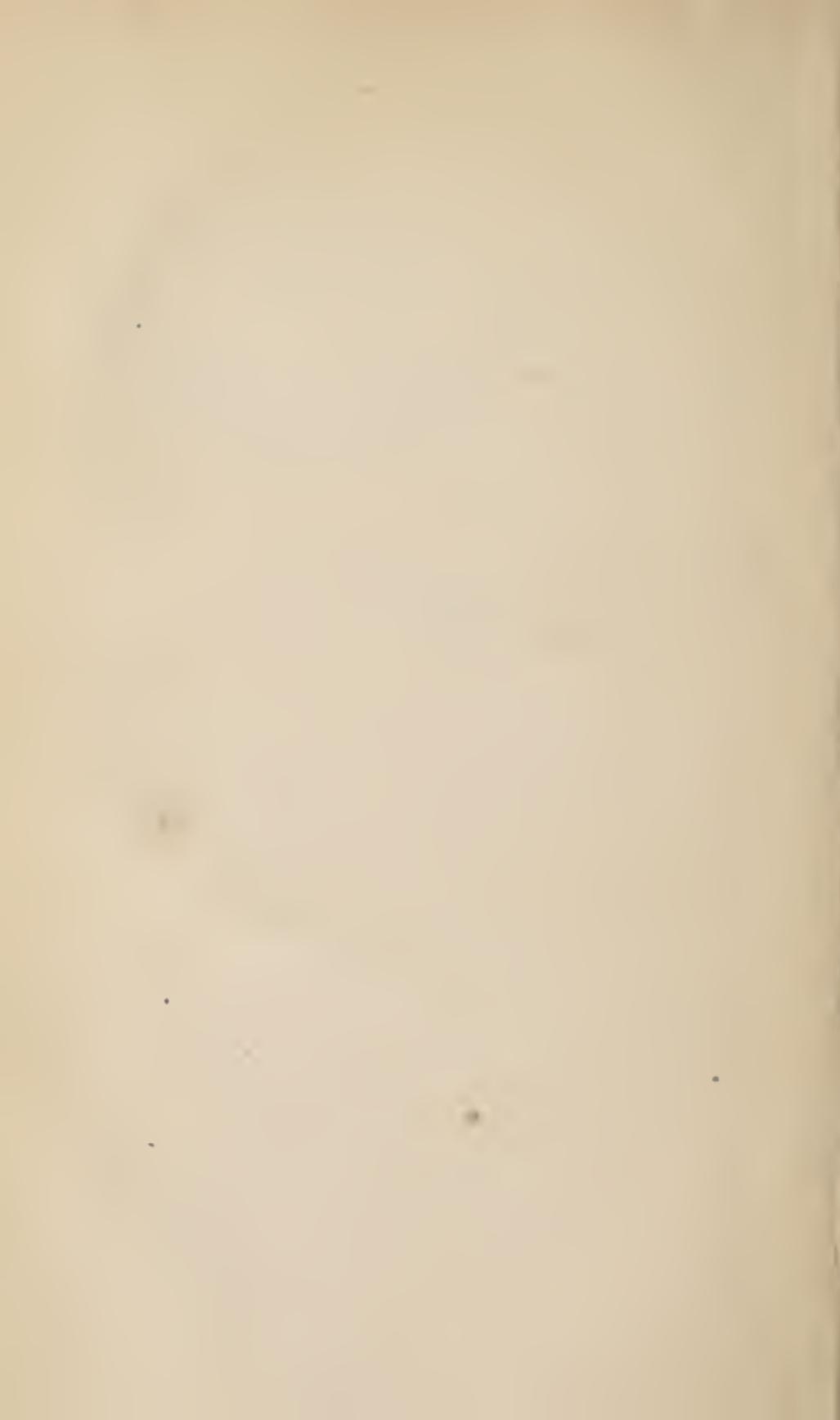
In pursuance of which award, the prize was declared to belong to the Authors of the said two Essays, conjointly, and their productions now appear, as recommended by the Arbitrators, in the present volume.

July 31, 1838.





JACHIN.



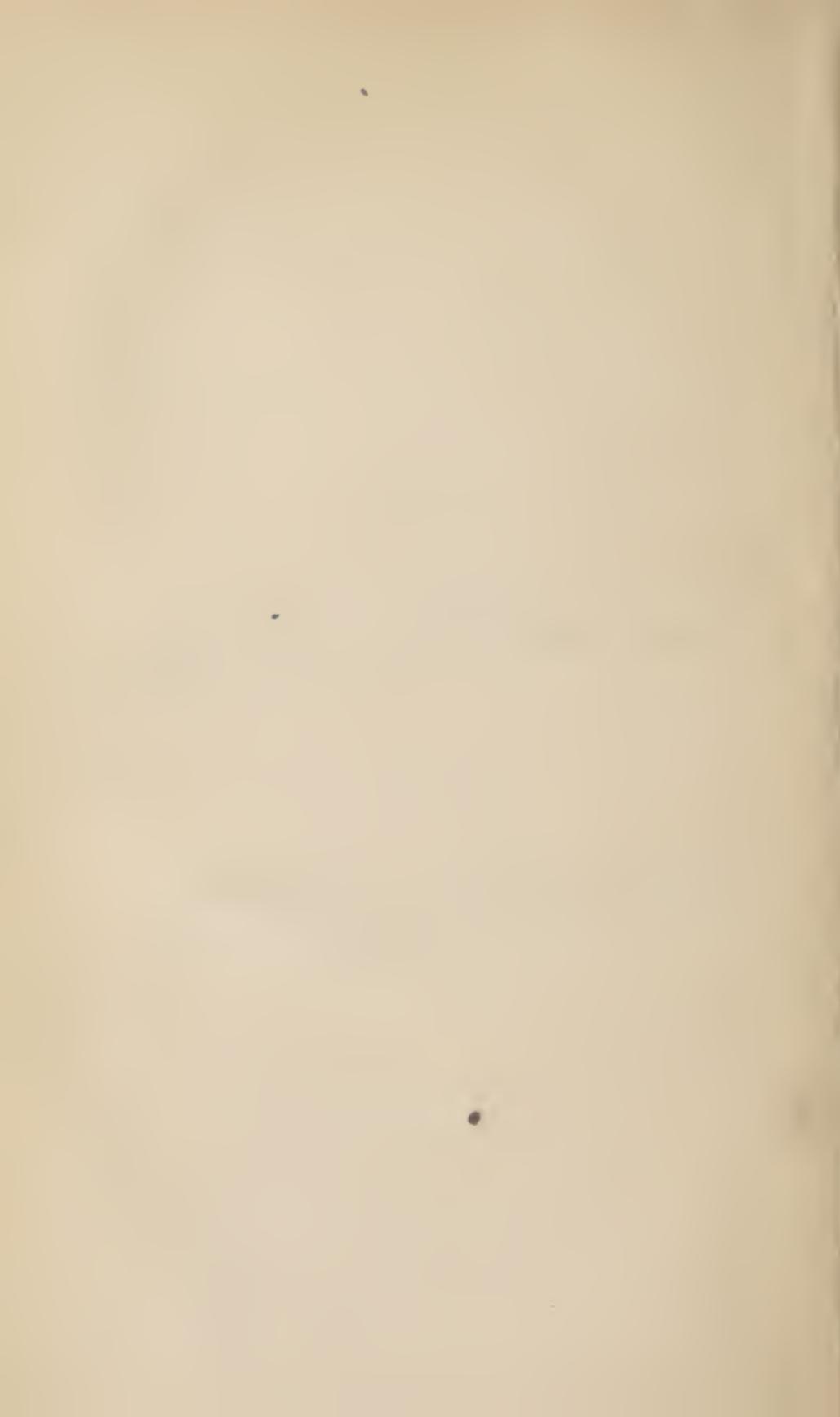
JACHIN.

יָכִין

THE RIGHT-HAND PILLAR OF THE TEMPLE.

2 CHRON. III. 17.

“Και εστησε της συλης κατα προσωπον τη ναη, ένα εκ δεξιῶν, και τον ένα εξ ἑνωθυμων, και εκαλεσε το ὄνομα τη εκ δεξιῶν ΚΑΤΟΡΘΩΣΙΣ, και το ὄνομα τη εξ ἀριστερῶν ΙΣΧΥΣ,”
LXX.



SYLLABUS.

SECTION

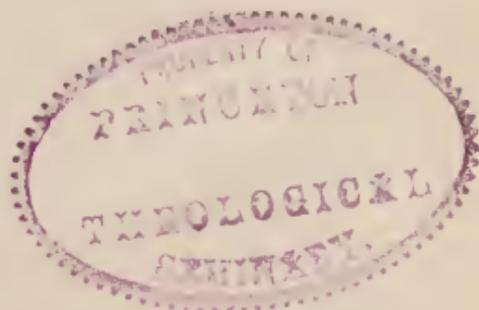
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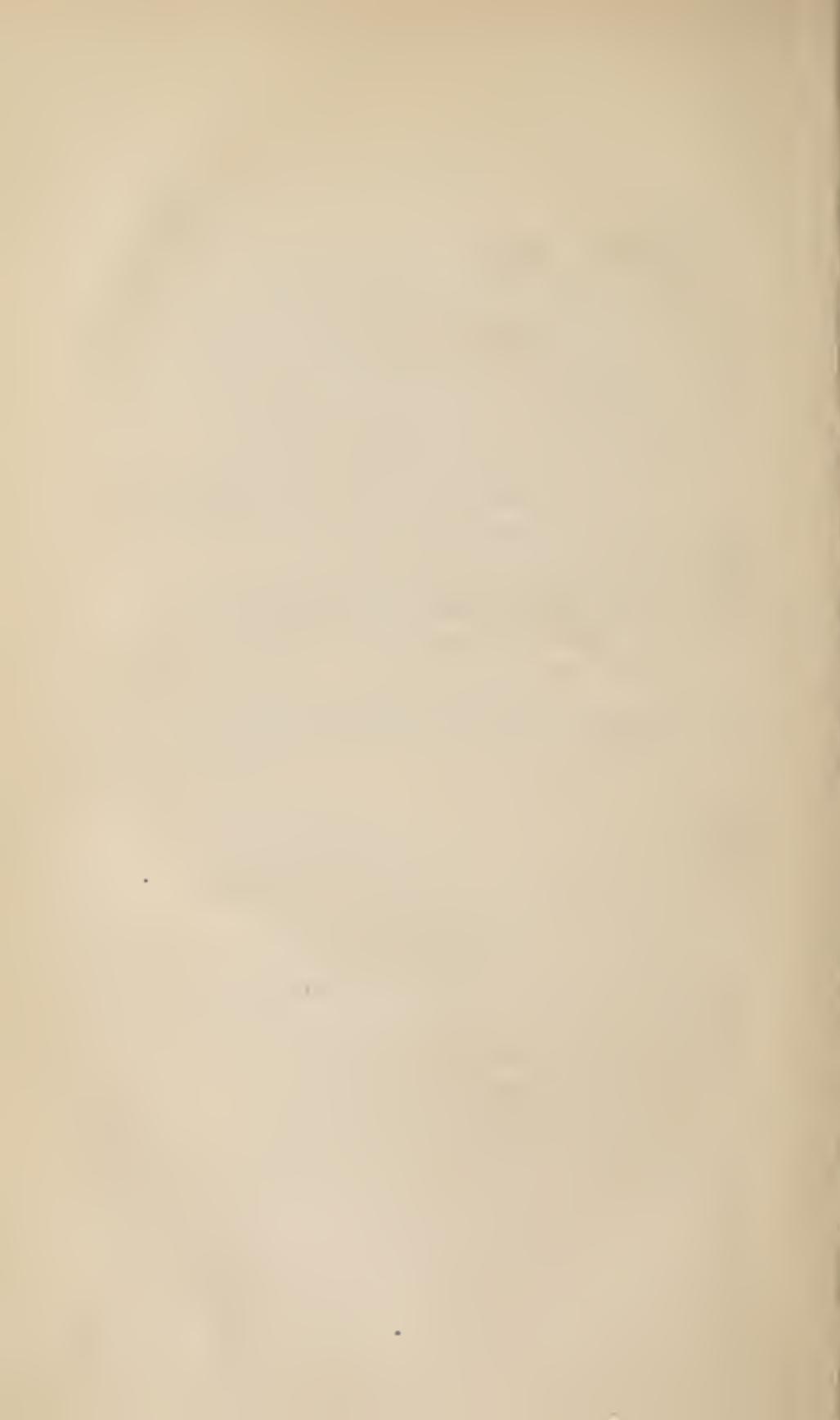
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JACHIN.

§ I.

WHEN we set about the work of effecting a change or modification of our condition, either in our physical or moral state, the proper point at which the operation should begin, is generally a question of doubt and perplexity. The things of the natural, moral, and intellectual world, have, among themselves respectively, such a correspondence and reciprocity, and cause and effect are so interchangeable, when practically considered, that to find the clue of the labyrinth is often impossible. With an infinity before and behind him, every scheme or system of man's contrivance which is to act upon and affect the state of his own humanity, necessarily consists of broken expedients, unadjusted by his own prudence to that mysterious order by which all things are overruled and conducted. The parts and organs which compose our bodily frame, and

minister to life, are reciprocally necessary to each other. If we assume any one in particular, as imparting the first impulse ; on a further investigation, we find that what it seems to produce, is pre-required to its own existence. In the world of matter without us, the same circularity presents itself, 'a wheel, as it were, in the middle of a wheel.'¹ Nor is it less observable in the moral scene of our duties and responsibilities, and the general economy of social life.

Where then to begin the great and vital work of improvement is a difficult problem. Shall we begin with our schools? these seem to be the fountain at which the streams commence. But these must have their sources of supply. They require to be replenished by the returns of elementary moisture, and to be nourished by their own exhalations. As the preacher reminds us, "the wind goeth forth towards the south, and turneth about unto the north, it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; into the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."² Pastors and teachers are an emanation from our schools, and our schools owe their

¹ Ezek. i. 16.

² Eccles. i. 6, 7.

virtual existence to our pastors and teachers. The clergy of the land are prepared and formed in our colleges, and our colleges are conducted by our clergy. Of the clergy our bishops and ecclesiastical rulers are made, and again from our bishops and ecclesiastical rulers, the body of the clergy receive their character as well as their commission. By the administrators of our church our secular polity in its highest departments is materially influenced, and again the efficiency of these instruments depends upon the choice and appointment of them by the rulers of the state.

From this involution in the bearings and affinities of our moral condition, we must look without us for the great first Mover. Instead of wearying ourselves in a vain search after remote causes and first principles, if each in his own department will but put forth his individual strength, the great Disposer will settle for us the question of priorities and the order of procedure. Meanwhile a renovation of strength and effect will be seen and felt in the various parts of the entire economy. We systematize, we philosophize, we set about reforming our practical state by a priori plans, grounded on favourite theories, and still end where we began; the fundamental error of our schemes being generally this, that they leave out of calculation our own infirmity.

In speculative plans of reform, not knowing

where to begin, we generally begin by disturbance ; loosening or removing parts which have come together by a fitness which time, and exigency, and concurring events, as much beyond human foresight, as above human control, have matured and confirmed. In our own nation, the truth of these remarks has been often exemplified. A great deal of time has been wasted in examinations into the evils of our system, rather in the spirit of scientific research, than with the serious and sober purpose of specific correction. It has been more a matter of philosophy than feeling.

In whatever class improvement is effected, the voice of public feeling is, instrumentally considered, generally entitled to the credit of producing it. He must know little of what are called the signs of the times, who does not perceive this,—who does not recognize in the preponderancy of opinion, whichever way it tends, a force which neither prescription, nor legitimacy, nor law, can long successfully oppose.

Among practical expedients therefore for accomplishing the substantial improvement of any institution of man, or any order of society, the most efficacious is that which brings a rectified public opinion to bear upon it, and lay it under a strong and urgent requisition. It is the action of this secret momentum, which has wrought a

reformation in the plan of instruction pursued in our universities; and to the same influence we are to look for a Christian revolution in the management of our chartered schools, and the general maxims of popular education.

§ II.

Whatever may be thought respecting the source and origin of *political* power; that the people in the aggregate are the repositories of *moral* power in a country of free institutions, cannot reasonably be doubted. From which clear proposition an inference is deducible, that points out to every man a sphere of activity in which he may benefit his country, and contribute in a degree, small or great, to the advancement of the common good. Nor can a higher lesson be taught an individual than that which awakens him, in the critical conjuncture to which events have brought us, to the obligation of endowing his country with some part of the patrimony of his mind, and adding to the stock of her cherished examples.

But the great area of moral discipline lies spread before the clergy. Humanly speaking, the country leans upon them. They carry on its commerce between earth and heaven, between time and eternity. To them the business of the soul is committed, and a power which, if it be not well

employed, will turn fatally against themselves ; for fatal indeed must be the liability of one who voluntarily places himself between God and his creatures, to intercept rather than to communicate the light of his saving knowledge.

All our inquiries concerning the great affair of man's immortal interest, bring the clergy of the land before us as our best dependence under heaven. To those among them, whose breasts are callous to the call of the present crisis, the appeal is vain; it is only a divine influence that can make them forestal their fearful account. But to the large proportion of the clerical body who feel the superiority of the religious principle over every other motive that determines human action, the special need in which their country stands at the present moment, of their best exertions, will be answered by a zeal proportioned to the danger.

It is a waste of time to address those who have no sensibility that responds to the application. Nor is it sufficient to put the case broadly as involving the character and demanding the efforts of an entire class. Where a duty presents itself as a general concern, it is apt to take a weak hold upon individuals; it assumes a sort of abstract form, and is received with the cold assent with which propositions, involving truths in which the many share, are by the many received. The object

of this essay is to call each minister of God to the separate consideration of his personal responsibility, and a solitary reckoning with his own conscience : to summon him to hold an inquest upon himself in the silent court of his own breast, and there to anticipate his day of trial before the judge of the world in the audience of men and angels.

Did we not feel the force of that humiliating sentence which pronounces us to be all unprofitable servants, we might be disposed to speak of the British clergy with the homage of sincere approval; but it would of necessity be with such applause as men bestow on each other, "measuring themselves by themselves." When we compare their performance with the vows which are upon them, we dare not interpose our weak commendation in a matter of special contract between God and his immediate servants. The Lord best knows how to estimate and recompense the diligence exerted in his service.

One thing all thinking men must perceive,—that it has pleased the Lord of the vineyard to multiply, in these our days, the duties, responsibilities, and difficulties of his labourers, and to put their fidelity to an awful test. The enemies of the truth are, in number and power, a more dangerous combination than heretofore; better armed,

better disciplined, better arrayed for their warfare. That inert mass of negative infidelity which half a century ago, lay almost concealed in the mist of its own speculations, has been quickened into life, and has propagated through the land its living mischiefs. The teeming time has come, and from its holes and corners a hissing brood has been thrown upon the community too well disposed to lodge them in its bosom. "They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper."¹ In such circumstances, the watchmen of our Israel can have no release from their active labour, but such as soldiers may look for with the camp of their enemies in view; and besides these visible assailants, they have to wrestle with "the principalities and powers" of a dark and sightless kingdom. We may be upon the crisis of a great victory. We cannot tell. But of this we may be sure, victory will not be vouchsafed to the idle.

It is a waste of effort to seek by argument to charge the evil of the day on any class of men. Where dependence is reciprocal, the blame will be always shifting its place. When every Christian shall take blame to himself, and the clergy

¹ Isaiah lix. 5.

more especially shall, with the humility of the apostle, proclaim themselves the chief of sinners with respect to their office, and all shall go on in this spirit, the great work of blessedness will be in manifest progress, and the kingdom of the Saviour will exhibit a sensible enlargement. Where each thus appropriates the blame, each will give his hand to the labour of reparation under the great repairer of the breach. "They shall build the old wastes; they shall raise up the former desolations."¹ It is that one great work into which all may intrude themselves, and no confusion result from unrestricted intermeddling. The wall of our Jerusalem will become the monument of the subdivided labour of each contributory workman before his own door.

§ III.

We do not purpose in this inquiry to advocate the truth, but consistency in the professors of the truth. We do not write to make converts to Christianity, but to put Christians in mind of the true principles they profess, and especially those deeply committed men, who compose the visible ministry of Christ's kingdom upon earth. "What is truth?". This question of the benighted Roman, might well

¹ Isaiah lxi. 4.

be asked by him as the representative of a heathen world, whose inquiries after truth had tended only to immerse them in fathomless error; and it was put with a carelessness that did not deserve an answer, to one who was alone on the earth qualified to answer it. This answer our Saviour did not, upon that occasion, throw away. But his answer to Thomas was virtually an answer to Pilate's question—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." And here at once is furnished the matter of all teaching to every faithful minister of the word,—the sum and substance of evangelical instruction—the practice, the doctrine, and the reward. Wherever our teachers have deviated from this course, by showing the truth without the way, or the way without the truth, or either or both without the promise which reflects upon them their light and glory, the means have been inadequate to the end proposed, and the sophistry of the proud heart has successfully resisted the aggression. It is not, in such case, the Lord's controversy with man, but the controversy of man with man, in which the rhetoric of the flesh debates on equal terms with unsanctified reason.

If public opinion is to be raised, and raised it must be to act with imperative effect upon all the functional parts of our polity in church or state,

it must be by the efforts of the national clergy,—animated by a zeal that courts a re-action upon its own body; raising an expectation which calls upon the teacher to graduate higher in his own school; and creating a rebound between the agent and recipient. Thus the cause of the gospel condescends to the course and manner of human progression.

But in vain will a national clergy exert itself in this great cause if it keep not constantly in its view the holy aphorism above quoted—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." Until the epoch of this blessed promulgation of light and leading in the path of salvation, the mind of man had tried all its resources of self-generated wisdom, in the search after speculative and practical truth; till their reveries fell into contempt, even with philosophers themselves. Weary of "walking" in these "vain shadows," they found relief and refreshment in the retreat of universal scepticism.

Two general opinions, under various modifications, had long divided the disputers of this world. Man was either degraded to the level of the brute, and deity dismissed to an eternity of voluptuous abstraction from the earth and its interests; or, in order to contract the distance between gods and men, the soul was dressed out in the attributes of divinity. The history of this

dark dynasty of error, which so long enslaved the heart and intellect of man, should be kept full in our retrospect to enable us to appreciate what we have gained by that single sentence, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

No such pregnant words have ever met the ear or addressed the understanding. All the devices of man have done homage to their mysterious efficacy. Philosophy, with all its pomp of ethics, has been put to the blush by them, and has seen all its centuries of gathered wisdom dispersed by a breath. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." But to what conclusion does this bring us? Is it not to this?—that as there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved, so there is no other name whereby we can be safely governed, influenced, and sustained. Of that great name which is above every name, the words which have been cited are only an expansion. In the proportion in which our clergy acknowledge and feel the sanctity of this name, and follow out its plenary import as "the way, the truth, and the life," will be the success of their attempts to elevate public

opinion. For this task, fidelity is a better qualification than ingenuity. In imparting knowledge we confer power, but often irregular, equivocal, or selfish power, acting by means and ministers which make it doubly mischievous. But there is a "power by the Spirit of the Lord"¹ which accompanies that word which "when it goeth forth giveth light and understanding unto the simple." With that power, both to exercise and impart it, must our clergy go forth, if the great multitude is to be moved onward in the march of real improvement. It takes no less a lever than this to give to the mass an inch in advance in the moral scale. No other teaching can be made to bear with effect upon the people but that which has been first taught by the Great Teacher. And the process must be regular. It is through Him only who is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," that unclean lips are made capable of conveying the divine message, and that the clay of those who receive it is changed into tempered mortar for "the edifying of the body of Christ."

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," are words of universal challenge. They admit neither partnership nor competition. They charge all

¹ Micah iii. 8.

other systems with folly. They claim to be all or nothing; and when they have reduced the mutinous into captivity, they call upon the rebel to glory in his chains. Words they are "more to be desired than gold;" nor are there any words whereby men can be better taught, or in the keeping whereof there is greater reward. It is the lesson comprehended in these words which turned philosophy from the idols of the schools to seek "the supreme good" in the testimony of the true God and the discoveries of his word.

Insisting upon this great truth may our clergy go with courage and confidence among the people, little solicitous about other aid than the aid of Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Let them keep in the old paths, adhering to the simplicity of the gospel, and suppressing the spirit of adventure and curiosity; which, if it multiplies topics to suit the demands of the pulpit, and to serve as materials for display, tends assuredly to dissipate unity, dis-sever force, and increase exposure to attack by widening the area of dispute.

These remarks are designed principally to draw attention to the importance of that humble but firm posture of mind which a clergyman should bring with him to his ministrations, and of that faithful simplicity to which he is pledged in the

subject matter of his teaching. Awful is the responsibility attaching upon each one of a class of persons who alone among men have the authoritative means committed to them, of awakening, alarming, and persuading the conscience and the heart, by the terrors and invitations of the glorious gospel.

§ IV.

The clergy are large debtors to the state—not indeed for the provision made for them, for that is scanty enough; but for the stock of moral power entrusted to their hands. They have weekly opportunities of exhibiting the truth to passive auditories. The ark and the testimony are in the midst of them; holiness is on their right hand, and honour on their left. They ask no sufferance, for they have the warrant of God and man for the function they discharge. Their character and occupation open to them the passages of the heart by private counsel. Every office of the church brings them into spiritual intercourse with their neighbours, and affords occasion for warning, consolation, or encouragement. In the house of mourning, and by the bed of the dying sinner, the season of salutary impression is theirs to improve to the purposes of godly profit. And to these commanding oppor-

tunities is to be added that which our church has made the duty and privilege of its ministers—the work of catechising their flocks, to prepare them for a lively and intelligent participation of the public worship and service of God.

These opportunities are clamorous. They have a trumpet-sound. They lay upon the conscience of every minister of Christ an unceasing obligation to put in exercise means so well adapted to oppose the march of evil. They call on him to combat practices of an anti-christian tendency, and to bring common opinion under the yoke of religious fear, and godly convictions. But “who is sufficient for these things?”—Only he who can bear to be reminded of them, and who feels his sufficiency to be of God.

§ V.

There is a little way of looking at all establishments. To seize upon defects is easy. ‘Few there are of so weak capacity but that public evils they easily espy; fewer so patient as not to complain, when the grievous inconveniences thereof work sensible smart.’¹ But to distinguish between inherent and consequential defects—between errors of abuse and errors of principle—between those which belong to an infirm agency,

¹ Hooker’s *Eccles. Pol. Lib.* v. § 1.

and those which belong to the system itself, is only within the competency of a sound discernment, and patient observation. Innovating and narrow minds never look to the resources of a system, nor stay to consider whether the evils which they see in it are constitutional or occasional, permanent or contingent. They never look deep enough into it to discern the mutual action of its component parts, its latent means of self-restoration, or its balancing compensations. They know neither where to fix the censure, or where to look for correction.

The church has done her part. It remains for her members, and especially her ministers, to do theirs. The sacred machinery is in preparation. Mind and principle are only wanting to impart impulse and action. It is true that all its primitive efficiency may not be capable of revival. 'If there be any conscience in men touching that which they write or speak, let them consider as well what the present condition of all things doth now suffer, as what the ordinances of former ages did appoint; as well the weight of those causes for which our affairs have altered, as the reasons in regard whereof our fathers and predecessors did sometime strictly and severely keep that which for us to observe now is neither meet nor always possible.'¹

¹ Hooker's Eccles. Pol. Lib. v. § 80.

Much however may be done in the way of moral change and amelioration, but that only which *can* be done *will* be done by a general stir, and godly commotion in every parish and ecclesiastical district, where happily a minister officiates who is not afraid of a raised expectation in the people. The Church of England would fain provoke a mutual challenge. Her offices are all contrived to engage the hearts of her congregations and her ministers in an amicable conflict. She encourages a holy emulation, that so the Christian, exercised by the collision, may grow in his character and attainments, until he reaches "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Ministers sometimes avow an objection to domiciliary intrusions upon the poor. They think it behoves them to wait till they are called for. We stay not to examine the grounds of this objection. Let them turn the whole poor into catechumens, and the church will furnish the apology for their visits. Catechising and lecturing will soon fill up the chasm between minister and people, and mix them together in profitable communion. Every office may be turned into a Homily. The church has, in all her services performed a mother's part. By the beautiful and solemn prayers which accompany each of her celebrations, she seeks to interest the attendants,

and win a soul by surprise. With this collateral aim all her services are calculated for public participation, and suppose the presence of a sympathizing congregation. That must needs be accredited as a wise economy in which things are so ordered, that the interest and exigence of each individual are made conducive to the great end and purpose in which all are ultimately concerned. And this is the catholic and holy design of our church; but alas! it languishes in the letter of the rubric. Were 'the spirit of ghostly strength' to be vouchsafed to it as the reward of a simultaneous effort of prayer and supplication, the most essential reform that any constitutional polity ever exhibited would suddenly manifest itself in this country, with not a single organic change. No dream of philanthropy has ever imagined so fair an Utopia as would then be realized. To lift the great mass of our church communicants out of a formal concurrence with her several institutions into a close sacramental union with all her liturgical offices, ordinary, occasional, and special, is the object to which every Christian patriot must, at this moment, if he is honest and consistent, direct his efforts: but the minister of God, of the Holy God, where is he? and what is he doing? May the answer be—not, that he is at the festive board or leading the

dance; but that "the watchman of Ephraim is with his God;"¹ that he is ministering in the sanctuary, or standing between the living and the dead!

If our church is in danger, she is not without defence. She has a rich arsenal; she wants only brave sons who will draw out the means of her protection from her own magazines. Her formularies are among her best safe-guards, but their efficiency depends upon the manner of using them. It is only for the sake of souls that she deserves our care. To be the object of our solicitude, she must be in function and operation. It is in the luminous circuit of her ministerial charge that she "lives, and moves, and has her being." Her glory is in her travail. She presses on from strength to strength in the preparation and exercise of her children. Her rites form so many successive lessons and grades in the furtherance of Christian proficiency. To make her services tell, and turn to their proper account, in impressiveness and in effect, is the true policy of those who love her cause. All her offices are made for permanence; but the want of a due application and connection has rendered them as evanescent as the dew upon the rose.

¹ Hosea ix, 8.

They were designed to conduct the Christian in a gradual, experimental progression through the several stages of his discipleship in the gospel; but how soon is the continuity broken by the disorderly scene which ensues! and how often has the service of the dying hour the work of instruction to begin, without any preparative aid from preceding rites! After the heir of natural corruption has been taken from the font—a new subject of the kingdom of grace, the ritual of our church considers him as having entered upon a consecutive course, and prepares him for a succession of solemnities whereby the inception of his Christian career may be followed out in a gradual development, through a series of fresh acts of communion, and new pledges of obedience: all which is suffered to come fearfully short of its intention and purpose. How brief is the impression of a rite by which an immortal soul is dedicated to God through the only Reconciler! It rests upon the memory of the parents and sponsors as a thing done, and done with; registered for some possible temporal use—to be recalled, it may be, as a fact, a date, or a testimony; but the soul's part in the ceremony, the undertaking it implies, its obligation, its privilege, its grace, how soon do they perish out of remembrance, without a vestige or savour of them left—nothing left to give them any

reflex existence in prayer or meditation. The nurture and education which succeed, have, in general, no tendency to keep in its strength and freshness the unction of the ceremony. Confirmation and the holy sacrament of the communion succeed; but the church expects from her ministers—is it not often in vain?—an intermediate instruction to make them a proper sequel of the great initiatory rite; and to link them together in vital connection. The beautiful coherence and harmony of all the parts composing our book of Common Prayer—their correct portraiture of gospel truth—their display of the rich provisions of pardoning grace, and their suitability to every self-accusing sinner's case, commend them to the believer's adoption, as opening for him a door of utterance and a way of access. He reads in them the ruin, the recovery, and the regeneration of man. He recognizes in them the precious privileges of adoption and sanctification, and feels in them those vital airs which invigorate and refresh him in his way to God's holy hill, that mount of assurance from which eternity is brought within the prospect, and the soul is bathed in the region of upper day. Not only is this beautiful composition an authentic repertory of topics for the minister of the word—not only is it that arm of the church on which he may place a main reliance in the conflict in which

he is engaged; but it is his monitor also; it keeps him within barriers which coerce his steps, and restrain the roving of a dangerous self-confidence. It is a full directory. It teaches him how to teach, how to pray, and how to persuade.

In the view here taken of our church economy and its system of edification, the writer has no new plan to propose. The whole object of this essay is to enforce the necessity of making an actual operative beginning. To him it seems that no new plan is wanted. He goes further. He thinks our plans are our hindrances. When men are so bent upon improvement that they overlook their existing resources, they may be said to outrun their speed. And this is one of the bad habits of the present day. A great deal of valuable time is lost in desultory aims. Projects take the place of action. We are mending when we should be moving, contriving when we ought to be executing.

Lord Bacon writes of an eminent statesman, that he was great in operatione, but little in opere; and this is precisely the case with those who consider it to be their duty and their province to suggest improvements of the organization of our national church. It is not a new organization that it wants. It is the practical and

efficient application of its present means. When the Spanish armada was threatening our country, it would have been a foolish and fatal waste of time to have set about building the same floating castles to meet the enemy, before we began to act. The wiser method was that which was adopted, of sending to the combat all the vessels which could immediately be furnished for the occasion. So let the aggression upon our national church be met by faithfully employing the resources we possess.

If in any establishment, civil or ecclesiastical, there exists a principle of amelioration; the true art and secret of reform consist in giving to the principle its proper developement, in a wholesome and practical operation. Conventional changes, if they reach their mark, generally defeat themselves by going beyond it. One effect they are sure to produce,—the dislocation of things already settled, and the disruption of prescriptive holds. It is seldom their principle or their wisdom to consider what *can* be done in the present circumstances; but rather, what *might* be done if things were otherwise ordered. The sensibility to tangible inconvenience, generally blinds us to remoter consequences. Few feel the verity of the proposition, which seems, nevertheless, to be founded on all historical experience, that where

the motive for the alteration of any standing arrangement, is the simple perception of evil, abstracted from a due comparison with proposed or possible substitutes, such motive can seldom accomplish anything beyond plausible mischief. 'As for arbitrary alterations, when laws, in themselves not simply bad, or unmeet, are changed for better and more expedient, if the benefit of that which is newly better devised, be but small, sith the custom of easiness to alter and change is so evil, no doubt but to bear a tolerable sore, is better than to venture on a dangerous remedy.'¹

When the principles of a system are so clear and defined, as to be susceptible of a new and extended application, without alteration of its organic structure, it may be said to contain the seeds of its own amelioration; and this is truly descriptive of our ecclesiastical, as well as secular polity. If we carry out its principles in a right course of progression, 'in what we improve we shall never be wholly new, and in what we retain we shall never be wholly obsolete.' This method of procedure is without innovation, dislocation, or disorder. We might pursue the idea still further: A system framed in subserviency to our need, may possess a power of self-enlargement and expansion,

¹ Hooker. Eccl. Pol. lib. iv. 14.

to keep pace with the increasing amount of that need,—a capacity of being acted upon by the urgency of the objects for which it was designed, so as to be impelled to the production of extraordinary means and substitutes, to supply the deficiency or failure of its ordinary and regular instruments. It is so with organic life; it possesses a fund, out of which its losses are repaired or compensated. Where there is an extraordinary demand, spontaneous efforts are put in exercise to answer it. Thus too has the church in this day of her difficulty, risen to meet it with a further development of her resources. The institutions set on foot within her pale, for aiding her in her pastoral duties, are an increase of her strength which may be considered as self-produced; and the zeal which animates them, may be said in a certain sense to be a creature of her own. It brings her the succours of filial gratitude.

Thus the Scripture readings, the lay assistance, and the augmentation of clerical labour which have been brought to the aid of the Establishment by the societies lately instituted for those objects, are among our greatest encouragements in the present crisis. They accelerate the existing force, without any change of principle, or the substitution of any new springs. They repay with a pious usury,

what has been borrowed from the treasury of the sanctuary.

So legitimately do these expansive methods spring from the constitution of the Church Establishment, and so adapted are they to put her resources in operation, that they may be considered as well illustrating that internal principle of self-restoration which has above been noticed, and on that account as entitled to be somewhat specially dwelt upon.

It is the part of a paralyzing prudence to reject assistance on the ground of possible injury from the miscarriages or mistakes to which it may be liable. Some degree of risk accompanies the admission of every alliance, and every co-operation. But if remote possibilities of evil are suffered to outweigh proximate benefits, and certainties to give way to surmises, nothing extensively great or useful can ever be accomplished. There is even a temerity in these timorous counsels ; a precipitation of choice which doubles the danger it would avoid.

The plans and purposes of the institution calling itself the ' Church Pastoral Aid Society,' appear to be tempered by that " right judgment " which, in company with Christian fervour, affords the best security for a correct and efficacious course of procedure. We have thus help brought

us "from the sanctuary," and are "strengthened out of Zion."¹ In large and populous parishes, under the superintendance of a single minister, sometimes broken down with his parish duties, sometimes ill in health, sometimes worn with years and cares, always, or nearly always, most inadequately maintained, the great majority never come within the sound of the gospel, and the spiritual wants of a great proportion of the people, never reach the ear of him who is appointed to minister to them. These cases of destitution and misery, the arm of the church is too short to reach. More labourers are necessary; and if these labourers are, to some extent, supplied out of the funds of private and pious liberality, who is he that can find a plausible objection? The dire necessity of the case has, for some time been forcing into existence a small accession of lay agency, and the object of the Society is to give it greater activity with greater authority; to bring it in an augmented and more efficient form within the constitutional control and discipline of our church; that something like a proportion may be created between the multitude now abandoned to sin, and the publication and ministration of the word of life.

¹ Psalm xx. 2.

To assist a minister where his parish is too populous or too extensive for the possible discharge of his duties, but whose ecclesiastical income is insufficient to allow him to employ the requisite co-operation, is a part of this godly undertaking. It is an object deserving of the greatest praise and encouragement, no less for its zeal than for its humanity. It is clear, too, of all objection, even from the most scrupulous, on the ground of innovation. And if something of solemnity is sacrificed by the performance of divine service in places ordinarily used for other purposes, until our church accommodation shall be more upon a level with the spiritual wants of the people, surely the sacrifice is outweighed by the worth of the soul. The stress of the occasion consecrates the deviation; and the beauty of holiness is, to the pious heart, a worthy substitute for the furniture of the sanctuary. The first Christians held their assemblies in an upper chamber; and from the deck of a ship, or the drum-head of a barrack, prayers have sometimes ascended to the throne of grace, not, we may presume, less acceptable than incense from golden altars. The right of the bishop to authorize such extra service in any place convenient for the purpose, under the circumstances above supposed, seems no longer to be controverted.

We cannot leave this subject without directing attention to the great advantages obtained by the employment of those who are intended for the Church, and are waiting for the age at which their regular office is to begin, in works of preparatory exercise under the parochial minister. They are thus made to serve a holy and instructive apprenticeship. They walk the hospital of spiritual maladies; they are sent to the chambers of sorrow, where "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" where there is "no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,"—to apply "the balm of Gilead;" or, if it must be, the cauterizing and the knife. They are sent to the lazar-house of the soul's diseases, where 'despair tendeth the sick, busiest from couch to couch,' to interpose, 'while death delays to strike,' with their 'chief good and final hope,' not in the poet's sense, but in the saving sense of the gospel of comfort.

We may advert here to the use which a wise minister may generally make of one or two of his parishioners less able than others to support themselves by labour, from the feeble state of their bodily strength. Such are often, from the softening effects of sympathy, best qualified to administer help and consolation to the dying sinner.

“ O youth and joy, your airy tread
Too lightly springs by sorrow's bed !
Your keen eye-glances are too bright,
Too restless for a sick man's sight.
Farewell ! for one short life we part ;
I rather woo the soothing art
Which only souls in sufferings tried
Bear to their suffering brethren's side.”

In the business of teaching, too, those who are in tender health would often be found the most efficient. A minister would generally obtain from among this class the persons most vigorous in gospel strength. Those are the best soldiers of Christ whose “ strength is made perfect in weakness.” They have been themselves taught in a school which fits them for the mastership of the schools of the poor, if, peradventure, they have learned in that school the best lesson,—to “ possess their souls in patience.” May God prosper the undertaking of “ the Church Pastoral Aid Society,” and may his fallen creatures feel its value ! In its failure, if fail it shall, the Church of England will receive a severe warning.

To the “ Pastoral Aid Society” another kindred institution has been added, which, as it emanates from the ministerial part of our Establishment, is restricted to the object of multiplying clerical assistance. The terms used in speaking of this object as being within the plan of the society

already noticed, are expressive of the writer's sense of the value of such a provision: nor ought he to omit another purpose of this last-mentioned institution, for which the gratitude of the country is particularly due,—the addition it proposes to grant in aid of endowments offered by the patrons of livings, or to the gratuitous donations of others for a similar purpose. Where plans so wisely contrived to meet the difficulties of the present conjuncture, and to defeat the purposes of the enemies of our Establishment, are by our subject brought so conspicuously before us, such particulars will not be thought to be minute or tedious. Both these institutions are worthy of all admiration. The one founded on its secular basis, and the other having the testimony of its sacred accreditation, join hands, or ought to join hands, in administering that succour to our Church which, it is trusted, will soon be visible in its character and efficiency. They exhibit the concord of our social with our sacred polity, on which, under God, the continuance of both depends—a concord involving a mutual pledge, an identicalness of interest and a consolidation of strength.

Of “the Christian Influence Society,” which is another daughter of our Established Church, it will be enough to say that it contemplates and seeks to promote those objects of spiritual im-

provement which it is the humble purpose of these pages to place conspicuously before the reader.

To the excellence of "the Prayer-Book and Homily Society," the passages of this paper in which the value of the sacred documents of our Church and all her offices and expositions has been attempted to be set forth, bear their testimony. For the annexation of the Ordination Services to the Book of Common Prayer they are entitled to the nation's gratitude; as is also the venerable "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," which has followed its example.

§ VI.

In the great work of spiritual edification, one thing, at least, is clear,—that none but willing minds will stir. Some are adverse to all movement in this concern, and deem the Church to be in danger from the activity of its members. Others, like Gallio, "care for none of these things." Ministers of either of these descriptions can only be reached by a circuitry of operation. It is only by many intermediate undulations that the trumpet can be made audible within their camp. The medium through which the percussion must be conveyed to them is the intelligence of the people. The public must be made to rise in their demand for spiritual benefits at the hands of their clergy—

to rise, at the same time, in their veneration for a laborious ministry, and their appreciation of the value of their services. But this elevating effect on the public mind and opinion can only be the result of an immediate stir among the godly portion of the clergy, who, like the better part of a crew when their vessel is in distress, lend themselves wholly to the exigence of the moment, without giving themselves time to complain of others.

The means of all moral improvement lie semi-nally scattered among the great multitude, ready to reward the labour of right cultivation. If by the efforts of those who have the disposition to work, a maturer sense of the soul's interest in the character and qualifications of the clergy can be imparted to the people, it will soon be found to multiply the blessings of our church by working upwards till it awakens the responsibilities of patronage and ordination. This is what may be looked for from that part of our national clergy to whom the term evangelical is properly applicable. We want them to come among us more in the character of catechists—catechists upon a large scale of intrusiveness; not only amongst those whose ignorance, excused by their disadvantages, gives them a priority in this respect, but also among the unhappy great, and those 'who make themselves rich, yet have nothing.'

His own vows are upon every minister with a weight of fearful accountability. If an aggregate good is to be done, and the public mind is to be quickened by a new impulse which has its virtue from above, it will come in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, accompanying the simultaneous movement of those who are amenable to the call of the crisis;—who, taking up their parable, go forth at once among the people, fearlessly to deliver their message, and to spread out the word of wisdom in familiar and attractive details of catechetical exposition. O for a more operative and diffusive employment of this last instrument of instruction! that the people may emerge from their gross inability to profit by the services of the church—that the waters of the sanctuary may no longer stagnate in ignorance and indifference. This happier state of things seems to wait only for a more sincere and decided invitation: but come it cannot till the near relation of catechist and catechumen form a stricter bond of union between ministers and their flocks; until the church in her practice is made to bring her ordinances within the reach and touch of the people, and to realize to their hearts and capacities the gifts and graces which are proffered to them in her services and sacraments.

We are not unconscious that we are open to the imputation of arguing in a circle. We call upon the clergy to raise the standard of public opinion, and we look for the improvement of the clergy as the result of the raised expectation of the people. But such we have stated to be the complex condition of all moral movements which affect the character of nations. Cause and effect are in a state of continual interchange, and the celerity and certainty of the progression are always the result of the vibratory impulses of action and reaction. But a *beginning* must be made, and it is always best made where there is most amenability to the force applied.

It is obvious, too, that in speaking of the clergy as the instrument of improving the people, we are supposing a part to act upon the whole; since by 'people' we must understand that great community which includes all the orders of the state. Yet in an abstract sense, and as a moral entity, it may be considered in separation from any of the classes contained under it. To improve the mass is to improve the subject of all politic institutions and denominations secular and sacred; but it may be viewed as the repository of what is called 'opinion' in a large sense,—an agent which, if not met by some extraordinary counteraction, makes the most important characteristics and con-

cerns of society sooner or later submit to its modifications.

There is an accidental fashion of thinking, or posture of the public mind, which usually carries disturbance in its train, and which often calls for the restraints of law ; but there is also a determination of thought and sentiment which, acquiring by degrees the permanence of habit, is too strong either on the side of right or wrong to be defeated, unless possibly by its own excess, or the slow process of an insensible reaction. It is a mighty author of moral mischief, or an efficient organ of salutary reform. Those only may safely direct it whose hearts and heads have been prepared for the work by the lessons of a divine philosophy. It may be turned to very beneficial account by those who have learned the art of using it in the schools of heavenly wisdom. Men of prayer, and such as have gone to the fountain of pure instruction, know how to make it conducive to the best interests of man, by turning the tide of the great ocean into channels on which the gifts of an unerring beneficence may be borne and dispensed. It may, in such hands, be made the origin of new efforts and new principles ; imposing on our clergy of the establishment new sentiments of duty, on our bishops a more watchful superintendence, on our government more salutary caution in the disposal of dignities,

and on our men of estate, a deeper sense of their accountability in the dispensation of their patronage.

The special duties belonging to government, to bishops, to the clergy in general, and to private patrons, are obvious. The great desideratum is to *initiate* the work of improvement with the means we possess. And with this view it has been our object to point to the most practicable beginning of the process, and to show the quarter to which our hope of effective aid in this hour of national exigence may most reasonably be directed.

But why do we dwell upon the expediency of raising the tone of public opinion? is it not in manifest progress? does it not appear almost daily to receive intellectual accession and enlargement? All this is true. But it is also true that, unless these accessions and this enlargement have a legitimate origin, they may operate with a force producing more of dislocation than of salutary change. What we have considered as their legitimate origin is the stirring activity of our parochial clergy eliciting those healing virtues of the pool which would otherwise stagnate into torpid barrenness. On such an elevation of public feeling, bringing with it to the church dignity, strength, and beauty, every true member of her communion will turn his eye with complacency and confidence.

A dangerous conceit has gone forth that human happiness is to be advanced by a secular and general education of the people ; a dogma well-pleasing to a revolutionary taste, and agreeable to the spirit of a false philanthropy ; which would persuade us that to prepare the intellect for the apprehension of religious truth, an infusion of knowledge must first distil from the vapoury element of human learning. Instead of a discipline of principles and duties—instead of an instruction of which the tendency, under the Divine blessing, is to elevate the thoughts, to chasten the affections, and to keep the practice steady, the public gratuitous education proposed by vain imaginations, and heartless theories is, to say the best of it, calculated rather for the vanities than for the verities of existence. For extricating the great masses of our population from their ignorance and depression, we are captivated by the boastful project of carrying instruction to the doors of the people ; but not instruction of a Divine tendency—not that which looks to the happiness of man through the medium of holy practice and vital godliness ; but that which puffs up instead of building up—which fosters conceit and the vanity of self-dependence. In this bustle and stir in the business of popular education, the cause of the people is neither correctly understood nor

honestly undertaken. A splendid cheat is passed upon the community, and a self-sufficient numerical majority is arrayed against the standing securities of religion, authority, and order.

Neither are we sure that in our National Schools, or schools of the establishment, as they are in most instances conducted, an efficacious barrier is raised against the consequences of this unsanctified system. Occasion may be ministered to latent ability in scattered instances by these modes of organical instruction: but a mind well versed in the nature and necessities of ordinary life, as well as in its infirmities and obliquities, will know how to value, above any artificial system or stimulating process of cultivation, a plan of less shew and apparatus:—he will know how to value the plain, antiquated, parental procedure of simply and scripturally teaching the heart-humbling truths of the blessed gospel, and the strong foundations of the sinner's hope.

Even in our Sunday Schools, excellent as is their constitution and design, religion may be taught very irreligiously; and it is so when blended with any secular teaching. It claims to stand alone—to be the solitary learning of a solemn consecrated day, whose grand proprietor will endure neither partnership nor competition.

Institutions for general education are means of

potent efficiency whichever way they bend. They may be neutralized, or rendered noxious, or turned to the soul's account according to the side on which their service is engaged. Unless the instruction of the poor in all its forms is pre-occupied and engrossed by our parochial clergy, it will be of equivocal tendency. It will be like a meteor whose luminous path appears among the lights of the firmament, but whose real place is in the region of mist and vapour. In the keeping of a sound evangelical pastor, whatever enlarges the bounds of man's understanding is made promotive of his real progression in godliness by a skill which those only possess with whom "the secret of the Lord is,"—who have "the spirit of love and of a sound mind." It behoves a minister of the gospel to be very jealous for the gospel; to take care that all the lessons which the poor receive may be under the pure dictation of its spirit. The province of instruction is within the active jurisdiction of him who has the cure of souls. If he suffers any school of charitable foundation which lies under his spiritual controul to be "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," he himself has never felt internally the deep imperative summons of his holy office.

This ambiguous teaching takes no permanent

hold of the mind. It leaves it an unappropriated territory ; and happy is that minister of the gospel who can annex it by occupancy to the dominion of his master. Happy that devoted servant of Christ, who lays hold courageously of every occasion of enlarging his blessed kingdom !—Happy that parish pastor who is prompt to apply and appropriate every instrument that can be made subservient to the spiritual good of his people ! It is in this charitable spirit of conquest that the church should strive to extend her bounds. But her opportunities, if unimproved, will multiply her dangers. When we look at the various institutions which have had their birth in this active and adventurous age, for extending the range of human intelligence, especially in the things of eternity, we see the need of a correspondent activity in our National Church to place her upon a par with this progression, and to satisfy the growing importunity of spiritual want.

By the diffusion of the word of truth, through the means and exertions of the Bible Society, a great portion of the people of this land has been taken out of a neutral state. Those who formerly cared little or nothing for creeds and communions, have begun to think them both of importance. The Bible has raised, and must continue to raise, a great proportion of the population from the

quality of ignorance, to a state of positive religion. In the various cases in which the Bible found them, had they been asked to what church they belonged, they might have answered, if the question happened to be understood by the Church of England, because there probably they were ministered, or married, and where the ceremony they expected to be buried. These also persons have been counted by the church, in a loose way of reckoning among the number of her people, a straggling portion of her flock indeed, but still bearing about them some badge of ownership, something to denote them to be not entirely free agents, unreclaimed and unregarded. These wanderers the Bible has overtaken—it has crossed their paths, and told them what they are and where they are. It has disposed them to become members of some congregation or community of worshippers. But all this creation of applicability and general power must be won over, as far as may be to the cause of formal discipline and order, or it will act with an irregular and unorganizing violence. This leading idea scripture sets—the general effect of the dispersion of the Bible—must be drawn also upon with our establishment, or it will be sure to smite under banners hostile to its prosperity. Not being resisted by the special efficiency of our own church.

it must be considered as a force acting upon it from without: which, if it provoke a strenuous reaction, may be greatly contributory to its safety.

§ VII.

When we superadd to all these extraneous influences which act with various effect upon the religious state of our country, and the well-being of our National Church, the avowed hostility of large bodies of separatists from its communion, we must admit its present condition to be one of difficulty and danger, and we naturally look around to find comfort in the consideration of its securities. We turn our eyes upon its venerable formularies, simple worship, pure creed, sound ordinances, and pastoral discipline; but all these, while they rest in the letter, are of no more avail to us than were the cedar and gold of the temple to the holy city when the Assyrian was at its gates. If we trust to the *union of the Church with the State*—an union founded in similarity of temperament and character, correspondence of principle, reciprocity of good offices, long companionship and close affinity, how painful is the discovery that these ties seem every day to be losing something of their sacredness, and to be almost as much a cause of irritation and obloquy as of respect and obedience! Do we look to the

antiquity of our church as casting on its grey battlements the awe of a prescriptive diuturnity? the charm is already vanishing at the touch of modern liberalism, and its monumental glory is fast fading away. If, perceiving these securities to fail, we turn ourselves to the durable *estate* of the church, not left to depend on a precarious benevolence, but, in the words of a great statesman, 'upon a provision identified with the mass of private property, and as stable as the earth on which it stands,' we perceive this support also to be gradually disappearing. The tithe of predial produce, which, from the nature of the hereditament, seemed to possess a character of sempiternity, and to be out of the reach of revolutionary confiscation, is found to be as weak a pledge of durability as the other supports to which reference has been made. From these failures and mutations the predicament in which our church establishment at this moment stands is that of being almost wholly thrown upon its *character*. It is a predicament full of alarm, which, if it affect us as it ought to do, must shake the bosom of every member, (and with how much stronger concussion that of every minister!) of its communion who has hitherto sat at his ease under its shade, beside the margin of its still waters.

It is by no means meant to be maintained that

the establishment of the church exists in its character. The abuses and corruptions of a church are no part of its establishment. Neither do ministers of the establishment *make* the establishment, although they may grievously *mar* it. It exists truly in its confession of faith digested and settled by wise and holy men, under the auspices and authority of the sovereign state—in its ordinances, sanctioned and confirmed by the same authority as being in accordance with the written testimony of God—and in its sound preparatives for the solemn celebration of divine worship, and the true edification of the people. In this view of our church, we have the assurance of its essential continuance. In its Articles, its Homilies, its Liturgy, its apostolical doctrines and spiritual prayers, it will, we trust, always be found subsisting, recorded, and recognized amidst all the accumulations and forms of error. But it is not the less important to consider that, to common observation, the institution of our church is embodied in its official agents, and is appreciated only by the use which is made of it in the hands to which it is committed.

The character of our Established Church must evidently sink into disesteem unless it keep pace with the general progression of mind in the country. It must brave the scrutiny of this inquisitive

era; and, while the authority of Scripture is admitted to be decisive, it must build only upon that foundation its title to the homage of a discerning people. In truth, all the offices, rites, and ceremonies of our Church suppose the spiritual progress of her children under a due pastoral care and holy teaching; and are so framed as to borrow fresh illustration and effect from every successive gradation in Christian attainment. This is the hypothesis on which her services proceed, from the sign of regeneration and the seal of the covenant of grace in the rite of baptism, to the last office which deposits in the clay out of which it was formed the empty tabernacle of flesh.

Under the provocation of these numerous and pressing calls, and with his ordination vows upon him, there can be no specimen of grosser insensibility than an indolent clergyman of the establishment. He who wears the livery and receives the wages of his Divine Master, yet makes little account of his duty, may bear at least to hear what that duty is. His duty is, not to perform with spiritless regularity, a stated service, not to deliver sermons of cold preceptive divinity, not to contend for immunities and exemptions, not to shut out intrusive zeal, not to censure an activity which it might be troublesome to imitate; but to "do the work of an evangelist," "to prepare the way of

the people," to "cast up the high way," not by mere stipulated or statute labour, but as one who laboureth for him "whose reward is with him, and his work before him," always regretting the little he can do, and deeming it impossible to do enough; remembering what has been done for him, and in the awful immensity of that obligation, to view the extent of his heavenly calling; in a word, to consider himself a trustee of human souls with a responsibility stretching through endless ages.

It behoves the Church of England to be a stirring church in these stirring times. It cannot rest on its claims to veneration. The wisdom of its founders and the blood of its martyrs are topics of defence that may be worn out. It is a capital so drawn upon as to be unequal to the increasing demand. All, at this time, is in movement, and there is much of irregular movement round and about the church—a movement which should put all its watchmen upon the alert. It is for the church a busy moment: a new æra has begun: a circulation has been given to the word of God unknown and unimagined before the opening of this century. Topics commensurate with immortality, touching the extremes of human happiness and misery, involving the loss and re-purchase of the soul, comprising the sentence of wrath, the covenant of mercy, "the means of grace, and hope

of glory," have found their way to intelligences hitherto impervious to all saving knowledge, or even to the dawnings of religious inquiry. The text is everywhere, and so must the teacher be: the Lord has "given the word," and "great" must be "the company of the preachers." Thus "an ensign shall be set up for the people," and they shall see in the Shulamite¹ the strength of the Mahanaim—a double camp of faithful soldiers.

But the stir without and within the church must be the stir of those that are valiant in prayer. The moment calls upon the faithful in this manner to evince their sincerity. Prayer for our country's spiritual health and wealth at this crisis is Christian patriotism. Why then in all the families gathered under the wing of our maternal church, is there not blended in the morning and evening worship, a supplication to the throne on high for the special healing of this disordered nation? would it not kindle a fresh blaze on the altar, and fill the air with the fragrance of the sacrifice?

But chiefly within the sanctuary let the voice of the primitive church be heard again importuning the throne above for the throne below, and the council gathered around it. Nor let the responses be muffled and suppressed, but rather let them

¹ Cant. vi. 13.

rise in mutiny against the tyranny of a heartless reserve. Happy the time, if ever that time arrive, when the language of general accord and fearless loyalty shall proclaim God in his own temple, and the chain of our liturgy be no longer dispersed in broken links by the refusal of the people to take their part in the series of a connected service.

It is better to be in storms than to be thus becalmed. The inanimate world around us declare the glory of God, though "they have neither speech nor language" yet "their voices are heard among them." The congregations of our national church *have* speech and language, but their voices are *not* heard among them. Their energies belong to the business, the pleasures, or the riot of the week. That must surely be an evil of some magnitude which destroys the integrity and constitution of our ritual, cutting down the beautiful liturgy of our church to a mere interlocution between the minister and his clerk. Prayer is the business as it is the life of the church, and if we bestow on her the endearing title of 'mother' it is because she breathes and speaks in her offices the spirit of love and the language of comfort.

§ VIII.

But the service of the church, to have its due effect, and to engage the sympathies of the con-

gregation, must have due utterance given to it. It asks with importunity for the voice and elocution of the minister. If in theological learning we must not report the clergy deficient (though perhaps, in this respect, their education may not be sufficiently specific) for the great and essential objects of enunciation, intonation, and a just and impressive delivery, their ordinary education makes no provision. It is the first business of a public teacher to be heard, and next, to be heard with attention. The loss of the church by organical deficiencies in her ministers, and a lame performance of her services is ill made up by the display of theological learning. It is on her daily workmen and her ordinary agents and interpreters that she must depend for her substantial influence, rather than on her critics, her scholars, and her apologists, important as they are to her honour and safety. With respect to these more mechanical requisites, dissent has perhaps some advantages over the church. Not that the ministers of dissenting communions are better models of correct reading than those of our own church, but where neither of two persons whose profession it is to instruct and persuade as ministers of the gospel possesses the talent of graceful elocution, he whose mistakes are most on the side of excess, will have the common mind most under his in-

fluence. To give a proper effect to the liturgy of our church, a minister must have his heart in the service; but every day's experience evinces the necessity of something beyond mere sincerity of feeling to hold it forth to the people in its majesty and beauty. A good ear and a good understanding must doubtless lie at the bottom of the attainment; but nothing but a due sense of its great importance can provoke the degree of effort necessary to the acquisition of a talent which can only be the fruit of assiduous cultivation. It is indeed most melancholy to see the liturgy of our church lying under the feet of one who is unconsciously treading upon pearls. How great was the effect produced by the delivery of the word of God in that memorable day when "they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading!" Upon which Matthew Henry observes, 'Let those that read and preach the word, learn also to deliver themselves distinctly, as those that understand what they say, and are affected with it themselves; and who desire that those they speak to may understand it, retain it, and be affected with it likewise.'

Such is the difficult and important duty which a clergyman has to perform with respect to that part of his momentous occupation—the utterance and conduct of the prayers of the church. His

ministry in the office of preacher, though it can hardly be esteemed more important, is still more arduous in its execution. We know that God can bring to pass all his will and good pleasure without the agency or instrumentality of any human being or thing; but if we may affirm any thing of his plans from the observable course of his proceedings, we may presume to say that he sees fit to deal *with* man *through* man; and to impress his truths, his lessons, and his commands more sensibly and emphatically on the minds of his rational creatures by making man himself the medium of his communication, as well as the recipient of his message. It is thus that he sends it with a swift circulation through all the vital channels of social intercourse. The message with which the ministers of the Most High are charged, is indeed one of infinite and ineffable importance; no less than a summons out of darkness into light, a vocation from misery to happiness, a proclamation of pardon with a clear statement of the conditions of the grant. This is the title and preamble of the message: but, as the scroll is developed, our predicament under the second dispensation lies extended before us. And what is this mysterious case in which we are placed? Is it not that the method of salvation promulged by the gospel is exclusive of every

other? And, if so, does it not follow that this only method must be kept by the minister always before the eyes of the people? Surely every proposition of his discourses, whether of doctrine or duty, must have reference to the will of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. All must stand and rest upon gospel reasons, gospel injunctions, and gospel rewards. The first and fundamental point to be insisted on is, that man is a criminal before his God. Until this truth is wrought into the conviction and conscience, nothing is done—no beginning is made in the work of edification. When this point is obtained, the rest follows. When men see themselves to be delinquents, and to deserve only punishment at the hand of God, they are prepared to comprehend the sequel of the argument:—that the justice of God, like his other attributes, is absolutely perfect, and incapable therefore of falling short of its accomplishment; that it must have satisfaction; and that to satisfy this perfect *justice* consistently with the full exercise of the counter attribute of *mercy*, and to give full scope to his mercy without detriment to his justice, thereby preserving the harmony of his divine character, He has by his wisdom and goodness instituted a method whereby not only the attributes of justice and mercy may be reconciled, but joined in operation—each of them being

carried out into the utmost plenitude of perfection, and made reciprocally the measure of each other.

Thus the key to the mystery of the gospel is the depravity and degradation of the natural man, lying in sin, and under the penalty of the broken law; whom to bring again within the operation of grace and pardon, required the stupendous sacrifice and ransom recorded in the gospel. And, admitting this truth, it is a perverse folly to suppose that any other way of redemption is open to man. Still however, this truth, which was to the Greeks foolishness, continues to be so to those who admit the great facts of Christianity, while they know nothing of its divine characteristics of grace and mercy, and the mysterious peculiarity of its method of reconciliation. To such persons it may and will appear foolishness; for to them it must present itself as a scheme of operose contrivance for an object very plain and direct. To overturn an absurd mythological system going to decay of itself, and to lay down new rules, however excellent, for the guidance of moral conduct, or to elevate the mind to higher and more spiritual objects, or to accomplish any other more general purpose of benefit or blessing to man, suggests no adequate cause for the marvellous and mysterious transaction of the suffering and death of the Son of God in the flesh. Now to

combat this carnal prejudice—to give the appropriate explication of this work of infinite love—to shew the necessity of a satisfaction, and the absolute inability of man to make it—to exhibit the restoration wrought by the satisfaction made, and the righteousness imputed to us through faith in its efficacy—to lead us to the contemplation of the unapproachable holiness of the divine character, attributes, and laws—and to display the deity and offices of the Holy Spirit in His regenerating and sanctifying power, together with the virtues flowing from His operation on the heart and life—these are the ends and aims which form the true design of preaching, the proper subjects of our daily supplications, and the common ground of communion and sympathy between pastors and their flocks. When the pious minister sees the awful enumeration of his duties and difficulties extended before him, and is conscious that he can “do nothing of himself to help *himself*,” much less to help *others*; and that his preaching, however splendid, cannot be operative unless God works with him; he feels his own to be a special case for prayer—prayer excited and impelled by the deep conviction of the utter fruitlessness of all attempts to gain for gospel truths an entrance into the bosom, unless he brings a warrant from the Holy Ghost.

Deity dying in the flesh as the commutation for man's eternal punishment—Oh, how great a mystery! Only to be brought into proportion with its object, by unfolding sin in all its dimensions: deep as hell, high as heaven; covering with its breadth the circuit of the world, and stretching its line through all its successive generations. But to carry the sense of this depravity home to its seat in the bosom, is the great difficulty; and yet, unless this be done, the first stone of Christian edification cannot be laid. It is for want of this bottom, that so many fair and specious edifices are unstable and vacillating. Their foundations are too shallow. They are in their proper place amongst the palaces of the worms. “Thy pomp is brought down to the ground, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee and the worms cover thee.”

How difficult, and near to impossibility, is it to get men to measure themselves by the standard of the gospel! Blessed indeed is that ministry by which this has, in any degree, been brought about among those who are under it. We cling to the folly of “measuring ourselves by ourselves,” and in so doing, we put ourselves in a state of revolt from the sovereign of the universe, who has declared “his ways” to be “not as our ways,” and has pronounced his will, and published his charter

authoritatively and plainly. This propensity to settle a rule for ourselves in deciding the moral quality of actions independently of Scripture, and the immutable rescripts of our great judge and legislator, manifests itself throughout all the grades and classes of society. Its branching influence casts an unholy shade between the creator and the creature, deeper and darker as moral character descends; but hiding, more or less, from the view of the best and wisest among the moral, and even religious, the pure irradiation of divine goodness.

This fatal security is exemplified in desperate forms of resistance to the humbling requisitions of the gospel, whithersoever we turn our regards. All humanity reels under the intoxicating delusion. Because we walk erect among our own species, we trust we can walk upright before God. The fallacious rule by which we thus take the measure of ourselves speaks "peace where there is no peace," and reconciles man to his ruin. Even among the outcasts of society, this deceptious measurement of ourselves with ourselves, affords the same treacherous solace—a scale of value where no value is. The world which is at enmity with God, and no better, with respect to him, than a band of transgressors against his government, violators of his laws, and contemners of his authority, set up among themselves stand-

ards of worth and character, founded on reciprocities of service or benevolence to each other, with little or no regard to Him who is the source of all good, working what is good in their own eyes for the sake of themselves, and founding upon these interchanges of benefit high claims to excellence, independently of that which alone infuses goodness into any action—the devotedness of the heart to God in doing it, and the derivation of its motive from pure allegiance to his holy will.

Now the character above drawn is applicable to the great mass of nominal Christians, and men of virtue in the common estimation of their fellows. And it is applicable also to a very large class who have a show of piety, recommended by an elegance and pathos by which the world is deluded and misled. They frame to themselves an image of an indulgent deity overlooking, out of pure consideration for our infirmities, our violations of his holy will. They have a theism of their own making. Under an illusory representation of a God, whom they crown with an unscriptural mercy, they proceed with much allowance for others, and much complacency with themselves, to dress up a sentimental creed: expatiating largely upon the advantage of a cheerful religion, and devout feelings, founded on principles of nature, and confirmed by the testimony of the

heart. They not only measure themselves by themselves, but by themselves also, and their own standard of goodness, they measure the attributes of God. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

What makes the dealing with this large description of aliens from the Gospel so difficult, is this: that they have a great deal to say for themselves. Profligate men and gross sinners have no defence to bring forward; but these have the wisdom of this world on their side. The decent philosopher and the sober infidel have often at their command the resources of secular learning, and the provinces of genius and fancy. Still, however, the faithful minister may safely go forth against all these apparent advantages. But he must carry the Gospel with him. His battle-cry must be, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" and an invisible weapon, furnished from heaven's arsenal, will make it of little comparative importance what may be the amount of his human means. He must keep close by the side of Scripture; and the Captain of our salvation, who has "trodden the wine-press alone, and who has the stains of victory on his raiment," will be with him in the conflict. The more subtle and plausible the arguments of the world, the more exact and correct must be

his exhibition of the Gospel, that the opposition between the two systems may be nakedly apparent. His single resource is the preaching of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, and the teaching through Him and Him crucified, of every truth and precept, doctrinal and practical, however modified or applied, in expansion or in detail.

Notwithstanding this necessary circumscription within the bounds of the blessed Gospel, the spiritual minister will find his "feet set in a large room." The Gospel is no contracted space. Christ Himself has shewed how various and specific are its bearings on all the relations of life. Though all the lines must radiate from a common centre, the circumference is co-extensive with the utmost range of charity and duty. There must, nevertheless, in all evangelical preaching, be an unity of design, a leading subject of attention, a prevailing tenor in every discourse from the lips of a faithful minister; otherwise the salt will lose its proper savour. The motive, the means, the purpose, the crown of every argument, threat, promise, and persuasion, must be—Christ Jesus our Lord, His blood, His expiation, His righteousness, made ours by faith, which is the product of grace, and the spring of holiness. Now when all this is made properly to bear upon the false estimate of ourselves to which allusion has above been made,

and brought into correct contrast with our natural delinquency and the salutary terrors of an uncompromising law, stout indeed must be the heart of him who can, under the perpetual pressure of these topics, continue to take into his own hands the adjustment of his claims to pardon or reward, independently of the revealed method of grace and salvation; or who can, with greater hardiness, presume to settle the balance of Divine mercy and justice, by bringing both to a measure below perfection; or who, with greater hardiness still, by his own arbitrary scale of measurement, can bring himself within the grade of an accepted sinner, by comparing himself with a lower rate of character; or take comfort from the consideration of the average character of those by whom he is surrounded, and in whose general worth he shares.

When, by the holy art of the preacher and the pure administration of the Word, a proselyte is made from these idols to the God of the Scriptures, a new life is opened to the soul, and a new scenery is spread out before the chastened imagination: the world's homage and its arbitrary standards, the shrines of human praise, and the columns raised to virtue irrespective of the will of Jehovah,—all that intercepts His glory, or pretends to a partnership with Him in goodness, falls to the ground. “The day of the Lord of

Hosts is upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan and upon all high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of man is made low." A vista is thus opened into eternity; and the "holy mountain," where God has "made Himself an everlasting name," where "righteousness goeth forth as brightness, and salvation as a lamp that burneth,"—bursts upon the view.

The privilege with which our Church invests its ministers of addressing the people twice on every Lord's day from the pulpit, carries with it a great weight of responsibility. It gives them an extensive jurisdiction over mind and character, and makes them the stewards and dispensers of inestimable treasures. According as the power is used or abused, it conveys or intercepts the best gifts of God to man. If rightly and profitably exercised, it may be efficacious in promoting and securing the spiritual and moral health of the country. Nor is it easy to imagine, while our ecclesiastical constitution lasts, a declension of the mind and spirit of the nation, without a deficiency of strength or will in the clergy to avail themselves

of their advantages and opportunities. If error, schism, and dissent are fearfully extending themselves, it well behoves the ministers of our Establishment to consider such a posture of the Church as calling upon them to question themselves seriously concerning the following particulars:—Whether, in their discourses from the pulpit, they have kept sufficiently close to the record in the matter and the spirit of their teaching; always presenting the plan of the Gospel in its integrity, without allowing any single doctrine, especially of the more speculative kind, to stand out in undue proportion and relief; whether they have been sufficiently careful to avoid all over-statements or unqualified propositions, either for the sake of rhetorical effect, or for the sake of giving an exaggerated importance to a favourite tenet; whether their instructions have been drawn purely from Holy Writ, without any admixture of traditional dogmas or the insulated positions of human authority; whether the sinner's way to Christ, and the willingness and sufficiency of the Saviour, have been made very plain and attractive to their hearers, and set forth in all the fulness and sweetness and freeness of the Gospel invitation, without suffering it to be forgotten that to rest in sin is the ruin of the soul; whether instant resort to Christ, without waiting for self-preparation, but

with tearful and prayerful contrition have been enough insisted upon; whether, where the happiness of heaven has been the theme, a constant reference to Christ as the way thither has imparted substance and reality to the vision; whether the doctrine of salvation by Christ has been, with sufficient constancy, coupled in statement with the defilement, power, and forfeiture of sin; whether union with Christ has been duly contrasted with worldliness of spirit; whether our sins imputed to the Saviour, and the Saviour's righteousness imputed to the sinner, have been set forth as the sum, substance, and compendium of the mysterious scheme of our redemption; whether the office of the Holy Spirit, and His whole work in regenerating, sanctifying, succouring, solacing, and strengthening the inward man, and especially in revealing Christ to the heart of a sinner till the edifice of faith, hope, and divine love has been built up and established within him, has had due and distinct consideration; whether principles, duties, and motives have been defined, compared, and described as they ought to be in the exhibition of Christian practice; whether in their discourses they have, by applicatory, special, and searching appeals to individual cases, and the secret convictions of conscience, brought the religion of the Gospel sufficiently close to the hearts

of their hearers. All these inquiries, in this hour of spiritual vacillation, the ministers of the Establishment are strongly invited to put seriously and impartially to their own hearts, as they hope to pass their accounts at the great day of reckoning. The heart of man is very prone to curiosity and wonder; but he passes over the greatest of all wonders, his own insensibility to the awful predicament in which he stands. Is it not wonderful that, notwithstanding the powerful means of impression and persuasion with which the ministers of the Gospel are furnished, and the warnings and arguments which every passing day bears along with it; notwithstanding the long retinue of pain, bereavement, disappointment, anguish, sorrow, and death which come in the train of almost all our movements and arrangements; that, notwithstanding all this, the oracles of God concerning us, and the eternity into which we are so quickly passing, neither attract nor terrify, nor in any manner influence the far greater part of us! Yet so it is. Pass through our parishes on the day set apart by the ordinances of God and man for the worship of the great Creator, and observe how little of the holy commandment is legible in the countenance, the talk, and walk, of professing Christians, and what an utter unconsciousness of the claims of the day prevails among the vast and vain majority.

Now if all this may be explained by referring it to the enmity of the carnal mind, still that the carnal mind should continue so unamenable to the preacher's faculty, with all the advantages and opportunities that favour him, and with God's blessing promised to faithful ministrations, remains to be accounted for. It is a fact which forces the mind upon doubting whether there may not be in the general character of pulpit discourses some prevailing defect which hinders their efficacy. It is a difficult and perhaps a delicate subject; and certainly one upon which it is becoming to speak with much self-distrust; but it has sometimes occurred to the writer of these pages that one at least of the obstructions to the success of preaching is an unseemly effort to acquire fame by discourses distinguished by their eloquence. The periodical publication of sermons as examples of fine composition, exhibited for the sake of entertainment or imitation, has created an excitement ensnaring to the clergy of the establishment, and a most ungodly perversion of the proper end and aim of preaching. The people also are spoiled for recipients of instruction. They are taught to consider themselves as arbiters in a literary contest rather than as scholars and catechumens, whose place it is to listen to instructors and interpreters. Pulpit eloquence is not a phrase of correct sound in the

ear of a real Christian. The only ambition proper for a preacher is to make the words of inspiration shine and burn through his own simple and transparent elocution. It is honour enough to wait upon the Gospel, and to be the medium of transmitting its sacred effulgence.

It is no exaggerated statement to say that the greater number of the discourses preached to the people of this land on every Lord's day in our churches are not understood by more than one fourth of the hearers assembled. It is indeed a great refinement of skill to reduce a subject of the highest dignity within the compass of a plain intelligence, without subtracting from its just elevation; but if to save the substance a sacrifice must be made in the mode of conveying it, necessity must decide the judgment; as where a life may be saved by swimming, the mariner hesitates not to cast his garments into the sea. But a compromise like this is seldom required in dealing with this great subject; for those who have sounded the secrets of a language well know that the commonest phraseology may under skilful management afford materials for new and happy combinations. It has been observed of Athanasius, that in his discourses he was every where clear, succinct, and simple; but nevertheless penetrating and lofty. In truth, the two fundamental objects of arresting

the attention and informing the intellect are of necessity inseparable. Admiration may be purchased at the cheap expence of sounding syllables and polished periods, but the heart is only to be won through the understanding by thoughts that flow from unsophisticated springs, taking no foreign tinge from the medium through which they pass—the offspring of godly emotion in the dress of artless expression. The younger ministers will perhaps excuse the remark that sermons often suffer detriment from excess of ornament. Divine topics will not bear to be ambitiously treated; they perish by too much human handling. They are plants brought from a far country, which flourish most in their native mould. Man's curiosity and intermeddling often intercept their grand and simple impression. As long as we are true to Scripture, it matters not what becomes of system. The practical excellence of the minister is to enunciate the great verities of religion distinctly, yet loosely, as they lie in Scripture; to exhibit them in company with each other, without attempting to coerce them into agreement;—which is God's, and not man's business.

Not only is plainness of language, sentiment, and exposition necessary to profitable preaching, but plainness also in the subject. Topics very proper for discussion in proper places and on

proper occasions, may be unsuitable to the pulpit. Criticism, suggestions of improvement of our translation, metaphysical discussions, learned doubts and cavils, are always unprofitable, sometimes dangerous, in discourses before congregations where the greater part are illiterate, or little advanced in Scriptural knowledge. They may be proper subjects for private communication, and sometimes for domestic instruction, but can never be trusted abroad. Their tendency is to engender "strifes of words" and vain disputations, and to scatter equivocal seeds to be blown about by every wind till they settle on congenial soils, and vegetate with unwholesome luxuriance.

It is truly affirmed to be the duty of a minister of the Gospel to preach the whole counsel of God; but there is danger in understanding the proposition in too wide a sense. As far as the counsel of God is clearly revealed in Scripture, it must undergo no defalcation in its passage through the preacher's lips. But beyond what is clearly revealed, we are not admitted to the mind and counsel of God. The proposition which assumes any article of belief beyond this, is to be considered as based on human authority. There are points of speculative difficulty which may be said to be intimated rather than declared in Holy Writ; respecting which much controversy

is abroad; and which are accepted and understood differently by different persons, and with various degrees of latitude and limitation. It is spiritual prudence to leave these in their sacred repository, rather than to shape them into dogmas, or to bring them forward before the multitude to exercise and inflame contention, and to lead off the mind from the plain and urgent truths which should be bound up in the belief of the humble Christian, and regulate his life and conversation.

The pure well-spring of God's everlasting decrees lies in the deep recesses of uncommunicated wisdom, there to be visited, if visited they must be, with prostrate and adoring awe; but let it not be drawn from for popular use to cause the common channels of instruction to overflow their margins, and pour their excess upon the saturated soil. Happy it is for the welfare of souls that what are to many minds propositions of difficult digestion, are not necessarily connected with the reception of those truths which are essential to the believer's hope, comfort, and assurance. They may neither involve the terms of our salvation, nor supply any new motives to the love of God, or to the practice of Christian duties.

That seems to be the best preaching which best acquaints us with our diseases and their proper remedies;—which first puts the corruption of our

nature full in our sight, and then directs our eyes to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;"—which makes our faith in him and him crucified our justification whereby we have peace with God;—which helps forward the commerce of the believer's soul with the Sanctifier and Comforter; and which dissipates every dependence, but a dependence on the Cross of Christ.

Though all teaching from the pulpit should be plain, it must not be plain by keeping from view the mysteries of our redemption. It must not be plain by representing the Saviour's only or chief design, in taking upon himself our form and flesh, to have been the introduction of a purer code of morals; neither must it be plain by inculcating morality independently of the principle of Christian obedience, and the love of God in the soul; but plain by a simple adherence to Scripture divinity distinctly revealed, and by the adoption of a pure and unpretending diction, such as the homilies of our church have so well exemplified: plain, by making the Bible its own expositor as far as may be, by means of its parallelism with itself, and the analogy of its texts, and by pointedly applying its contents so as to make it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness." Plainness in this sense and acceptance, is the hinge on which the

success of the preacher turns, where the ordinary mind is brought under his instruction.

But if plainness is necessary in discourses from the pulpit on the Lord's day, it is still more necessary to the useful effect of the week-day's lecture. It has often occurred to the writer of these pages, that if those lectures condescended more than is usually the case, to the proficiency and capacities of the audience assembled to hear them, they would probably bear more abundant fruit. The week-day's lecture is a most important feature of pastoral ministration. But there is a notable deficiency in the conduct of it. It is too detached from that general train and consecutive order which are so agreeable to the spirit and character of our church-services. It is not enough considered as part and parcel of a system of exposition and instruction. By these lectures the fasts and festivals, and other holy seasons of special commemoration appointed by our church, lying under practical neglect, might be substantially recognised, and converted into new means of grace and spiritual edification. Perhaps, too, nothing would tend more directly and effectually to render the Lord's day service a progressive step in the Christian walk, than the dedication by the parochial minister of one morning or evening in every week to a preparatory lecture on

the Lessons and Psalms of the ensuing Sunday. If any human means can avail to give the congregation an interest in these parts of the service, the practice here recommended appears to be excellently adapted to promote that most desirable object. Who that delights in the sympathy of worship, has not, with much sadness of feeling, observed, as he casts a look around during the recitation of the Psalms, while the lips of the less instructed part of the assembly have been moving in decent conformity to the rubric, the vacant look, the vagrant eye, the attention divided among the crowd, not knowing where to rest ; there being in truth, no points of contact between these holy compositions, and the minds of the persons engaged in the recitation of them. And yet in this beautiful portion of the sacred volume is contained, partly within, and partly without its mystic veil, the moral of life, the mystery of redeeming grace, the spiritual history of the world, the travel of Jehovah through the wonders of his creation, perfect lessons of wisdom, breathing sentiments of divine love, reflections full of experience on the vanity of human cares and human counsels, all that can alarm the wicked, revive the penitent, console the afflicted, and confirm the faithful. Sometimes, from within the shell of the holy minstrel, oracular sounds attract the ear ; sometimes beneath the

shining surface of its poetical beauties, we catch a glance into the recesses of its sacred interior; sometimes, by sudden transition from earthly to heavenly things, we are carried to the border of the invisible world, following the footsteps of the Messiah, and the dawning anticipations of the gospel. Surely such things as these are proper subjects of special teaching, and call loudly for the catechist and the weekly lecturer. In other parts of the sacred record, the subject is usually completed, and the sense single and entire. But if we read the Psalms without a view to their double sense and expectant accomplishment, we cannot be said to understand them as we ought. Nor is it forgotten, in this recommendation, that, in carrying it into exercise, caution is necessary. Evil is every where. Human infirmity accompanies human agency in its best things. Spiritual refinement is one thing, and spiritual discernment another. When we pursue parallels between earthly and heavenly things with the zeal which is apt to accompany such discoveries, we are sometimes led on to a littleness and fancifulness of detail unsuited to the majesty of Scriptural truths.

If sermons should particularize, in order to reach and affect the heart and conscience, it seems to follow that a minister should preach his own. The matter of this applicatory style of preaching

should come from the observation, fresh and local, of passing events and existing characters, having the raciness of the hour, and the bloom of unborrowed thoughts; nor does it seem to go beyond the exigence to affirm that he who is incapable of composing a sermon answering the occasions as they arise, has mistaken his proper destination in entering into the service of the church. It might not be for the benefit of the church, to put every actual minister under the necessity of making his own sermons; but it might be well for the church and its sacred cause, if the incapacity of so doing were to operate as a barrier to future ordinations.

General discourses, which touch principles and manners in many points, press with an equable bearing, and unfelt impression. They distribute their weight so as to press nowhere. The individual escapes in the crowd, and in the effort of a corporate resistance, avoids all personal exposure. But this is not as it should be. The individual should feel the preacher's hand; not in the touch of personal contact, but in the discomposure, if not the laceration, of that subtile web which the sophistry of egotism has spun around him. His particular, if not his individual case, should be laid bare to his own cognizance and silent conviction. He should feel himself, in his own view of his own character, sequestered and set apart, to

abide the trial of a solemn intro-spection. In the solitude of his separate accountability, he must be compelled to enter into controversy with himself. He must be driven to face the storm of his guilty recollections, and that too without any hope but in the single resource of a lost sinner. Thus it is the proper business of the preacher who is true to his great undertaking, to make each man *think* of himself, according to what he *knows* of himself; and to give him, in that knowledge of his sinful self, the true dimensions of his Saviour's love.

The above seem to be the great ends of a gospel ministry, and to promote those ends no human collateral means appear to be more conducive than frequent periodical meetings among the zealous clergy of the Establishment, to confer and resolve upon the course most expedient to be pursued in carrying on the work of their common ministry. By communicating the results of their several experiences, and ascertaining the comparative magnitudes of prevailing vices in their respective parishes and neighbourhoods, a combination of effort may be directed towards this or that quarter, where hostility to the cause of vital religion is principally gathering its strength; that so the glory of the Redeemer, and the extension of his kingdom, may be efficaciously forwarded.

But although the most effectual use of the

preacher's privilege is to make very near approaches to the individual bosom by displaying before the consciences of men their own likenesses, a more general exhibition of our duties towards God and man, with large and abstract expositions of the qualities, motives, and consequences of human actions, constitutes a very material part of the business of the evangelical preacher. We have said the more of his doctrinal province (although we have chiefly, in this Essay, objects of practical reform in contemplation) from the strong assurance which we feel, that no sermon can be profitable or safe, wherein the Saviour, either in his character, his cross, or his glory, is not kept prominently in view, and wherein every thing relating to him is not immediately borrowed from Holy Scripture unwarped by the traditions or pretensions of fallible human interpreters.

In this general exaction of duties, moderation, in the best sense of that term, and a kind of spiritual policy should characterize the zeal of the preacher. The serious call which our Christian profession makes upon us must be fearlessly and faithfully enforced; but the character of our religion need not, and ought not to be brought into conflict and collision with the cheerfulness of life in all its forms, without regard to seasons or circumstances; nor should gaiety, simply as gaiety,

be put under the ban of an austere and inflexible interdict. When this is done the heart droops; the resolution falters; a gloom overspreads the temper and deportment; heaven appears to frown upon human happiness and to delight in the sorrow of the creature. By thus dealing with the subject, religion is wronged, and the heart estranged from its charities and comforts. Christ's religion is a religion of love. If we are made sensible of the sanctity and serenity which it is its tendency to introduce into our duties and employments, correcting and purifying all the purposes and propensities of the heart, shaping all our delights so as to point them to God and eternity, making sensuality distasteful, multiplying innocent joys, facilitating self-conquest, attenuating care, disarming disappointment, and taking out the sting of our daily vexations, we are then on a principle of calculation convinced how greatly we are gainers every way by following Christ, and forsaking what he forbids. It is then that we understand his saying "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." To take the Christian by the hand and lead him, by the lamp of the gospel, through the labyrinths of life and its multiform duties and relations, so often perplexing to the conscience; to shew him the method whereby his sacred obligations are to be reconciled with his worldly business and social

duties ; to teach him to bring religion home to his hearth and his bosom, and make it speak out in his ordinary deportment, is that task of the Christian instructor, in which he experiences the greatest difficulty, the severest conflict, and the sweetest reward.

§ IX.

When the mind of the Christian philanthropist expatiates among the fields and prospects of religious privileges and pleasures, the eye turns naturally towards the spires and towers of our national church with affection and veneration. It is in the arms of this venerable mother that all the opportunities, means, and advantages which have been above discoursed upon, are folded, cherished, and for the present, secured. If the day is to arrive when she must surrender them, where then is the system or communion upon earth which can give them entertainment or effect. The winds that blow where they list will scatter them abroad—the sport of every blast of vain doctrine—tossed to and fro in the vortices of the voluntary tumult. Take away a regular and independent church ministry and you take away the very life and purpose of preaching. When the people choose their instructors, the instructor must receive instruction, and give it back to the source of its emanation with the circularity of a garden-fountain. The system in-

volves an absurdity, if system it can be called, and not rather an 'arrangement for general confusion.'

Thus has our argument brought us to the vestibule of the sanctuary,—its "beautiful gate," and its pillars of brass on the right hand and on the left—the 'Jachin' and the 'Boaz' of our temple. Before these it is hardly possible to stand without a sentiment of awe. The constitutional establishment of our church is, at this hour, a spectacle of extraordinary interest. When we look back through our history to the date of its commencement, its coincidence with the birth of our constitutional liberties, and its agency in the developement of the national spirit, character, and greatness, it is at once surprising and humbling to observe the weak hold of these arguments against the fickleness, conceit, and ambition which adhere to our nature, and defy all the lessons of experience. The church is menaced, though every principle of permanence which human intelligence could devise has entered into its composition ;—incorporated with the state ; fixed into the soil ; wrought into the frame and substance of our laws ; majestic in its aspect ; mild in its ordinances ; spiritual in its offices ; sober in its zeal ; sound and circumspect in its doctrines ; in stature, stability, and beauty, pre-eminent among the congregations of the devout upon earth.

This church, the nurse of conservative prudence, and the meet companion of good government, is, in this favoured country, in strict union with the secular polity. "Our church is Protestant; our state is Protestant; our government is Protestant in all its parts." They have the same spirit; the same counsel; the same fear. They have had the same beginning, and will have the same end. They have been "lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they will not be divided." Their union does not stand on a principle of mercenary dependence, official decorum, or political expediency; but on an identicalness of views, and a deep-seated correspondence of character, temper and habit. Looking no further than to the visible agency of man, we may presume to say that the features of liberty, their common parent, mark and identify their origin. The contract of their solemn partnership has the seal of nature and of truth.

Where are we to look for the principle of this connexion between church and state? Is it not in the nature of the individual man? Is not religion the founder of his character—the source of his actions, habits, and impressions? And is he not a compound being related to two worlds? And are his affairs ever rightly managed here without respect to an hereafter? Can he be safely left,

without a formulary of faith or worship, to himself and his mis-directed reason? Man, the solitary, the social, or the political man—man in his individual, his aggregate, or his corporate capacity, can neither be understood nor estimated in separation from religion. The union of his moral and political, with his religious state, is so far from being the result of human contrivance, that no human contrivance can make it otherwise than it is. We do not say that there may not be a state without a state-religion; but we contend that, in such a case, the propensities of the heart towards religion, being excluded from their due working in such a system, the laws are without their proper force, society without its proper cement, the government without its proper support; and discord, discontent, and dismemberment must be the speedy consequence, unless something peculiar in the circumstances of such a people should be strong enough to take off the pressure from its internal springs, and give its energies a determination to exterior objects.

“Religion and its fruits,” says Hooker, “cannot be planted without a spiritual ministry, nor grow of its own accord.” But a spiritual ministry must be a body of persons separated from the cares and concerns of the world, and devoted to the study of divine wisdom, and the dissemination of Chris-

tian truth; and it is difficult to conceive how such can be maintained but by a provision made for them independently of secular labour, and in pure recompence of their religious duties; or how the dignity, efficiency, learning, and freedom of such an order of persons can be made to flourish under an elective, popular, and eleemosynary system.

That there is a necessity for an outward, visible church in every political community, with its established ordinances, doctrines, and discipline, to uphold the uniform exercise of social worship, a correspondence of religious principle, and a standard of moral opinion, is a truth which has its testimony in every man's bosom, and is confirmed by the voice of all antiquity. The religions of the heathen world were religions of rites and ceremonies in which there was little or nothing of a dogmatic theology. They freely allowed an intercommunity of worship to the gods of other nations, so long as the established divinities were not denied by those who claimed this adoption and allowance for their own. Still the local, national, and tutelary deities of the heathens were held entitled to the honours of state worship; which worship was protected by the magistrate, and formed the established religion of each commonwealth. If then for the creeds and forms of a false system, religious orders and a privileged

priesthood were established, shall not *we*, the disciples of a perfect teacher, uphold the ministry of his saving truths, to hand down the mysteries "once delivered to the saints," and to preserve the records of that dispensation, and the treasures of that grace whereby "we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life?"

If in their general application these arguments are good, surely in the case of our own church they lose none of their weight. It calls upon us for our fostering care. As well as our civil constitution, it is the acquisition of long struggle and heroic sacrifice. It is a glorious Christian conquest for which good, wise, and faithful men have been profuse of their blood. It is the prize, the greatest in human annals, of meek courage, and intrepid moderation.

A conquest so gained is worth preserving. And this can only be done by faithful watchmen well selected for the duty and prepared for its defence by "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." Still, blessed be the church's true Patron, it has been brought down, on the surface of a troubled stream to the times in which we live, with all its creeds doctrines, and ordinances entire. Still the majority of believers in the gospel agree in the importance of a common worship, without which a church would be a jum-

ble of conflicting creeds and discordant liturgies. Still they agree that an establishment implies community of worship, and community of worship an uniformity of belief, at least in fundamental points; and that to preserve this uniformity of belief, the teachers must be of the same household of faith. They agree that the church must have an adequate provision for the maintenance of its ministers: that, if they are precluded from following other professions or businesses, their own ought, in justice, to yield them a support. And perhaps, as yet, a majority may agree that such support ought to be permanent and certain; that if the duties of the clerical office were left to depend upon voluntary remuneration, the manner of the performance would soon correspond with such an irregular impulse; and that, amidst the disorders that would ensue from such a venal, precarious, and degrading system, the Church of Christ would be a prey to disorders of every kind, and covered with spots and wrinkles.

§ X.

But the greatest efforts are, at this moment, in operation to reduce this numerical majority, and turn the scale against the Church of England. The Church is menaced on all sides; it is menaced from without and from within.

It is *menaced* by her old enemy, who, rising from defeat and discomfiture, is taking her full advantage from the mutability of the human mind, which never long 'continues in one stay,' but which, after a long secure enjoyment of the truth, (it matters not *what* truth,) must have novelty at any cost,—with truth, if it may be, but, if not, novelty with error. The superstitions and idolatries of Papal Rome have come round again upon this wheel of restless change. She presents herself again, rendered wiser by experience—no longer with the terrors of the Inquisition on her brow, but with a placid mien. She lays aside, for the present, her more offensive tenets, and seeks to bring back her children by the language of affection and charity. She comes with the symbols of her pride and sounding titles, but without her excommunicating edicts, her penances, her tortures, or her fires. She comes attended with solemn music, and all that gives attraction to an imposing ceremonial. She claims to be acquitted of the charge of persecution, on the strength of her liberal association with all anomalies in religion—with all but the Church of England, with whom she has a quarrel not to be made up but by exchanging places.

It has long been the habit of persons of reputed wisdom to deem lightly of this menace of the

Church of Rome; but the melancholy fact has been geographically proclaimed through the land. It is echoed from chapel to chapel, from district to district, that the Roman Church is recovering her ancient domain. The shade of her apostasy, which overcasts her new acquisitions, marks them as hers on our country's map. The dark spots are spreading over the land with terrifying progress. Nor does she lack encouragement from quarters where the disposition to favour her was least to be expected. Out of the bosom of our own Establishment, and out of the midst of our academic bowers, have men arisen speaking the same "perverse things," the same "great swelling words of vanity."

The Church of our nation is further *menaced* by a confederacy of heterogeneous sects, who have forgotten their mutual differences in the league they have formed against the National Establishment. Animosity, exasperated by the security of that which it seeks to destroy, is apt to defeat itself by its excess, and to suffer seriously from its own recoil. So the menaces from this quarter may, by Him who alone knows how to educe good from evil, be made to redound to the general benefit of religion. They may inculcate caution where they designed to fix reproach, and their mischief may expire in their shame. "Surely

the wrath of man shall praise Thee. The remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.”

Those who differ from our Church on essential points are consistent in their hostility; but the orthodox portion of those who refuse her communion would be acting with a tenderness towards their own souls, would they but carefully for once examine themselves concerning the grounds of their separation, in order to discover how much of their dissent is the product of a pure conscience, and what proportion had its source in contradictoriness, egotism, and a sectarian spirit. Whatever may be their motive, the conduct becoming the Church is clear. She prays, in her Litany, that God will ‘forgive her enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts.’ Let her act in the spirit of that prayer; above all things, abstaining from vituperative language, and the low, uncharitable practice of calling names. It is the tendency of this practice to mingle together characters and classes of very different colours and descriptions. Our Church is never more unjust to herself than when she commits her cause to men who quarrel with whatever exceeds the temperature of their own piety—to men who see nothing in zeal but enthusiasm, and in labour nothing but intermeddling and excess. These are the persons most apt to call names, and confound distinctions

plainly apprehended by good sense and common honesty.

Our church is *menaced* by those whose direct undisguised endeavour it is to divorce her from the state, and then to take advantage from her unprotected condition to destroy her worship, her ordinances, and the whole structure of her pure and holy ritual. This confederacy against her has, in the midst of all our institutions of religious philanthropy, spread its influence over the land. On the same floor where the settlement of the constitution on its protestant basis seemed to have eternized the union of church and state, the principle has been coldly and drily discussed. Nor can we wonder that this infidel strength should be numerically great, swelled, as it needs must be, by continual accessions from the godless and lawless part of the population. "They have consulted together with one consent, and are confederate against thee; the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them, they have holpen the children of Lot." Against these and such as these, the church has no resource but in the faithful use of her internal means, expanded by a re-action proportioned to the pressure from without, carrying with her this

consolation, that a league against her so anomalously composed bears a testimony the most unequivocal to her character and worth.

Again, the church is *menaced* by those within her pale, who are for pushing her claims beyond legitimate and sober bounds; who bring her too near in her pretensions to that apostate church which interposes its spiritual sovereignty between God's word and God's people; which assumes a power collateral to the holy record, whereby it is made of none effect by traditions, or of what effect it chooses by authoritative interpretations. There are among her sons those who, with unnatural effort, appear to be desirous of removing her from her Scriptural basis. They would fain invert the order and destroy the proportion between human and divine things. They would disfigure that authentic succession, which is the ornament of our church, by engrafting upon it the pretensions of a dark, superstitious, and corrupt communion.

And, on the other hand, she is *menaced* by a latitudinarian spirit which deems but lightly of her discipline, and those instituted forms and regulations which compose the system of her ecclesiastical government; lightly too of her derivative authority delivered down, by the successive imposition of hands,—the symbol of her rule and ordination. Between these opposite perils it is cheer-

fully hoped she will be guided by the same spirit of moderation with which, by God's especial grace, her course was shaped in the outset of her career, amidst contumely, calumny, and conflicting extremes.

'Thou Framer of the light and dark
Steer through the tempest thine own ark :
Amidst the howling wintry sea
We are in port if we have thee.'

The church is *menaced* by the scantiness of her room and accommodation, very inadequate still to the growing wants of the nation. To meet even the existing exigence, and much more to profit by the present stir of intelligence, the area of the Gospel had need to be doubled. We are extending our spiritual commerce over the world, while the emporium of our faith is comparatively contracted, and the number of effective labourers are insufficient for the multifarious work. If our national church is to be fed and nourished by the present system of national education, it must be commensurate with it in extent. Otherwise, when education has done its work, and prepared a member of that church to receive the benefit of her ordinances, he finds his entrance within her walls virtually interdicted. He may be told that in another quarter of a century there will be accommodation for him; but is his piety to be in abeyance till the promised period shall arrive? All

this is only to mock the understanding and to trifle with the soul. If the great numerical majority now shut out of the church should, by the force of a diffused education, become a moral majority, the national church will in vain insist upon her pure and holy ritual, and her sound and Scriptural doctrines. She will encounter every where a chilling apathy and an alienated mind. A Christian government, if ours be such, must prove its title to that appellation and distinction by making a further provision for this great and transcendent exigence. It should give itself no rest until it finds out places for the temples of the Lord and habitations for the mighty God of Jacob.

Wherever the want of church room has long existed, it has produced its natural consequence—a great secession from the pale of the establishment, and an over-ruling majority against its interests. We have legislators disposed to deal with the religion of Christ as with a commodity of the market, by leaving it to the simple operation of demand and supply. Whercas, so far from being in analogy, the things are in contradiction the one to the other. For articles of commerce nature and animal propensities create the demand; for Christian principles and rules nature, so far from creating a demand, has implanted an universal distaste. The maxim of trade is inverted. The supply must

precede the demand. This is too obvious to need the illustration of facts; or abundant instances might be produced in support of the proposition.

Notwithstanding all the relief that has been afforded, we have still to deplore the case of an excommunicated half of the people. It is true that the larger half of this half may not care for the blessing; but their wants plead better for them than their wishes. There is a tongue in their indifference of louder acclaim than the thunder of a thousand petitions.

The church is *menaced* by the close communication into which the travelling habits of this country are bringing us with the continent in general, and with France in particular. The manners of the capital of that kingdom are not only such as the religious mind must view with dismay, but such as threaten the absorption of the better in the baser parts of our nature—the triumph of the animal over the spiritual man, and the utter extinction of all trace of the Divine likeness in the soul. There the children of Britain receive, under the deceptive name of education, the seeds of moral and religious error, to vegetate and expand, on their return to their own shores, in fatal luxuriance. There vice, in multiplied forms, crosses them in every path. There sin has no Sabbaths;

her work is incessant; and there ungodliness rejoices in her privilege of uninterrupted profanity.

And this leads to the consideration of another call upon our clergy in the danger with which our church is *menaced* in her strongest hold; the sanctity, serenity, and blessed appropriation of the day consecrated to the services of the Lord. The day concerning which God has declared his will, and in which he has reserved a special property in terms not to be mistaken, is disputed with him by the great majority of his creatures; and if human suffrage could decide whether it should belong to Him or to man's sensuality and abuse, His dominion of the day would no longer be left with him. His name and seal would be torn from the charter, and the creator would be voted out of his creation. Among those who pay their accustomed visit to the Lord's house how reluctant are many to be seen upon their knees! How little is recognized the glory of him of whom it is said, "to him be glory in the church," and who, by the coming of the messenger of the covenant to his temple, filled his house with glory! how sparingly is the tribute paid of praise and thanksgiving! and after the ostensible devotion within the walls is over, how sudden is the re-plunge into the world and its vanities!

In this hour of her distress our church calls upon her ministers with unutterable inportunity to uphold the honour of the Sabbath. The Sunday is in their hands to defend or to betray; and unless they surround it with the dignity and energy of their own examples and talents, covetousness and dissipation will soon share it between them. He must be blind who does not perceive that the part of the day not covered by the stated offices of the church is distinguished from other days, by greater insobriety, and that the Romish church is, in this instance, through our laxity and indifference, recovering the best part of her lost ground.

Of all robberies, to rob Jehovah of any part of his own peculiar day is the most to be condemned. He solemnly reserved one day in seven out of the life interest which he granted to us in the works of his hands; and by choosing it for the celebration of the close of the two great achievements of his goodness, the creation and redemption of man, he sealed it with a double sanctification. He has reserved it not for his own sake, but as a peculiar blessing to his rational creatures whom he has called to a partnership in it with himself. He has made it a day for renewing with us his covenant of grace, and for the recapitulation of his mercies and his promises. He designed it as a most beautiful and benign season of intermission and refresh-

ment: easing the wearied shoulder of its burthen, and the harassed mind of its cares: and it has pleased him to stamp his own image and memorial upon this sacred gift of leisure, that the special recollection of himself might be associated with the sense of enjoyment.

Alas! that notwithstanding all these considerations, the tides of business and pleasure should still flow in upon the devoted Sabbath, washing away by degrees the shores of its sacred territory. Only a narrow insulated portion remains to God. There his sanctuary stands, and there his worshippers still assemble; but if both his day and his temples are to be dishonoured and forsaken, we know that there is yet an invisible Zion, whose gates the Lord loveth too well to suffer them to be carried away by any flood;—whose “foundations are upon the holy hills;” and that he that delivered Israel and made a “wall for them on the right hand and on the left,” can bring his own again “as he did sometime from the deep of the sea.”

The church is *menaced*,—more than menaced, by those of her own ministers, who, forgetting whom they serve, maintain an unspiritual and unclerical commerce with the world. In arguing with such persons, we may begin by assuming a very low ground. We may make our

appeal to the primary principles of sound discernment in character. We may ask of common sense whether a clergyman does not incur the contempt of men of the world, by his appearance at the race-course, the theatre, or the ball-room, or at any pastimes, or scenes of boisterous or noisy conviviality? Do not they place him in a degrading contrast with himself, when seen in the performance of the solemn offices in which his duty engages him? Is there not a logic in the claims of external consistency which summarily decides the question of decorum as to such an oscillating course between the pastoral care, and those vain and ensnaring amusements? But some may think we are laying too great a stress upon human instrumentality. They may think we should leave confidingly the cause of God to God himself, who will turn the hearts of men in his own good time as it pleaseth him. And true it is he may do so. The Holy Spirit can take out of his own treasury all the excellencies of knowledge, and the things which are of Christ Jesus: but the *power* of God is not always the index or the measure of his *will*. He does not do concerning the things of this world, what he has ability to do, but what in his wisdom he judgeth meet to be done. It is according to the analogy of his dispensations, to make man the instrument

of his dealings with man. In the natural world, every comfort and commodity is conveyed through a great diversity of agencies; it may be in order that our dependencies upon himself may thus be multiplied. The supply of our necessities being brought to us through so many intermediate channels, we are hourly reminded of our indigence, and are made to perceive how much the walk of humility becomes us. The righteous God has committed the communication of his word and will to humble instruments; and for this purpose has fitted and framed his gospel for such an agency. By these provisions occasions are multiplied for trying the spirits in various ways. The duty both of dispenser and receiver, presses awfully and urgently upon the conscience of each, and a relation of reciprocity is established between the people and those who minister in sacred things, to which society is indebted for some of its best cements. Engaged in so great a work, the minister of the gospel has to answer for the use he has made of his opportunities of service, and of an access to the seat of motives and affections far beyond the privileges of other men.

By the great diversity of administrations in the dispensation of God's mercy to his creatures, the moral world has been enriched and beautified, and made the scene of various gifts and graces. Hon-

oured above all with a delegation of supreme importance, it is for the minister of the sanctuary to exercise an unceasing watchfulness over himself, that he may be, so to express it, in keeping with his office. For since the ministerial function is one of so much dignity, what must be thought of him who intrudes upon such an office, without the necessary qualifications; who handles the *word* of God, without discerning in it the *mind* of God, but makes it, like the word of man, ineffectual to reach the heart, or trouble the conscience?

The clergy of the land are, officially considered, great men; for great is the post and command of him who has it in his power conspicuously to adorn the doctrine of Jesus Christ,—to commend it in the sight of men,—and to make it lovely. Christ is said to have taught with authority: it could not be otherwise: he practised the things he taught: unlike the scribes and pharisees, whose inconsistency displayed their hypocrisy. He only whose life preaches, can expect to do good by his discourses. Then are the arrows in the hand of a giant: they reach the conscience in its farthest retreat, and convulse the very settlements of sin. How can a man, defective in spiritual endowments, engage in such an undertaking as this? Who can venture to touch this ark with unsanctified hands? who may be per-

mitted to approach it, but those who by their living precepts “adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things?” Who but those who can commend it by the power of their examples to the hearts and consciences of men? Let but a few plain words come from the mouth of a true man of God,—let such an one only tell us that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and we shall find in them a virtue beyond the best rhetoric of others who seem to be “wise in this world,” but are not wise in Christ.

None can approach the ministerial office with any prospect of success in it, but he whom that Spirit accompanies, by whom he was inwardly moved at his ordination, if the persuasion of his mind was grounded on a self-searching inquiry. “A royal priesthood” must bring with them a princely revenue of faith and love; of spiritual wisdom and knowledge; of patience and practical virtue; a treasury and stock, out of which they may minister to the surrounding destitution. They have, it is true, an unfailing fund in the gospel, but they need besides “a right judgment in all things.” If the apostles themselves were directed to remain at Jerusalem “until they were endued with power from on high,” surely the baptism of the Holy Ghost is equally essential to qualify for their work the men of this day. Their sayings

and doings must exceed in value the sayings and doings of other men, or they will say and do little that is effectual in the way of sound edification. They teach, they threaten, they exhort, but the world stirs not—and why? It waits for the working faith and the believing walk. Ministers must live above the line and level of other men. They must *act* their faith before men. They must make demonstration of it in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost must go before them travelling in the greatness of His strength. They have entered upon a work commensurate with the highest reach and elevation to which man has ever attained. And thus they have been truly characterized in the language of one of our writers, whose words have a virtue and bravery in them seldom elsewhere found, as “great, separate, busy, eminent, and profitable,” equalled by none in “rule, and care, and honour.”

Of the great numerical aggregate of life, the clergy morally considered, constitute no part. They must stand alone, separated from the world, the friends of him with whom the world is at enmity; separated by an appointment which has called them out from the great forest of men, to have their dwelling in the Lord’s house. “The God of Israel hath separated them from the congregation of Israel to bring them near to himself,

to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them." We speak of the men furnished and fitted for the ministry by those gifts and preparatives which the church pre-supposes in the servants of her ordination. As such, they are called upon to reverence themselves for the Lord's sake; men of God, having the "white stone" in their hands, and "the hidden manna" in their hearts; mediators, in a lower sense, between God and man; having an angel's commission. Such is the eminent station of a minister of God, who has received a real call, and been, in sober serious verity, moved inwardly by the Holy Ghost to enter into the service of the church; whose "soul is as a watered garden" in the vicinity of heaven, bearing "fruit unto holiness," and where charity flourishes in essence and in flower. If this be not so, and if, though a minister of the sanctuary, he has no vocation thither, is he not an intruder? and is not his a case of awful peril who stands in this nominal relation to his Maker, without having once bestowed a thought upon his actual predicament? If, after having at his ordination declared himself to trust that he was "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost," he has scarcely 'so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost,' what is his fidelity or honesty before God or man?

It cannot be doubted by any serious Christian who is at all observant of the "signs of the times" in reference to our church establishment, or who inquires into the prevailing state of our parishes, and counts in any district of considerable extent the number of real pastoral ministers, and at the same time duly estimates the importance to a neighbourhood of a diligent, exemplary, and conscientious parish priest, that the church is less in danger from the want of orthodoxy of opinions in her ministers, than from the want of a spirituality substantiated in a holy consistency of behaviour. Other evils there are, and other errors require the vigilance of our spiritual overseers and guardians: against the invaders of her forms and doctrines, the church has some strong defences, if they are judiciously made use of; but against the heresy of inconsistency, against the betrayers of her character, against those who live down her dignity, and loosen the ligatures on which she depends for her hold on human opinion, her only security is in the faithfulness of those who superintend her discipline, dispense her patronage, and prepare her servants for her proper business.

A day passed at any country village, without particular enquiry, will usually let the stranger, if he is an observer of these things, into the secret of the real state of the cure. If the pastoral func-

tion is in abeyance, the misery, pollution, and blasphemy which meet him at every turn, will speedily inform him of that fact; and how well the authorized dispenser of God's word and sacraments hunts, shoots, dances, and denounces methodism and saintship.

It is unnecessary to specify the sports or amusements which are unseemly in our pastors and teachers. When a Christian man in name becomes a Christian in principle, vicious or silly amusements are no longer gaieties to him, but are transformed into dull and wearisome occupations. A devout clergyman has a tenderness for the character and office with which he is invested that gives him a distinguishing taste in all that concerns it. It is a taste wholly of spiritual origin and growth; without which the mind is as insensible to the graces of the ministerial character as the deaf ear to the melody of sounds.

Tithes have long been a stumbling-block between the parish pastor and his flock, and may be reckoned among the things whereby the church has been *menaced*. It has before been observed that no better method of making the provision for the clergy permanent could have been devised. But as the greatest objection to any institution is its tendency to defeat the ultimate end for which it was established, however well it may answer

intermediate purposes, the tithe system cannot be defended if it lessens or opposes the very ends of a clergy, and the very design of a church. That this has been the effect of tithes and their collection, can hardly be questioned. We may therefore hope that the commutation which is taking place will increase the efficiency of the clergy, and add to the dignity and moral weight of the national church. The tithe system has always been pregnant with disputes, engaging in a contest about things temporal those between whom the things eternal are the only proper business. It is by no means a difficult undertaking to prove the right of the clergy to their tithes; but it is absolutely impossible to reconcile the occupier of land to another's claim to participate in the product of his skill and toil. He sees not the force of analogy, or the substantial likeness of the tithe-owner to the land-owner, both of whose demands are equally original and paramount, and who both follow the improvements of the tenant with a proportionate increase in their demands; but he sees and deprecates the hand that fastens upon the fruit of his labour, "taking up that which it laid not down, and reaping that which it did not sow." The prejudice is invincible, the feeling natural, and the consequence inevitable. No man can be listened to while there is a prejudice against the

disinterestedness of his conduct, or while the wants and passions of those whom he addresses are in mutiny against his reproof and persuasions. Even with the gospel on his side, he is no match for such hostility. In such an atmosphere the rod of the priest can "bring forth no buds;" "the rose of Sharon" withers on its stem; the vine can yield no "tender grapes." Vain is the ministry of him who at once is the plaintiff and the priest, the prosecutor and the pastor, the guardian of the flock, and a sharer in the fleece. There are associations implanted in the human breast which may be modified to good purposes, but which can never be reasoned into silence: they belong to certain prejudices leading often to practical mistakes, and crossing the best-laid plans of a particular economy, but which help, on the whole, to incline the scale to the virtuous side, and to keep up in the great mass of human beings a diffusive sympathy of moral feelings and predilections. Among these is that prejudice which associates with the sacred service of the gospel habits of a higher order than those which are necessarily brought into exercise in the contentions about rights and dues, and little things of vulgar sound and illiberal concern. It is hard for him who has spent the week, or any part of it, in making bargains, or (which is indeed by far the more frequent case) in resisting impo-

sitions, or in discussing questions of right and compromise, or in disputing about half-crowns and shillings, or the produce of the field or the garden, to rise with dignity and effect on the Lord's day to the serene summit of his high and heavenly duty: and still harder for uneducated minds to forget their grudges and complaints, and accept from him whom they deem their oppressor, however erroneously, the lessons of peace and love; but hardest of all for a pastor of a parish to blend with his adverse dealings in these temporal matters that weekly intercourse of spiritual affection and comfort in which the language of Christ and his gospel should alone be heard, healing the soreness of irritation, and un-neighbourly strife, with the power of its "new commandment" to "love one another."

§ XI.

We may consider therefore the discontinuance of the tithe system a great advantage to the clergy of the establishment in reference to the momentous ends of their ministry. But this kind of advantage is of little value unless it operates as a *challenge*. They will now stand before the people, practically and operatively, at least, in the only character in which for the soul's sake they ought ever to appear, as watchmen and shepherds, and

the publishers of glad tidings ; and let it not be forgotten that their responsibilities will rise with their opportunities.

Other advantages to which these later times have given birth carry the same stirring appeal to the clergy, and by multiplying their means, bring public expectation to bear upon them with a more imperative call ; to say nothing of the voice of conscience and the vow which is upon them. Let us advert to these *challenges*. The supply of church accommodation is still far short of the existing necessity, but the deep cry of spiritual want has not been unheard by the legislature. The area of God's household has been enlarged, and thereby the religious character of the country greatly redeemed. Still however, unless what has been done be felt as a fresh call upon the zeal of the clergy, the boon to the country will mock its expectation. It is as if the trumpet were sounding its summons from the battlements of our augmented Sion to the champions of her cause ; and unless this summons be answered, however large may be the acquisitions of the church in brick, and masonry, and consecrated space ; however increased in nominal and numerical strength, her *spiritual* bounds will remain the same. If no new impulse is felt by the clergy from this extension of the range of possible usefulness, the additional room

will be nothing but an expansion of weakness and an extended proof of the nation's degeneracy.

The wide spread, in these days, of education over the land has added also to the opportunities, duties, and responsibilities of the clergy of the establishment. It is also matter of serious *challenge*. A new and strange moral power is put in activity. The multitude and mass is awakened from dormancy into a new and energetic state of being. Their eyes are opened upon their teachers, and the parish-priest can do nothing unobserved: in nothing is he neutral: in his walk as well as his work he must be doing or undoing, whether it is by his example, his teaching, or his inaction. Every thing about him tells one way or other. Whether the people are the better for the education they receive, is not the point. We are looking to its consequences with respect to the clergy. If the people are not made better in practice, nor improved in the essentials of conduct, they are, at least, advanced in the theory of morals, and made shrewder judges of propriety in others. If without any new infusion of pure principle or sentiment, they must, at least, come out from all this teaching better qualified for the task of exposing their superiors, and discerning their inconsistencies of behaviour and conversation.

The national church cannot, under these circum-

stances, afford any expense of character. It must rely on its living strength for its security—not on its prescriptive grandeur. Nor will mere caution suffice. Its safety lies in its action as well as in its circumspection. Knowledge is power, and the power of knowledge is a busy, fiery principle, which, when not pre-engaged on the side of utility, lends itself to mischief, decomposition, and disorder. And precisely in this moral position stands the church of England. Destruction hovers over all our establishments, to be averted only by a diligent and honest use of such means of influencing opinion, and giving it a conservative direction as are vested in individuals by the gifts of God, or the ordinances of man. The present of universal education is offered to the people—to make the boon a blessing is the proper work of the clergy. They are to take care that the knowledge which has been thus diffused may not turn to that which “exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,”—that it may not expire or explode in vain generalities, in presumptuous conceits, or more positive mischiefs,—that it may not put the stimulated thoughts upon enquiries which neither opportunities nor duties will allow;—that it may not warp, or unsettle, or disturb, but rather cause all the appointments of civil and social life to range in better order round a common and commanding

centre;—that the instruction given may tend less to excite genius than to illustrate duties; less to raise curiosity than to regulate opinion; point less to possible attainments than to practical good, and instead of teaching many things superficially may teach deeply and well the one thing needful; and thus urge on the life of religion in the soul.

The increased circulation of the word of God in these latter times may be reckoned among the advantages which give a sort of *challenge* to our clergy. It puts upon them very special obligations. It does not become the Church of England to be afraid of this book. If, however, it is not felt that by its unlimited diffusion the general population of the country is thereby taken out of a neutral state in respect of religion, and excited to a new curiosity and interest in the subject; if it is not felt that the church ought to lend itself to this new state of things so as to profit by the crisis, it may be doubted whether Bible societies are friendly to the Church of England. But if our national church considers the wide dispersion of the scriptures as extending the field of her own exertions, as augmenting her means and multiplying her proper business, then will the distributors of the Bible, and the Bible only, be amongst her best friends, in opening the channels of access and instruction, and laying the foundation of a more profitable cor-

respondence between herself and her communicants.

In these days it is manifest that the cause of religion and the soul suffers injury from the defect of that species of service which has been properly called 'aggressive,'—and this is the service which the lukewarm delight to repudiate. There is a vast out-lying population in whose ears the gospel sound of grace and mercy never rings, and to whom the fear and hope of unseen things are quite unintelligible. For these miserable brethren, the heathenish and heartless care nothing. They love to cast discredit upon that extra-labour which pushes the landmarks of the church into the territory where wretchedness appears in its horrid forms, and where humanity knows nothing of itself beyond the appetite of the hour. It is unhappy for the church that sometimes the least symptom of this spiritual stir, the smallest movement of zeal on the part of a parish minister, brings his orthodoxy into question. There are many who never think the citadel of our Sion safe but when the region about her presents a dead level. Even the ramparts which environ her are sometimes mistaken for the enemy's works; and should the head of an unhappy man appear above the trenches, the artillery of his own commander may chance to punish his temerity. The truth seems

to be that ministers must be busy in the church, or the people are too busy out of the church to suffer it to be at peace; and perhaps the quarrel with certain ministers of the national church, which seems to relate to their tenets, is, in truth rather moral than doctrinal; or, in other words, if they would do no more than others do, their theology would be unproved.

Against schism and dissent the church has no effectual or legitimate weapon, but efficiency in her own work; and for this she will do wisely in borrowing as much supplementary strength as may be had from her surrounding resources. Let her not spin the thread of her orthodoxy so fine, that the only security against doing what is wrong may consist in doing nothing. If she is too suspicious of her children, she may create the danger she deprecates, and make a chill around her in which the best flowers of her border may sicken and decay.

§ XII.

If what has been said of the importance of the clergy and their ministrations is not considered as over-stated, what terms can adequately express the responsibility which accompanies the exercise of *patronage*. If it be too much to say that here the stream receives its first salutary or poisonous

infusion; at least, it may be said that patronage is the soil from which the stream in its passage takes a strong impregnation. It is among the greatest anomalies of the moral predicament of this country, that while all acknowledge the value of whatever tends to the improvement of mind, the conviction imposes little or no check on the patronage of the church. Surely it is a cardinal mistake in human policy, putting out of consideration the awful accountability which attends every appointment of the guardian of souls, to neglect this natural course and appointed order for the just and efficient flow of national instruction. It may be safely affirmed, that the whole success, under God, of the present widely-extended plan of education, depends upon the character of our parochial clergy. Human intelligence is said to be in quick progress, but human intelligence must travel much in the night; and along the highway of national improvement, there are numberless pits and precipices which require the stationary public lights to be kept burning and bright. He who, having the patronage of a benefice, consults the safety of his own soul, by setting over the souls of others a minister of godly sufficiency for his spiritual charge, does more for the public happiness and improvement, than would result from the establishment of many schools, useful as, under

good management, such institutions undoubtedly are. Parish schools produce their specific benefit only under the superintending genius of a wise and zealous parish priest. On the right use of patronage therefore in the appointment of such a superintendant, the character, the peace, and the happiness of a neighbourhood depends; and can a man, with any right feelings in his bosom, enjoy any peace there, after putting an entire vineyard of the Lord out of due cultivation?

That private persons, to whose estate the right of patronage is annexed, should exercise it with a single view to their worldly gain or family advancement, is in accordance with ordinary humanity; but it is pitiable to see the guardians of the state affected by no larger motives in a matter of such deep concernment to the well-being of society and the dignity of the national character. By every appointment of a weak, or worldly, or prejudiced, or indolent functionary to the service of the church, they lay whole districts barren in the Lord's heritage, and wither the growth of grace in the country. Every patron, from the sovereign downwards, holds his power as a trust from God; and, in every exercise of it, is doing an act more extensively affecting the prosperity of souls, and "the perfecting of the saints," and "the work of the ministry," than any of which any individual is

singly capable : and the higher the patronage, the more destructive is the abuse. To send overseers into the vineyard of God, who care not whether it bring forth grapes or “ wild grapes ;” who, with the frost of their academical learning and constringent orthodoxy, interdict its productiveness and starve the soil : who conceive their own dignity to consist in doing nothing, and checking all extra-doings in others ; or who mistake all labours of love and unbought service in the work of the gospel for extravagance or defect of prudence, and rest satisfied with a clergy, however lax or Laodicean in character, so long as the letter of the rubric remains inviolate,—to commit to such persons, from respect to family connexion or political interest, the difficult and momentous administration of a portion of our Christian Protestant establishment in its present conjuncture, is to make void the dispensations of divine mercy in the gospel of Jesus Christ by the most efficacious of human means, and upon the widest scale of operation, which the enemy of souls has it in his power to suggest.

What moral improvement of the people, what sound cultivation of principle, what effective education can have its spring and origin in any government which can avow the appointment to high stations in our church, to be made in subserviency

to party objects and political expedience? and has not this been avowed in parliament by ministers, and echoed by their opponents? These things are far from being in their true position, and in a healthy state. Until God and his laws are more openly recognized, and revered among our statesmen and legislators, with a manly scorn of infidel derision, the exercise of patronage, the provisions for public education, and the character of the Protestant Church of England, will continue to be at variance with the spirit of our laws, and the ancient frame of our ecclesiastical polity. But what organ or oracle of truth will avail to alter this state of things, until by the vigorous 'putting in ure,' as the lawyers express it, of the means with which good men are furnished, in the actual and standing state of our moral machinery, public opinion, or the general tendency of thinking and feeling, is brought to such a gravity of religious and virtuous bearing upon all the departments of official duty, as may insensibly work a reform, to which all our other boasted reforms may blush to be compared.

Of the dispensation of the patronage vested in the episcopal bench, it becomes us to speak with great reverence. It must be supposed that when *they* promote to the pastoral charge they are guided by a scrupulous and devout regard to the

good of souls, and the glory of the gospel of God our Saviour. If this be not always so; if it will sometimes occur that he in whom the people expect to find religion represented, and the gospel character exemplified, is the author of a mischief of the extent of which none can assign the limit, by a hasty or partial disposition of a preferment in the church, let a feeling for human infirmity throw a veil over the act, with a charitable hope that it is a case as rare as it is awful. ‘The sum of all this is, says Bishop Burnet, that patrons ought to look on themselves as bound to have a sacred regard to this trust that is vested in them; and to consider, very carefully, what the nature of the benefice which they give is, and what are the qualifications of the persons they present to it; otherwise the souls that may be lost by a bad nomination, whatsoever may have been their motive to it, will be required at their hands.’¹

§ XIII.

But the exercise of patronage is only a part, and not the larger part, of a Bishop’s care and responsibility. To guard the accesses to the church by due inquiry into the qualifications of

¹ Burnet’s Pastoral Care, chap. 10.

each candidate for ordination,—to fix the standard of those qualifications, and to make them known, so as to excite such as are intended for the ministry, to enter upon the necessary course of preparation,—to make, as far as in him lies, the ordination office of our church to do its proper work upon the conscience,—to take cognizance of all that concerns the conduct and success of the parochial ministrations within his diocese, whether it be in respect of catechetical instruction, or visits to the poor and sick, or the initiatory preparation for the profitable hearing of the word and partaking of the services of the Lord's day, or other the daily duties of the pastor,—to have his eye and mind upon all these things encouragingly, feelingly, and in detail, is so anxious a labour, and yet so exigent, that a Bishop answering all the requisitions of his undertaking, and compassing the full extent of his practical duties, is the man of hardest work among hard-working men in the country, at least in the field of its philanthropy.

To an office importing such a charge, all honour is due. Even where the charge is inefficiently performed, still as to the crown so to the mitre, whoever may happen to be the wearer, he who feels the force of the precept which tells him to give "honour to whom honour is due," and understands what are the habits on which the per-

manence of establishments depends, will pay his willing tribute of homage and respect. It is by honouring the office that we call upon those to whom its duties are intrusted to honour it too by their performance. In the present state of the church it may not be too much to say that the office is entitled to honour through those in whose persons it is presented to the people; and it would be presumptuous and uncandid to qualify this testimony by any distinctions. It is only necessary further to remark, that the episcopal office is one in which the crown has a constitutional interest only for the conservation and perpetuation of the ministry in its more exalted functions: no interest, certainly, which can, without a most profligate scandal and abuse, be made use of by the state for any political or secular objects.

But whatever obliquity may have belonged to the motives which have influenced, or to those which may continue to influence the appointments of our clergy, the duty of the clergy themselves with regard to the present extremity of the church is plainly written in the forehead of the times.

A great effort is required to be made by them to save the purity and practice of our faith. Is there a question, Who is to begin? Let it be answered through all the grades and ranks of church ministry and membership, I will begin.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then said I, “Here am I; send me!” May he who has this answer ready be forthwith at his work. In this procedure there is no order of priorities; it is vain to look for a *primum mobile*. The motion is like that of the wheel; wherever the impulse is given the whole partakes of it. The struggle for precedence is, in this case, a contention to be first in the order of self-accusation and the work of amendment. Were every clergyman to peruse attentively the ordination offices of the church, and especially, more than once, the simple, solemn, and affecting admonition appointed to be given by the Bishop to the candidate for priest’s orders, it might be an auspicious prelude to the proposed general movement.

The office for the ordination of Bishops is also very solemn and instructive; and the writer of this Essay will perhaps be pardoned, if, with unfeigned respect, he ventures to suggest to the Prelates themselves a frequent and attentive reperusal of the form of their own consecration to the work of a Bishop.

There is, in the history of this country, one fact which has no parallel in the destinies of any other nation—the elasticity, so to express it, with which affairs have recovered their usual posture after a

long and complete revolutionary period. In the histories of other nations a revolution has been a dissolution. The frame and structure of its polity has never been brought back when the violence of the agitation has settled down into its results. In the ruins of the convulsion the elements of a new political state have been formed, as things have been disposed by the current of events or the controul of commanding minds; but for the instance of a sound and vigorous restoration of the old constitution, with its genius unimpaired, or with alterations in accordance with its ancient analogies and principles, we look in vain into any history but our own. The civil war ended in the suspension of the episcopal order and the temporary destruction of church and state. A partial recovery took place under the interregnum which succeeded, and the return to the former state was complete in about eighteen years after the commencement of the troubles.

Two things were principally taught us by this course of events. We had full experience of the miseries which befall a people whose intemperate spirits, under great accidental excitement, have thrown them into the agitation of a disorganized state; while the revival of those institutions which came again into existence as integral parts of the restored system, was a clear proof of their virtual

necessity. These things were lessons to this country in practical wisdom. They instructed our forefathers in the conduct of that second revolution, if revolution it could be called, which settled the Protestant basis of our government; and shewed to the world how deeply grounded in the necessities of our nature is the alliance between church and state.

No minister can safely proceed a step in the domestic management of the country, without a frequent and close review of both these great events. They furnish to the men of sound hearts and heads, so many beacons and signals set on high hills: they are, in their hands, when properly used, the best confutation of the low conceptions or artful designs, of the projectors of subversive changes. Now it is observable that these men, who have been the same in all periods and places, have generally aimed their first blow at that part of the constitution which has stood most prominently in their way. As long as our church maintains its integrity, the state maintains its consecrated character. To remove the bishops from their seats in parliament, as spiritual lords, has been therefore the great purpose of the agents of destruction. Knowing that in their integral union with the legislature, consists the incorporation of the church with the state, and that the dissolution

of that union would be a complete organic dispersion of the elements of our constitution, their hostility has always proposed to itself this laudable commencement. Here lies the stress of the conflict maintained between the men of principle and the men of mischief in this country. Nor can there be imagined a weightier argument to substantiate the worth and importance of the episcopal order, than that it is the first of our state bulwarks against which revolutionary activity directs its vengeance.

It is from these circumstances, that our bishops have always stood, as it were, in the foreground in all our revolutionary scenes. No great transaction has proceeded without a full display of their characters before the nation as actors or sufferers. We are deeply and variously their debtors. As much from them as from any of our forefathers we have derived the fair inheritance of our tempered liberties; and to them, as the master-builders under God, we owe that beautiful structure of worship, of doctrine, and of discipline which is so offensive to the enemies of order and proportion. They are made out of the common clay of our corrupt nature. They are clothed with its infirmities. The motives which have influenced their appointment have sometimes had no reference to aptitude or ability. They too are

specimens of our fallen humanity ; but still it is humanity in communion and contact with divine things. They must pass through the grades of the highest human instruction ; they have the vows of a most impressive ordination service upon them ; opinion and public respect place them under a strong requisition, and perhaps we may safely say that the average character of our countrymen under these guarantees has produced, in a correspondent proportion, the dignity and the virtues which belong to the station.

But above all this, the mitred head is admonished and challenged by its responsibility to the Great Head of the church. Under the weight of this responsibility the only relief is in prayer. Of devout prayer the specific accomplishment is grace. And the result is the transformation of the inner man, and the life of the spirit. Thus to these venerable overseers of God's heritage we look for the fullest developement of the Christian character.

They are an essential part of our general polity. Leaving to others the concerns of temporal and transient interests, they are to sit in council as the ministers of God, to maintain his honour, and to stand before the ark and the testimony. Religion is committed to their care, and that "right judgment in all things" which is the gift of the Spirit,

and will be the fruit of their prayers, will endow them with a holy valour, and an ability far above the standard of natural men in the defence of it. Every measure which however welcome by its seeming expedience or temporary advantage, touches the cause of God, or the safety of the soul, comes within and demands their vigilant jurisdiction. And while the wealth of a nation wherein its estate and strength are displayed, and which depends upon uncertain calculations, engages the solicitude and study of others, that wealth which we pray for in our Liturgy, and which is the tacit instrument of the only true and durable greatness, is principally in the keeping of these spiritual lords to guard, improve, and dispense.

But chiefly at this conjuncture are the counsels of our Bishops important. Nothing in the things around us presents an aspect of stability. Whatever good we may think we see in the recent political reform,—whatever means of popular improvement may be in operation, the piety of the nation, if it has been increased by the diffusion of education, has not as yet so entered into its politics as to find its way where it would be most prevailing and exemplary. In parliament it still blushes and retires before the shallow daring of flippant reasoning and scornful ignorance; nor can obtain a single recognition of its claims against Sabbath-

breaking covetousness. That engagement which we have been accustomed to regard as a mysterious and holy union, and as laying the very foundations of society in the heart and the conscience, is degraded to the level of a trading transaction ; and this may be the beginning of separations between heaven and human concerns. These things are calls enough upon the protectors of our vital interests in parliament.

Before the nation can dispense with the bishops as a constituent part of the legislature, it must have parted with its honour, its character, and its place in Christendom ; and, after such a proceeding, we must expect religious disorder to be succeeded by general confusion. Thus another interval of blood and confiscation will probably reward the labours of the agents of discord, who have no hope but in watching for the chances of a general collision, and for what the scattered elements of society may throw in their way. Ere such a calamity may befall us, may we not look to our bishops as the defenders of their own dignity, and of that of the state of which they are the grace and support ?

‘ Grey-headed men and grave with (nobles) mixt.’

May we not look to them for recalling those with whom they are so mixed to the open recognition

of Gospel authority which has lately appeared to be discountenanced, if not despised? References to the word of God are so sparingly made in either house of parliament that they seem always to be heard with a sort of surprise as belonging to the customs or superstitions of a distant country. They *might* be made too frequently or too familiarly; but if they are to be treated as under an interdict, it would seem to be going but a little further to consider them as under a stigma; till the morality of political men will have no better bottom than expediency, and become entirely disconnected from its only legitimate source. It is thus that Hooker expresses himself on the points above insisted on—‘The French king Philip Valois in his time made an ordinance that all prelates and bishops should be clean excluded from parliaments, where the affairs of the kingdom were handled, pretending that a king with good conscience cannot draw pastors having cure of souls from so weighty a business, to trouble their heads with consultations of state. But irreligious intents are not able to hide themselves, no, not when holiness is made their cloak. This is plain and simple truth, that the counsels of wicked men hate always the presence of them whose virtue, though it should not be able to prevail against their purposes, would notwithstanding be unto their minds

a secret corrosive; and therefore, till either by one shift or another they can bring all things to their own hands alone, they are not secure. Ordinances holier and better there stand as yet in force by the grace of Almighty God, and the works of his providence, amongst us. Let not envy so far prevail as to make us account that a blemish which, if there be in us any spark of sound judgment or of religious conscience, we must of necessity acknowledge to be one of the chiefest ornaments unto this land: by the ancient laws whereof the clergy being held for the chief of those three estates which together make up the entire body of this commonwealth, under one supreme head and governor, it hath all this time ever borne a sway proportionable in the weighty affairs of the land; wise and virtuous kings condescending most willingly thereunto, even of reverence to the Most High; with the flower of whose sanctified inheritance, as it were with a kind of divine presence; unless their chiefest civil assemblies were so far forth beautified as might be, without any notable impediment unto their heavenly functions, they could not satisfy themselves as having shewed towards God an affection most dutiful.'¹

We do not forget that there have been occasions

¹ Hook. Lib. VII, § 15.

in which the seasonable and unflinching interposition of episcopal advice has saved the Lord's day from desecration in the highest quarters. And if a crisis can be imagined in which the spiritual counsellors of the crown are more imperatively bound by their consciences to display before royalty the majesty of truth, that crisis seems now to have overtaken us. Of the court of our young and gracious sovereign the splendid floor is covered with embassies from far and near; but is there not room for that embassy which borrows nothing from earthly pomp, but brings a message from the King of kings? It proposes a treaty which, if accepted, will place the throne in pre-eminent security above its enemies secret or avowed, and build up church and state on one foundation, as "a city which is at unity with itself," to be "the glory of the whole earth." There are certain matters of indispensable requisition included in this sacred embassy, and which it behoves God's ambassadors, if they are faithful in the delivery of their message strenuously to insist upon. There is a church, a protestant and reformed communion, which holy and highly-gifted men have founded in this country, and rescued from the tyranny of Antichrist; and that church must be maintained in its purity and integrity. There is a record which contains the promulgation of truths and ordinances of divine

authority which must be kept entire, and preserved from being broken into parts or selections to serve any subordinate purpose of man; and there is a day of peculiar sanctity, which has the seal and signature of the King of kings to attest his exclusive property in it, and on which he will not suffer the foot of pride, or pomp, or pleasure, or business to intrude with impunity. A refusal to comply with these requisitions and stipulations, or a denial of the prerogatives and claims which form the subject of this awful embassy will bring upon this kingdom a sore visitation, under which all its present grandeur will speedily wither away, and "Ichabod" be inscribed on all its palaces and temples.

These suggestions are not intended to convey any insinuation to the prejudice of any class of official persons. They issue from an earnest desire to be the humble means of giving some stir to that great movement which the national church is called upon to begin towards its own protection. It can have but one true and righteous defence. What is sometimes called a revival seems properly to express the demonstration which should now be made of the pure profession of "the faith once delivered to the saints," according to the formularies of the reformed church of this nation for which its holy founders freely gave their bodies to be burned.

§ XIV.

It is only in such a revival that we can look for safety to our establishment. The forms of our church must be substantiated and her lines filled up. The dry bones must have their sinews and their flesh laid upon them, and be made to breathe and live. Institutions which can be rendered operative and useful must no longer remain mere adumbrations of the godly purposes for which they were designed. The household of God, its spiritual economy, and its sacred appointments should be reviewed and set in order. But let it be the church of Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, which was proclaimed by them in prison and in flames, and to which they gave the Bible as the charter of its foundation, and as the trophy of their own passive triumphs. At a time when heated brains were every where teeming with excessive births, those wise and moderate men framed for us that model of doctrine, discipline, and worship which we now hold by a tenure by many regarded as precarious, in adverting to the multitudes of its assailants. But as long as our church can retreat upon Scripture, she has a fortress from which she cannot easily be expelled. Her moderation in which in truth her safety lies, presents the aspect of continual danger to superficial observers. Placed

between violent and excessive dogmas, she seems ready to become the victim of the fury and fanaticism by which she is on either side threatened. But the extremes between which she moves only the more distinctly mark out for her that middle course in which there is, proverbially, the greatest safety, and preserves her from vacillation. Her moderation may not save her from her enemies ; but her moderation is not the cause of her weakness or danger. She cannot be enervated by keeping steady to the life-giving doctrines of the Gospel, with the gloomy terrors of the law on the one side, and the liberty which is " a cloak of maliciousness " on the other ; for truth is always strong, and victory is the sure reward of righteous perseverance. But if the pure doctrines with which the church was nourished at the Reformation, and which have brought her to her present growth and perfection, shall be stained or diluted by any intermixture of modern introduction, flowing in upon them from the teaching of men of her own household, having authority and the power of persuasion, then will the church be in that state of internal weakness which will render her unequal to maintain the struggle against her assailants from without.

It is expedient that those who are rallying round the church in this moment of her conflict,

should have a distinct notion of what they have to contend for. Unless they are contending for the identical church for which the martyrs of Queen Mary suffered, they are not truly contending for the Church of England. If, to place her at the farthest distance from Protestant dissent, they contend for a church standing on the verge of that superstition, from whose vortex it was snatched at the Reformation, they are endangering the abric of that famous era ; and if, to avoid such an approximation, they adopt the error of depreciating her discipline, and disregarding her sacerdotal succession, and traditional authority, they are not contending for the pure inheritance which belongs to us. In either of these cases our zeal is in great part thrown away. Neither let us contend for a state of church discipline above control or change in its exterior condition. There is a lethargic maxim which would under all circumstances keep things as they are. This cannot be ; things must not and cannot remain altogether as they are. A moral revolution is in progress. The church must keep pace with it. All its capacities must be awake. If a new influence, the offspring of intellect or talent, or time or accident is at work, determining the actions and opinions of men, our ecclesiastical polity must have its hold upon this influence for maintaining its own standing and station.

Public education, which is a mighty organ of moral change and social modification, if it acts independently of the church, will soon turn against it, with the press for an ally, standing, like Briareus, with its hundred hands uplifted against heaven.

There is a large party in the country who would fain content the general craving after knowledge by giving it instruction, without religion, or with a religion secularized and generalized into theory, and made matter of science. To counteract all this is the proper business of an established religion, provided with its various means and ministrations. But it cannot be the work of an indolent or stagnant religion; neither will a flimsy display of spectacular worship, or pulpit oratory, or all the vanities which the creature obtrudes upon the Creator, be of any avail in the present conjuncture. It is in the simple discharge of the pastoral office that the secret of our preservation consists. To a real, efficient, and stationary clergy—the guardians and instructors of the poor, the firm expostulators with the rich, the decided promulgators of evangelical truth, the rural patterns of probity and sanctity, the great work of popular instruction and Christian defence belongs. The mind of the country is theirs. They have only to make a full use of their opportunities. They are

summoned to a simultaneous effort, and to put on their spiritual armour. It is not the time for the friends of our Zion to mark her bulwarks and to tell her towers, but to listen to the trumpet which sounds from her battlements, proclaiming the approach of her besiegers, and the stress of her tribulation.

If the ministers of our church are sincere men, as doubtless for the most part they are, the most effectual of all means whereby it may be strengthened is that which has been already stated as the greatest security of the church; and to which we return, in concluding this Essay, as deserving to be last impressed on the mind of the reader. It was said by an ecclesiastical writer of the fourth century, that the world itself has been kept from dissolution by the prayers of the saints;¹ a supposition not without support from Scriptural analogy. Certain it is that whatever we ask in prayer, being asked of Omnipotence, cannot be excessive; it needs only to be tempered to his will. This is the only measure necessary to be observed.

In praying for the church of this nation we seem to be on safe ground. We are entreating a sovereign in behalf of his own prerogatives. In praying for the establishment, we pray only to have the means of praying with the due solemnity secured

¹ *Quis dabitet mundum stare precibus sanctorum.*—RUFIN.

to us. We pray that our Jerusalem may be "buildded as a city which is at unity with itself;" that "thither the tribes may go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel; to give thanks unto the name of the Lord; for there are the seats of judgment, even the thrones of the house of David."

To pray especially for the Church of England seems to be, at this moment, the duty of all its members; but more emphatically of those to whom its ministrations are committed. But it should be a national act. Prayers for an object of general concern should collectively go up to the throne of grace. There is a holy violence in simultaneous supplication that lays siege to heaven itself. Unless there is heart enough in the cause to draw its supporters together in an embodied effort, the establishment of our ecclesiastical polity is drawing near to its dissolution. Faith is the stamina of prayer, and if our church is strong in this stamina she will not long be without a demonstration of it in a general movement among her spiritual members. We shall see assemblages of her saints uniting in prayer in every diocese, or rather in every district and neighbourhood to the great head of the church universal, to impart his blessing, his unction, and his grace, to the distinct portion of it established in this country. Such special

societies of praying men will be the best hope of our national establishment. Their echoes will reverberate through the land; and as those which reached from Smyrna to Antioch, and procured the peace of the church, so may the supplications for the churches of England and Ireland connect the two countries together in a firmer sympathy of sisterhood on a protestant basis. In every family, in either nation where pure religion has found a home, and schism has gained no footing, the morning and evening prayer should at this hour put the church's cause in the front of their petitions. And in the prayer which precedes the sermon of the minister, which the rubric has left to his discretion, he will shew that our beautiful system of doctrines and formularies is precious in his sight by remembering its claim, in this period of its conflict, to be made the special subject of the soul's entreaty. But "there must be fire in the sacrifice," otherwise it ascends not. There is no sacrifice without incense, and no incense without fire. Our remiss dead hearts are not likely to do much for the church of God, nor for ourselves. Where are those strong cries that should pierce the heavens? 'His ear is open to their cry.' He hears the faintest coldest prayer, but not with that delight and propenseness to grant it. He takes no pleasure in hearing it; but cries, heart—cries—Oh!

those take his ear and move his bowels; for these are the voice, the cries of his own children. A strange word of encouragement to importunity—"Give him no rest." (Isaiah lxii. 7.) Suffer him not to be in quiet, "till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." A few such suitors in these times were worth a thousand such as we are. Our prayers stick in our breasts, scarce come forth, much less do they go up and ascend with that piercing force, that would open up the way for deliverances to come down. ¹

¹ Leighton,

THE END.

THE PURITY OF THE MINISTRY.

THE
PURITY OF THE MINISTRY
THE
STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH.

BY WILLIAM NICHOLSON, M. A.

RECTOR OF ST. MAURICE, WINCHESTER.

“ Σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ Θεῷ, ἐργάτην
ἀνεπαίσχυντον.”—2 Tim. ii. 15.

‘A priest, the like of whom,
If multiplied, and in their stations set,
Would o’er the bosom of a joyful land
Spread true religion, and her genuine fruits.’

WORDSWORTH—*The Excursion*, Book vi.

P R E F A C E.

THE writer of this Essay will not be chargeable with an ostentation of humility, in expressing his deep conviction of the deficiencies of his work. He is probably conscious of more imperfections, than the most critical of his readers will point out. The subjects with which he has had to deal, it will be readily admitted, present no ordinary difficulties; and it would be arrogant to pretend that he has mastered them. In all probability he would not have appeared before the public as "an adviser for the common good," if the circumstances explained at the commencement of this volume had not laid upon him a kind of necessity. Most gladly would he have devoted much additional study and thought to this production of his leisure hours in a rural parish; but if weightier duties, now devolved upon him, did not forbid it, he would be prevented by another consideration. The essay, in its present form, having received the sanction of those to whom it was submitted, the writer feels that he is scarcely warranted in introducing any substantial alterations. The only material change,

which he has allowed himself to make, is a condensation of the matter contained in the earlier chapters. He has done this, under the impression that the subjects there discussed have probably received a more full consideration in the accompanying essay.

In treating of the important subjects contained in the last two chapters, the writer trusts that he will not be chargeable with 'accusing laws, for men's oversights, or imputing evils, grown through personal defects, unto that which is not evil;' although perhaps, he may justly incur the censure of 'framing unto some sores unwholesome plasters, and applying other some where no sore is.'¹ He sends forth this essay to the world, with the earnest hope, that it may lead the minds of serious and reflecting men, to bend their thoughts to the solution of the important problem, how the Church of England may be restored to its due efficiency, and become the means, under God, of more widely extending the blessing of pure and undefiled religion in our land.

Winchester, July 2, 1838.

¹ Hooker. Eccl. Pol. V. 1.

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CHAPTER I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE.

IN order to form a correct estimate of the dignity and importance of the Christian ministry, it is necessary that a right judgment be entertained respecting those things with which it is conversant. It possesses a derived importance, arising from the grandeur of the theme which it is commissioned to declare, and the vastness of the interests which are involved in its due administration. That theme is the gospel of Christ, and those interests the temporal and eternal welfare of the human family. If the knowledge of this gospel be imperfect or erroneous, if its high claims upon the attention be slighted, and if the future destinies of man, dependent upon its reception, be unheeded, then it can be no matter of surprise, that the importance of the ministry by which it is propagated and maintained, should be underrated or despised.

The gospel is in itself transcendently glorious. It is the brightest and most illustrious manifestation of Himself, which God has ever vouchsafed to man. All his divine perfections, are traced in heavenly characters on this his last and clearest revelation. The glory of God indeed is every where displayed. It is proclaimed throughout the universe by countless heralds appointed for the purpose. But although heaven and earth declare the glory of God, yet has it a brighter display, and a more distinct and emphatic proclamation. The gospel affords a wider platform for its manifestation than even the visible creation itself, and presents a grander and more overwhelming exhibition of the divine perfections, than all the splendour which the eye beholds. It is, in a word, ‘the *glorious gospel* of the blessed God.’¹

And if we turn away our thoughts from its intrinsic excellence, to the effects which it has produced upon mankind; if we contemplate the moral revolutions which it has accomplished in the world, and the blessings, temporal and eternal, which it has diffused, its importance becomes still more apparent. It may be doubted by the sceptic or denied by the unbeliever, but we hold it to be a fact, capable of the most rigid demonstration, that even in a worldly point of view, Christianity

¹ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δοξῆς : 1 Tim. i. 11.

has been the bearer of incalculable benefits to mankind. And if those beneficial effects be not so numerous or so apparent, as might have been expected from its nature and tendency; if eighteen centuries have passed away, and it be found still only struggling for the mastery; let us bear in mind the difficulties which it had to encounter, and the obstacles by which its progress has been impeded. True it is, that its salutary influence has hitherto been partial and limited in extent. Still it would be difficult to appreciate the obligations, under which society lies to Christianity. Even when its spiritual power is not experienced in the heart, its outward forms are a public recognition of God's authority, a standing memento of man's responsibility, and its laws and sanctions a wholesome restraint upon the violent outbreakings of wickedness. In short, like some of those mighty agents in the kingdom of nature, whose secret influence pervades all matter, Christianity, entering into the constitution of society, and penetrating to the very elements of the social system, exercises in every part of it a potent and beneficial influence. Let but this influence be weakened or destroyed, and the effects will be apparent in the disruption of those joints and bands, the compactness of which constitutes the strength and stability of the body politic.

We have dwelt longer upon this point perhaps than the argument demands. But in these days, when there exists so strong a disposition in certain quarters, to divorce religion from all questions affecting the economy of a state, we seem to be imperatively called upon to vindicate the principle, that a community can only then be happy or prosperous, when the influence of the gospel pervades the great mass of its population.

We arrive now at the point, to which the preceding remarks have been tending. It has already been stated, that the importance of the office of the Christian ministry is derived solely from the dignity and importance of the work assigned to it. If this latter point therefore be established, the other will necessarily follow. The divine author of the gospel has appointed it to be diffused and perpetuated throughout the world, by human agency. He has ordained and commissioned a body of men, in all ages, to be set apart from the secularities of life, and to be engaged in scattering far and wide around them the knowledge of his holy religion. The apostles, receiving their high commission immediately from the hands of Christ himself, went forth into distant lands, as his accredited ambassadors. The power of the Holy Ghost accompanied their ministrations; and whithersoever they went, they left behind them

trophies of the victories, which, through their instrumentality, divine grace had achieved.

The triumphs of the Gospel were not intended to be transitory. The Apostles and early ministers of Christ were commissioned, not merely to propagate, but to establish and perpetuate his religion. Like prudent generals, they were to be intent upon securing their past, as well as upon acquiring fresh, triumphs. They were to leave, as it were, a garrison in every place behind them, while they continued their aggressive movements upon the still unsubdued dominions of Satan. This they did by founding churches by ordaining their appointed officers, and by entrusting the ministry, which they had received from the Lord, to the hands of men duly qualified to execute it. Thus they provided for the perpetuity and continued extension of the Gospel. Each church was supplied with an internal organization, adapted, not only for its own maintenance, but also for its progressive expansion. The world could never have been evangelized by any other system of operation. The apostles and earliest missionaries of the Gospel were soon removed by death. If, therefore, the several churches which they founded had not been thus constituted, the fruit of their labours must soon, humanly speaking, have disappeared from the earth. But, guided by the Spirit

of God, they delegated their functions to others, who should carry on the work of the Lord, when their lips should be silent in the grave. They were 'put in trust' with the Gospel, for the benefit of future generations; and since 'they were not suffered to continue by reason of death,' it was necessary that this trust should be perpetuated in the persons and ministry of others. Thus was provision made for a continual succession of 'faithful men,' who, as each generation should finish its course, might hand down the word of life to that which followed it. Thus the Gospel struck its roots into every soil, where the Apostles planted it; and until the withering blight of error in doctrine and corruption in practice swept over the churches, they continued to flourish and expand, under the genial influences of the Holy Spirit.

God has thus, in his infinite wisdom, linked the establishment and extension of Christianity in the world with the institution of the ministry. He has appointed that office to be the medium of communication between himself and the souls of men—the channel, by which he is pleased to distribute throughout the world the blessings of his Gospel.¹

In every point of view, therefore, this ministry

¹ Ephesians iv. 11, 12.

appears unspeakably important. When we can duly estimate the value of salvation—when we can measure the worth of innumerable millions of immortal beings, rescued from perdition, then only shall we be able to form an adequate idea of the importance of this holy office.

We need not further continue the discussion of this point. If we admit the value of the Gospel, we cannot doubt the necessity of a standing ministry in the Church, as the means of its establishment and extension. Doubtless God can dispense with these, and with all other means, and work by his own immediate hand his purposes of grace. He could, if so it seemed good to Him, train up souls for glory, and people heaven with the redeemed spirits of men, without any subordinate agency whatever. But we can perceive sufficient reasons for believing, that this, his chosen method, is the best and most fitted for the accomplishment of his purposes; that it tends most illustriously to display his glory, and is, upon the whole, most conducive to the welfare of mankind.

O that this ministry had never so far failed in the execution of its high functions, as to leave the shadow of a doubt upon the question, whether it be essential to the well-being of mankind! Would that every one, to whom this holy office has been entrusted, had faithfully performed the part

assigned to him! Then should we want no other answer to the cavils of the unbeliever, than to point to the visible effects of his ministry, to souls won 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,' and to the blessed fruits of peace and order and sobriety and righteousness, which are at once the glory and the strength of a people.

CHAPTER II.

THE EFFICIENCY OF THE MINISTER DEPENDS,
UNDER GOD, UPON HIS DUE QUALIFI-
CATIONS FOR THE OFFICE.

GOD usually works by the agency of means, adapted and subordinated to the purposes, to which they are to be applied. According to this system, one condition is obviously necessary, in order to the full accomplishment of the intended result, namely, that the means employed be, in their nature and quality, fitted for the purpose. It is also obvious, that the efficiency of those means, in ordinary cases, will be in direct proportion to the degree of their adaptation to the end; and that any defect in such adaptation will necessarily be apparent, in the partial or entire failure of the result. We need not bring forward illustrations of truths so obvious as these. The law above stated pervades every department of nature;

and in the business of life, that man would be counted destitute of reason, who should expect his designs to be accomplished, by the intervention of means, in their nature disqualified from effecting them. In his purposes of mercy towards his creatures, God has not deviated from this his usual mode of proceeding.

We have traced in the last chapter, the institution of the Christian ministry, the purposes it was intended to subserve, and the benefits which it is calculated to confer upon mankind. We considered the agency which it has pleased the infinite wisdom of God to employ, for the propagation and perpetuity of his gospel in the world. Now since he is fettered by no laws, and bound to adhere to no system, God, unquestionably, might have rendered success altogether independent of the qualifications of those, whom he has condescended to employ ; he might have so ordained, that there should be no necessary connexion between the characters of those who minister in holy things, and the efficiency of their ministrations, although his mode of acting in this case would certainly have appeared anomalous and extraordinary. But so far is this from being the case, that in no department of his dealings with men, has he more closely connected the accomplishment of the end with the adaptation of the means. Christ com-

mitted the ministry of his gospel, in the first instance, to men duly qualified to execute it; not indeed to men, whom he found *previously* endued with qualities, which rendered them sufficient for their work, but to men whom he singled out, in order that they *might be qualified* by endowments and capabilities proceeding from himself. Assuredly, the apostles and their fellow-helpers in the ministry, for the most part, had no natural or acquired endowments, which peculiarly fitted them for their high vocation; no vigorous grasp of intellect, no rich and varied stores of learning, no widely extended influence. Yet were they qualified, in the best possible manner, for their work; and it may safely be asserted, that had they not been thus qualified, their ministry would have been ineffectual.

It would be anticipating a future part of the subject, were we to enter at large upon the question of qualifications, at the present stage of our inquiry. We are now dealing with the general principle, that God has so united the *success* of the ministration with the personal *qualifications* of the minister, that, in ordinary cases, the one is accompanied by, and dependent upon, the other. And when we speak of success in the ministry, let it be remembered, that we do not so much allude to the collateral and subordinate advantages which

result from it, as to the attainment of the one great and paramount object, which it contemplates, *the salvation of souls.*

Nor again let it be supposed, that in the statement of this general principle it is implied, that there is any *proportion* between the means employed, and the results effected. On the contrary it must be admitted, that there is an infinite *disproportion* subsisting between them. We cannot for a moment compare the magnitude of the effects produced, by the preaching of the gospel, with the apparent sufficiency of the means to produce them. They are utterly incommensurable. When we think of the salvation of innumerable souls, of heaven peopled with rejoicing spirits, once the heirs of misery and the slaves of sin: when we reflect upon the scene which will be disclosed at the day of judgment, "the great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," and remember, that this great multitude will ascribe its blessedness to the ministration of the gospel, who does not feel, that in the result there is a *vastness* which baffles our conception, while there is in the instrumentality a *meanness*, amounting to utter insignificance?

And this view of the subject is consonant with the word of God. It is "by the foolishness of

preaching," that God is pleased "to save them that believe." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."¹ The treasure of the gospel is deposited in earthen vessels, that "the excellency of the power may be of God and not of men." And none is so ready to admit the native insufficiency of the minister, as the great apostle, of whom, less than of all the apostles, that insufficiency can be predicated. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, (says St. Paul,) to think any thing, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God: who hath also *made us able ministers*² of the New Testament."

With regard to the principle for which we are contending, it may be observed, that there is a vast difference between *sufficiency* and *qualification* for the ministerial work. The minister, who may be endowed with most of the requisite qualifications, is after all, in himself, wholly insufficient.

¹ 1 Cor. 27—29.

² ὅς ἐκένωσεν ἡμᾶς—"who hath fitted us to be ministers." 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

“ For who is sufficient for these things ? ” The fact, which we wish to establish, is simply this, that by the appointment of God, certain qualifications are necessary, in the main, for a right discharge of the ministerial functions ; and that in default of these, a partial or entire failure of success must be the issue.

It has been already observed, that the analogy of God’s other operations would necessarily lead us to this conclusion. He has ordained certain means for the accomplishment of certain ends ; and we perceive the attainment of those ends to be more or less complete, in proportion to the suitableness of the instrumentality employed. But this general analogy in itself, would be no conclusive argument in our favour. For it does not necessarily follow, that God should adopt the same order in the spiritual, as in the natural and moral worlds. His purposes, for ought that we can determine, might have been as effectually accomplished by a different arrangement.

But if we bring the question, which we are considering, to the test of actual observation, we shall find this view of it fully established. Do we not perceive the ministerial work to prosper, by the blessing of God, in the hands of those endued with the requisite qualifications ? and on the contrary, do we not observe it to languish, where those qualifications are defective ? Sinners are not usually

converted from "the error of their ways, to the wisdom of the just," by a careless and unenlightened ministry. The strong holds of Satan are not usually assaulted with success, by weapons of any other than of heavenly and spiritual temper. The brightest times of the church of Christ have not been those, when the fire upon her altar has been fed by a secular and worldly-minded priesthood; nor has the flock of Christ been most numerous or most beautiful, when the "pastoral staff" has been feebly wielded by the hands of slumbering and self-indulgent shepherds. In reviewing the annals of the church, we cannot fail to observe, that its general prosperity has been intimately connected with the high standard of personal qualifications, which has prevailed amongst its ministers. When the ranks of the clergy have been filled by pure, and heavenly-minded, and "faithful men," then has the church "put on her beautiful garments" of holiness, and faith, and zeal, and love; then has she "shaken herself from the dust," and arisen, and shone forth in majesty, the light of a dark world. We can point, alas! to but few such bright epochs in her history, but those few are sufficient to furnish an argument for the truth of our statement. We see, that the times of her brightest lustre have been those, when her ministry has been purest and holiest; and that, when

that ministry has been morally and spiritually degraded, then has her light been quenched, and her glory departed. Can we have a clearer evidence of the fact, that God has connected the prosperity of his church, with the due qualifications of her appointed functionaries ?

It is not however necessary to appeal to the records of the church in former times, for facts illustrative of this truth; our own personal observation will suffice. Let us look abroad over the parishes of our native land, and see if we can gather from the survey no proof of the connexion, subsisting between the efficiency of the ministerial office, and the due qualifications of those who bear it. Do we find the blessing of God usually attendant upon an incompetent ministry of his word? Can we trace therein the operation of the Spirit, in the awakening of the careless, the conversion of the profligate, the instruction of the ignorant, the consolation of the mourner, and the edification of the body of Christ? We must admit, that, for the most part, we look in vain, under such circumstances, for these blessed effects; that we find no shaking among the dry bones, no breathing of the Spirit into the lifeless forms of religion, no resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

It may be thought perhaps, that we have carried out this general principle, beyond the limits of its

just application. That certain qualifications are essential to the due execution of the Christian ministry, can be doubted by none. But it may perhaps be objected, that we have too much referred success to the possession of these qualifications, and too much lost sight of the divine commission, with which the office is invested, and which is alike the foundation of its authority, and the warrant for its success. It may be said, that we have attributed more to the skill of the sower, than to the divine nature and inherent virtue of the seed. It may be said, that the ministry of a Balaam, under the old dispensation, and of a Judas, under the new, are instances of apparently unqualified agents employed in effecting the purposes of God. But let it be remembered, that we are dealing with a general principle, unquestionably admitting of exceptions. It is not affirmed, that in the work of the ministry, God *never* deviates from his usual and established mode of operation. All that is contended for is the fact, that he has *established* that mode, and, in ordinary cases, is pleased to adhere to it. He is a sovereign God, and works after the counsels of his own will; and it is certain, that he often accomplishes his purposes of mercy, by instruments, not only insufficient in themselves, but in appearance totally unfitted to effect them. He can, and doubtless

does, occasionally make use of ministers destitute of the qualifications, which he himself has appointed, as generally necessary.¹ But these are plainly exceptions to the ordinary method, which he employs, and cannot be considered as in any measure affecting the force of the preceding arguments.

It may be objected, moreover, that, in supporting this principle, we are inconsistent with the tenor of the XXVIth Article of the church.² But this inconsistency is in appearance only. It has not been said, that the want of due qualifications in the minister invalidates the word and sacraments, ministered by him to the church of God. This doctrine, if admitted, must lead to manifold absurdities, and leave a cloud of gloomy uncertainty upon the mind of a Christian, as to the validity of every office of the church, in which he has participated. The prayers and praises of the congregation cannot be hindered from reaching the throne of God, and returning with a blessing upon the

¹ "What he can do extraordinarily (Archbishop Leighton well observes) who doth always what he wills in heaven and earth, we question not. He can convey grace by those, to whom he gives none. He can cause them to carry this treasure, and have no share in it; carry the letter, and not know what is in it, and make them, so to speak, equivocal causes of conversion."—Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 20.

² "Of the unworthiness of the ministers, which hinders not the effect of the sacrament."

faithful worshipper, by the unworthy lips of him, by whom they are presented. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," is "quick and powerful," though wielded by an unskilful or unworthy hand; nor can the efficacy of a sacrament be nullified, to the devout recipient, by the unworthiness of him, upon whom the honor of ministering at the altar of God should never have been conferred.

But how do these acknowledged truths interfere with the principle, which we have been considering? If qualifications be required of those who undertake the office of the ministry; if they be described and insisted upon in Scripture; if Apostles and Bishops be directed to appoint those only, in whom they are found, then it must be manifest, that important consequences depend upon the possession of these qualifications. But if men, destitute of them, should have intruded themselves into the sacred office, however much the ministry by this means may be impeded, it is going too far to assert, that God will never make them the channels of communicating gifts to his church. At the same time, since he has instituted a system of means, in their nature fitted for his purposes, it cannot be a matter of indifference, whether this fitness be possessed or not. It is obvious, that, in ordinary cases, the due execution

of the work assigned, will depend, instrumentally, upon the suitability of the agency employed.

If the arguments which have been adduced be conclusive, and the general principle which we have sought to establish be admitted, what an awful view of ministerial responsibility is presented to the mind! How overwhelming is the thought, that the work of the Lord may be impeded by the ministry of those, upon whom has been laid the office of promoting and establishing it! That the very watchmen upon the towers of Zion, may be the cause of her danger; the very shepherds of Christ's flock, the cause of its wanderings; and that spiritual death may be perpetuated by those, who are appointed to be the ministers of the word of life!

CHAPTER III.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

A VERY important question naturally arises out of the argument of the preceding chapter. Let it be admitted, that an intimate connexion subsists between the efficiency of the ministry and the qualifications of the minister, and it becomes a matter of the deepest interest, to ascertain precisely the nature of those qualifications, and the extent, to which any partial deficiency of them will deprive the minister of success.

If we were to include all the qualifications, which it is desirable that the Christian minister should possess, we should draw the portrait of more than human perfection. For what high endowments are there, which may not be advantageously employed in this great work? The sagacity of mind, which can penetrate most deeply into the arcana of moral or physical science, will find in it subjects, which will tax its powers

to the utmost. The imagination, which can expatiate most freely in the world of poetry and feeling, will find ample room for its most discursive flights. The sanguine energy of mind, which can grapple with the most arduous difficulties, and persevere undaunted amidst the most trying discouragements, will not unfrequently find itself severely tested. The largest stores of learning, which laborious industry can accumulate, will often be brought into most useful requisition. The lips of eloquence can be touched by no purer or holier fire, than that which is taken from the altar of God. There can be no theme, more calculated to inspire its most winning and persuasive efforts, than the love of Christ; and no opportunity more fitted to display its powers, than when it is called upon, "in Christ's stead" to pray men to be "reconciled to God." In a word, we may safely assert, that the noblest endowments of nature, and the largest acquirements of learning, will find ample room for their exercise and development in the church of God. Let them be brought into his temple, and placed at his altar, and consecrated to his service, and he will make them minister to his glory: he will find for them employment, which shall at once be honourable to them, and serviceable to himself.

But these talents are not entrusted to all:

they are the rare possession of a favoured few; and if none but those, so highly gifted, were to be admitted to the ministry, the church would be scantily furnished with teachers. We must therefore make a broad distinction, between the *desirable* and the *essential* qualifications of the Christian minister; between that, which may be advantageously employed in God's service, and that, which cannot be dispensed with, without more or less frustrating the efficiency of the work. Regard must also be had to the several departments of the ministry, and the several orders, which it has pleased God to institute in his church. For as there are different functions to be performed, so there are required different specific qualifications, for the due performance of them. The Bishop, who is appointed to rule the house of God, should be endued with qualities, which can be partially dispensed with in him, who sustains the subordinate office of a teacher. There are, however, certain general characteristic qualifications, without which no man can be said to possess a proper degree of fitness, for any department of the ministerial office.

The qualifications of the Christian minister, may perhaps be conveniently arranged under the two general divisions of *natural* and *spiritual*. And here it must be acknowledged, that there is not

a little difficulty in treating a subject, which has been so often and so ably treated by others. It is no easy task, to say any thing more, or any thing better, than has been already said by the ablest writers of the church in every age.

1. We begin with what we have termed the *natural* qualifications for the ministry; and as these consist chiefly of the endowments of mind or intellect, we may perhaps more properly term them the *mental* or *intellectual* qualifications. These are to be classed among the qualities desirable, not absolutely essential, for the ministry. They certainly cannot be considered so essential, as that the absence of them, when the others are possessed, should in ordinary cases materially interfere with success. For this reason, we place them first in the order, which has been adopted. It is a grand mistake, to suppose that a scanty measure of intellectual furniture is generally required, for an effectual discharge of the ministerial office. For a perfunctory performance of its duties, indeed, a moderate capacity will assuredly suffice. There can be but little strain upon the intellectual faculty, in going through a formal routine of ecclesiastical duties. But the great ends of the ministry will not thus be answered; the glory of God will not thus be promoted; the church of God will not thus be "built up in its most holy

faith." Nor again is it contended, that for the salvation of souls much vigour of thought or grasp of intellect are necessary. So far is this from being the case, that we hold it to be an indisputable fact, that multitudes of souls are continually trained up into "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light," under a ministry of the word palpably deficient in this respect. The simple statement of evangelical truth, enforced with the earnestness of sincerity, and seconded by the cogent influence of a consistent life, are mighty through God in accomplishing the great design of the ministry. And it cannot be doubted, that there is now, and ever has been in the Church of Christ, many an humble and faithful pastor, indifferently furnished with intellectual gifts, who will be found at the day of judgment, to have possessed the noblest of all wisdom, that of being "wise to win souls;" many a one, whose heart will be cheered by those gracious words of his master, "well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But there are departments in the church of Christ, which demand the services of the highest order of mind. There is not unfrequently work to be done for God in his church, which in the

absence of miraculous gifts, cannot be done without more than an ordinary share of mental endowments. There is indeed no department, where a sanctified intellect may not be productive of manifold and great advantages. The village pastor will find his ministrations among the untutored swains of his parish, by no means impeded, and frequently much assisted by the possession of the rich and varied stores of a well cultivated mind. But there are not a few positions, in which a Christian minister may be placed, where to be destitute of such advantages will weaken his influence, and in such proportion obstruct his usefulness. In an age of cultivation and refinement like the present, when the force of mental superiority is more generally appreciated, the ministry, in order to be respected, must not betray a poverty of intellect. It must lead and not follow in the train of the general improvement. It must give an impulse and a direction to the public mind. The times are past away, it is to be hoped, for ever, when an ignorant and unlettered priesthood could wield a despotic authority over the minds of a benighted people. We want a ministry, spiritually and intellectually superior to the mass of those, to whom they are appointed to minister. The church requires, in those who attend at her altars, such mental qualifications,

and such stores of solid and useful attainments, that their ministrations shall not be contemptible, even in the eyes of her most cultivated laity.

And let it not be said, that we are requiring more than God has required, and investing that with importance, which he esteems insignificant. Most assuredly, God has in his word poured contempt upon the false philosophy of this world. "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"¹ But it should be borne in mind, that it is the wise man and the disputer of *this world* that God despises. He requires not these in his service. He repudiates their unhallowed wisdom. But he has nowhere declared, that he cannot, and will not, use the mental powers with which he has endued his creatures, as instruments for the promotion of his glory. He has never informed us, that the offering of a sanctified intellect, devoted to his service, is an unacceptable gift, or one which he will not condescend to employ. We attribute no inherent efficacy to these high endowments of mind; we regard them

¹ 1 Cor. i. 19, 20.

in no other light, than as fit instruments in the hand of an omnipotent God, to work his purposes of grace. He needs them not, though he condescends to use them. But if the weakness and the foolishness of man can be made subservient to his glory, surely it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the vigour and the energy of a masculine understanding can be employed by him, with increased advantage to his church.

We cannot too strongly deprecate the tone of feeling, which frequently prevails, respecting the point we are now considering. It is an opinion at once dishonourable to God, and ruinous in its effects upon the church, that in the ministry, a smaller demand is made upon the energy of character, and the powers of mind, than in other professions. And the lamentable effect of this delusion is apparent, in the designation to holy orders of persons obviously defective in those qualities, simply on account of such deficiency. More than an ordinary share of talent, combined with untiring perseverance, are absolutely essential to any great success in other walks of life. But is it not a painful fact, that the church is too frequently regarded as a safe refuge for those, whose supineness of character and mediocrity of talent debar them from any prospect of otherwise rising to distinction? Setting aside the awfully

defective view of ministerial responsibility, upon which such an opinion is founded, does it not also imply a complete mis-conception of the nature of the work, and the qualities of mind which it requires? To say nothing of the spiritual disqualification, which in such cases usually exists, is not the very notion, that an inferior measure of natural ability is demanded, a libel upon God's holy ministry, and a dishonour to himself? Is it not practically saying, 'Let Mammon have the best, and give to God what Mammon refuses to employ in his service?' It has been justly remarked by the wise and holy Leighton, 'Are there not divers pretenders to it, (the ministry,) who being, and possibly finding themselves, insufficient for all other employments, have their recourse to this, making no doubt of their sufficiency for it? Yea, such there are, too many; their worldly friends being guilty either of begetting in them, or of fomenting their presumption. On the other side be there not others, who, having some advantage of outward rank, or inward endowments, would think themselves, and be thought by those who have interest in them, to be exceedingly disparaged, if this calling were mentioned to them, and who would count it a great abasing, yea, a losing of themselves to embrace it? Against these two gross mistakes

may very appositely be opposed this—"We are ambassadors for Christ." From which expression it is most evident, that the ministry both requires the best and ablest, and deserves them; that the refuse and abjects of men cannot be worthy of it, nor it unworthy of the choicest. It requires able men, because they are to be *ambassadors*; and this will follow of itself. Again, consider *whose* ambassadors, and in what business. The ambassadors of the King of kings in the weighty matter of treating peace betwixt him and mankind.'¹

It is high time that this ruinous delusion should be banished for ever from the church. Let it no longer be thought, that "the blind and the maimed," are fit offerings for the Lord's acceptance. 'It is a piece of God's prerogative,' again remarks the same admirable writer whom we have just quoted, 'to use unlikely means without disadvantage. Any thing is a fit instrument in his hands; but we are to choose the fittest and best means, both in our own affairs, and in his service; and if in any, this eminent service of embassy requires a special choice.' It is most devoutly to be wished, that the public mind were more generally alive to the unspeakable importance of the ministry of the gospel. Then would it be universally ad-

¹ Sermon to the clergy.

mitted, and the admission would be carried out into practice, that God's service demands the consecration of all the high endowments, and all the varied capacities, which he has been pleased to bestow upon his creatures. We should then no longer hear the profane lamentation, that a youth of high intellectual promise had *thrown away* his talents, (there is something impious in the very phrase) by enlisting them in the service of his God. It would not then be said, that the candle which might have shone brightly and usefully at the bar or in the senate, is hidden under a bushel, when set in the candlestick of the Church of Christ. The coronet of earthly distinction, which often in our land of freedom adorns the brow of genius, would not then be counted a fairer prize than the crown of glory, which is reserved for the faithful minister of the gospel.

2. Having dwelt at some length upon this subordinate but not unimportant part of our subject, we proceed to the second class of qualifications, which we have termed the *spiritual*, or qualifications *of grace*. These must be considered as so essential, that without them, the grand design of the ministry will be partially or entirely frustrated. Natural endowments may be dispensed with; but for the right discharge of spiritual functions, a certain measure of spiritual endowments

already noticed, are expressive of the writer's sense of the value of such a provision: nor ought he to omit another purpose of this last-mentioned institution, for which the gratitude of the country is particularly due,—the addition it proposes to grant in aid of endowments offered by the patrons of livings, or to the gratuitous donations of others for a similar purpose. Where plans so wisely contrived to meet the difficulties of the present conjuncture, and to defeat the purposes of the enemies of our Establishment, are by our subject brought so conspicuously before us, such particulars will not be thought to be minute or tedious. Both these institutions are worthy of all admiration. The one founded on its secular basis, and the other having the testimony of its sacred accreditation, join hands, or ought to join hands, in administering that succour to our Church which, it is trusted, will soon be visible in its character and efficiency. They exhibit the concord of our social with our sacred polity, on which, under God, the continuance of both depends—a concord involving a mutual pledge, an identicalness of interest and a consolidation of strength.

Of “the Christian Influence Society,” which is another daughter of our Established Church, it will be enough to say that it contemplates and seeks to promote those objects of spiritual im-

provement which it is the humble purpose of these pages to place conspicuously before the reader.

To the excellence of "the Prayer-Book and Homily Society," the passages of this paper in which the value of the sacred documents of our Church and all her offices and expositions has been attempted to be set forth, bear their testimony. For the annexation of the Ordination Services to the Book of Common Prayer they are entitled to the nation's gratitude; as is also the venerable "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," which has followed its example.

§ VI.

In the great work of spiritual edification, one thing, at least, is clear,—that none but willing minds will stir. Some are adverse to all movement in this concern, and deem the Church to be in danger from the activity of its members. Others, like Gallio, "care for none of these things." Ministers of either of these descriptions can only be reached by a circuitry of operation. It is only by many intermediate undulations that the trumpet can be made audible within their camp. The medium through which the percussion must be conveyed to them is the intelligence of the people. The public must be made to rise in their demand for spiritual benefits at the hands of their clergy—

“minding the things of the flesh or of the spirit.” Now it is the distinctive mark of the spiritual man, that he minds heavenly things—that his thoughts, affections, and desires, are habitually of a heavenly and spiritual nature. This we expect to find in every Christian, because his very profession of Christianity implies no less than this. But we expect to find it more prominently conspicuous in the Christian minister. He is emphatically a spiritual person. A heavenly frame of mind, and an habitual engagement of his affections on spiritual objects, seem not only proper, but absolutely essential to the character of one, whose occupation is in its very nature spiritual and heavenly. ‘No man (says Jeremy Taylor¹) is fit for that office, but he that is spiritual in his person, as well as his office. He must be a despiser of the world—a light to others—an example to the flock—a great denier of himself—of a celestial mind; he must mind heavenly things.’ In order to a right discharge of his office, he must be continually occupied in the contemplation of eternal realities. They must be ever prominently before his eyes: they must be influential upon his heart. To these his mind must, so to speak, turn instinctively, when it is left free to follow the bias

¹ Vol. xi. 471.

of its own inclination; and be withdrawn from them, only so far as the necessary business of life requires. He must "meditate on these things, he must give himself wholly to them."¹

It can hardly be objected, that this is making too large a demand. Reason tells us, that an order of men severed by the institution of Christ from the secularities of the world, and consecrated entirely to spiritual employments, should have their minds habitually occupied with spiritual things. It cannot surely be too much to expect of those, whose office it is to enforce the necessity of godliness, that they themselves should be under its constraining influence; that those, who are appointed to present before God the offerings of prayer and praise in behalf of his church, should themselves be men of deep personal piety and devotional spirit; and that those who stand, as it were, intermediate between God and man, should hold with Him something more than a mere *official* intercourse.

Amongst the most important qualifications of character for the Christian ministry, must be reckoned the existence of *spiritual motives* for undertaking the work. We can have no hesitation in insisting upon this, as an absolutely *essential* qualification. A spiritual office cannot rightly

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 15.

be entered upon from any other than spiritual motives. The only motives which can be considered, strictly speaking, legitimate, are a single eye to the glory of God, and a sincere desire for the salvation of men. Whatever inferior considerations may be mixed up with these, must partake more or less of an earthly, if not sinful, character. Without entering into an analysis of the various complicated motives, by which a man may be influenced, it is sufficient to observe, that those two considerations, which we have mentioned, must have so decided and paramount an influence in determining the choice, that all inferior ones may be said virtually to have no existence. This is no exaggerated demand. It is not only practicable and reasonable; it is *indispensable*. The grand design of the gospel is, unquestionably, to save souls, and by that means to bring glory to God. Consequently, the legitimate motive for undertaking the ministry of the gospel, must be the accomplishment of that design. 'The work of the calling (to use the words of Jeremy Taylor) being principally and immediately for the good of souls, and for the glory of God, it cannot be pursued as the nature of the work requires, if that be not *principally intended* which is principally to be *procured*.'¹ Hence, whatever

¹ Ductor Dubitantium, vol. xi. 472.—HEBER'S ED.

inferior motives may partially influence the decision, when that superior and overpowering motive is wanting, all fitness for the ministerial office must be wanting also.

It is no easy matter, for the most sincere and conscientious mind to detect all the latent motives, by which the conduct may be powerfully, though secretly, influenced. But no man can be said rightly to aspire to the holy office of the ministry, whose conscience cannot bear an humble yet decided testimony to the pure, and heavenly, and disinterested feelings by which he is actuated. It is needless to enter upon any detail of the various selfish and worldly motives, by which, it is to be feared, too many are influenced to intrude themselves into this high vocation. It is sufficient to observe, that whatever motive will not bear to be tried by the test which we have just laid down, is essentially defective and unworthy. St. Paul has given us, in his own ministry, a beautiful example of the feelings by which the Christian pastor should be animated. "I seek not your's, but you."¹ And St. Peter exhorts the elders that they "feed the flock of God...taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a *ready mind*."²

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 14.

² προθύμως—with that alacrity and willingness which arise from delight in the employment.—1 Peter v. 2.

Spiritual wisdom is another essential branch of the qualifications of grace. And by this we understand, not merely the knowledge of spiritual things, attained by the diligent use of the appointed means, by the word of God and prayer, but also that peculiar wisdom and discernment, which are the result of deep personal experience of the power of religion.

These are important faculties to the minister of Christ, without which he cannot be accounted "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹ It is manifest, that a teacher should be perfectly acquainted with the subjects, which he professes to expound to others: without this he must frequently lay himself open to contempt. He must have an accurate and well-digested view of the truths, which he wishes to convey intelligibly to his hearers. He must have examined his principles, and viewed them repeatedly in their various bearings and aspects. He must, by frequent meditation, have wrought them, as it were, into the very texture of his mind; and if they be truths which affect the feelings of the heart, then he must have personally experienced their power, before he can rightly explain or enforce them. Now such a teacher is the

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 17.

minister of Christ, and such are the subjects which he is commissioned to make known. His office is, to expound the great truths of the gospel, to set forth in a lucid and perspicuous manner the mystery of Christ. And this it is impossible for him to do, unless he have a clear and accurate and well defined understanding of those truths, and a competent insight into that mystery. Distinctness of spiritual vision must surely be necessary in him, who is to be a "leader of the blind," if both are not to fall into the ditch. A partial and incomplete knowledge of scriptural truth, on the part of the minister, will usually be the cause of defective attainments in the people to whom he ministers. For how can the unskilful workman build up the beautiful edifice of Christian faith and holiness, of whose perfect symmetry and nice proportions he is partially ignorant? He may build most sedulously, and devote himself unweariedly to the work, but the building which he rears will usually betray marks of the unskilfulness of his hand, in the want of perfect conformity to the scriptural design. He must study to "shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."¹

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

This spiritual wisdom, which consists in clear and comprehensive views of the truths revealed in Scripture, is evidently essential to the due execution of the ministerial office. And this, we have already stated, must be combined with that wisdom, which consists in sound judgment and discrimination. The exercise of this will often be demanded in the practical details of the ministry. In dealing with the consciences of men, and in presenting the truths of the Gospel to the ever varying phases of the human mind and character, this spiritual faculty will be brought into frequent and important requisition. And he will scarcely be able to "make full proof of his ministry," who is materially defective in this particular.

It is most deeply to be deplored, that the sacred ministry of God's word should be the only profession, in which ignorance of its very first principles is tolerated. The consequences of unskilfulness in any other profession are often most serious, but in this they are *ruinous*. The interests involved in the due discharge of its holy functions are too deeply important to be trifled with.

One point only now remains to be considered—the *conduct* essential to the Christian minister. Since this is moulded by the character, in other words, by the inward state of the heart and affections, the consideration of it naturally follows from

the subject, which we have just been discussing. If the character be spiritual, then the conduct will partake of its spirituality. "Ye shall know them by their fruits," is a maxim of universal application, but our Lord applied it in the first instance to false prophets. And most assuredly, the spiritual qualifications for the ministry, which have been stated above, will have their developement in a life and conduct corresponding therewith. Spirituality of mind and holy affections must produce the fruits of holiness in the life; and right motives for entering upon the ministry will necessarily lead a man diligently to practise whatever tends to promote, and scrupulously to avoid whatever tends to neutralize the beneficial effects of his ministry. If therefore the necessity of the above qualifications be acknowledged, it will be needless to enlarge upon this branch of the subject. Words would be idly spent in attempting to prove, that the Christian minister must be generally correct and moral in his deportment. There is a universal feeling, that a higher standard of morality should be maintained by the ministers of religion, than by its ordinary professors. This is a point, which we believe will be generally admitted, and may therefore be taken for granted. But when we come to examine the notions which usually prevail upon the subject, we find that the superiority demanded

is of no very elevated description. And it is not to be wondered at, where the general standard of Christian conduct is depressed so far below the Scriptural level, that the higher standard required from the minister should still be defective.

The apostolic injunctions of St. Paul, addressed to Timothy and Titus, will point out to us the conduct requisite in the Christian minister. In the first place he must be *blameless*. It is worthy of remark, how frequently St. Paul enforces the necessity of this, as a qualification for every department of the ministry. Is a bishop to be ordained? Let us hear the Apostle's description of the person whom he would wish to be selected for this "good work." He "must be blameless." He must "have a good report of them which are without."¹ And in addressing Titus, whom he had left in Crete to ordain elders in every city, he repeats the same admonition. Upon whom he is exhorted to confer the gift of apostolical ordination. We find the same qualification placed at the very beginning of the description. "If any be blameless. . . . For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God."² Titus himself is commanded to be such, that "he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 2. 7.

² Titus i. 6, 7.

to say of you.”¹ Or are the inferior offices of the church to be supplied? Still we meet with the same limitation. “Let these (the deacons) first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.”²

This then we may reckon an essential characteristic of the Christian minister’s conduct. It must be unblemished. It must manifestly and undeniably be free from every breath of suspicion.³ There must not only be no *evil* in it, but no *appearance* of evil; not only no stepping beyond the verge of propriety, but not even an approach to its very confines. If there be *debateable* ground between the territories of the church and the world, that ground is not the place where the Christian minister should take his stand. If there be pleasures and occupations of a *doubtful* character, those are not the pleasures and occupations which the ministering servant of God should select. The world must receive no countenance in its questionable practices from *his* example. If the rule, “touch not, taste not, handle not,” be applicable to any, it is peculiarly so to him. We may go even further than this. Let an amuse-

¹ Titus ii. 8.

² 1 Tim. iii. 10.

³ The two words which are rendered “blameless,” ἀνεπίληπτος, and ἀνέγκλητος, both signify, not merely *free from crime*, but *free from the charge of criminality*.

ment or an occupation be intrinsically innocent, yet, if it offend weak consciences, if it "cast a stumbling-block in a brother's way," it is to be repudiated. The Christian minister should be a man living for one object, and whatever in any degree interferes with that object, must be sacrificed. Jeremy Taylor has well observed, 'In a minister of the gospel, every inordination of carefulness, and every excess of attendance to secular affairs, and every unnecessary avocation from, or neglect of, his great work, is criminal: and many things are excesses in them, which are not in others, because the ministerial office requires more attendance and conversation with spiritual things than that of others.'¹

But the minister is not only to be blameless in his conduct. This is a *negative* quality. There must be something *positive*, something beyond the mere negation of evil. He must be *exemplary*. "Be thou (says St. Paul to Timothy,) an *example* (τύπος) of the *believers* in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."² And so also to Titus. "In all things shew thyself a *pattern* (τύπον) of good works."³ The Christian minister is to be an example not merely to the *world*, but to the *church*; an example

¹ Vol. xi. 474.

² 1 Tim. iv. 12.

³ Titus ii. 7.

of holiness and purity among the holy and the pure. His life and conduct ought not only to be good and holy, but *preeminently* good and holy. For this is evidently implied in the very idea of being a pattern. He is to *shew*,¹ that is, to *exhibit* himself as an example. To place his conduct before their eyes as a model of superior sanctity. If Christians in general are to be refined from the dross of sin, he should be as gold seven times purified in the fire. If they are “to shine as lights in the world,” he is to be “a burning and a shining light.” In short, like the chief shepherd of the sheep, the pastor is to *go before* his flock, that they may follow him.

Such is the standard of conduct required of him, who undertakes the holy office of the Christian ministry. We have traced the high endowments, and the varied gifts, and the heavenly character, which form the qualifications of “the man of God.” And who does not sigh with a feeling of regret, that this picture of ministerial excellence should ever fail of being realized? Who does not breathe a deeply fervent petition to the great Head of the church, that so may all his ministers be qualified? O! that he would send forth abundantly such labourers into his vineyard, men of deep humility,

¹ σεαυτὸν παρεχόμενος τύπον καλῶν ἔργων.” Titus ii. 7.

of burning zeal, of unblemished holiness ; men taught of God, that they may teach others with their lips, and enforce their doctrine by the silent yet persuasive eloquence of a blameless life ! Then might we look for bright and glorious and blessed days for his church ; then might we reasonably expect to behold her “ enlarging the place of her tent, and stretching forth the curtain of her habitation.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEPLORABLE CONSEQUENCES OF DEFECTIVE QUALIFICATIONS.

IF it be true, that God has appointed certain qualifications, as generally necessary for the ministerial office, it evidently cannot be a matter of indifference, whether they be possessed or not. Evil consequences, greater or less in degree, must plainly result from the deficiency. This may fairly be inferred from the general principle, which was established in a former chapter. We shall now proceed to point out some of the most prominent and most serious among those evil consequences. It is indeed utterly impossible duly to appreciate the full extent of the mischief; but we can see enough of the evils to make us most deeply deplore their existence, and most fervently pray for their extinction.

Contempt of the office will obviously be one of

the miserable results of a disqualified ministry, and it will be the parent of many more. This, we admit, by no means ought to be the result but unquestionably, as men are generally constituted, it will be the natural, and we may almost say, the necessary consequence. If indeed men judged rightly, they would be able to separate "the precious from the vile;" they would detach the sanctity of the office from the person of the bearer, and under the most disadvantageous circumstances, would perceive the glory and dignity of the one to be independent of the inferiority of the other. But this is too much to expect from the generality of mankind. Their judgment is hasty and superficial. Their opinions are formed from what is presented in a tangible shape before their eyes, rather than from inward reflexion upon the reality of things. The world at large will judge of the utility and importance of an institution, by its practical working, rather than by its theoretical capabilities. If they perceive beneficial effects resulting from it, they are ready at once to admit its excellence; but if, on the other hand, they look in vain for fruits corresponding with its professed design, they are equally ready to undervalue or despise it. It can scarcely be expected, therefore, that the holy office of the ministry should be otherwise treated. We may justly

blame the children of Israel for "abhorring the offering of the Lord," when the sons of Eli "made themselves vile," but we can hardly wonder at the fact. It was a result naturally to be expected under such circumstances. We are indeed very far from supposing, that this will be the effect produced upon the mind of the enlightened Christian. Whatever blemishes or deficiencies he may perceive in the minister, will be the cause of deep and heartfelt sorrow ; but they cannot in the smallest degree diminish his reverence for God's holy institution itself. He will indeed be greatly discouraged, when there is a radical defect of qualification ; and if the life and conduct of the minister be unworthy of his high calling, he will probably derive but little comfort from the ordinances of religion, administered under such unpropitious circumstances. But he knows too well the unspeakable value of the sacred office, to despise or undervalue it, even though its vestments be stained with the pollutions of earth. Such however will not be the case with the worldly man. A priesthood scandalous in life, or slenderly qualified for the execution of its functions, will not only be contemptible in itself to the irreligious, but will transfer a portion of its own not unmerited odium to the office, with which it is invested. The transition from the one to the

other will be easy and natural. And if the sins of religious professors are in all cases a scandal and a reproach to religion, and give great occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, surely when the ministers of religion themselves are found defective in those moral or spiritual qualifications, which are required by their office, a fouler reproach must be cast upon religion, inasmuch as its very ordinances are thereby exposed to the danger of contempt. It should not be forgotten also, that the danger is increased by the conspicuous station in the church, which is assigned to the clergy. They are necessarily exposed to a severer scrutiny, and their blemishes are thereby placed in a stronger and a clearer light. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." They have been not more beautifully than truly compared with the sun, 'which has more and closer observers, when he is eclipsed, than when he is in his beauty.'

It may be said, indeed, that as worldly men do not, and cannot appreciate the spiritual qualifications of the ministerial character, so neither can they clearly discern the absence or defect of them; and that, in such cases, the office is in no danger of dishonour. But it may, we think, be fairly doubted, whether worldly and irreligious men are quite so blind to the qualities, which should be

found in the minister of Christ. At any rate, they are sufficiently acute in detecting, and sufficiently severe in animadverting upon, the inconsistencies of his character and conduct. They may dislike the spiritually-minded and faithful reprover of their sins, but they will secretly in their hearts respect him. On the other hand, they will usually be found to think lightly of him, whose worldliness of mind, and negligence of life, they feel to be inconsistent with the high character which he sustains. Though their notions of the requisite qualifications of the Christian minister may be vague and undefined, yet they do not expect to find his standard of religion no higher than their own; they do not expect, nor, if the real state of their feelings were candidly expressed, do they generally wish, that he should be altogether such an one as themselves. And when they find, that neither by his doctrine nor his life he produces any visible effect upon the community; when they can point to no very distinct and tangible benefit resulting from his ministry, can we wonder, that they should often come to the conclusion, that the office itself is one of little practical utility? They may be induced, from various motives, to uphold and maintain its worldly emoluments and immunities, but it is practically dishonoured in their estimation.

Schism in the Church is another deplorable effect, resulting from the want of due qualification in its ministers. We may trace this evil indeed to other sources. It has often sprung up, where no such cause has existed. It reared its monstrous head in the church of Corinth, amidst the labours of the chiefest of all the apostles. And it has not unfrequently, down to the present period, grown up simultaneously with the most faithful and most laborious ministration of the Gospel. We must look for its primary cause too often in the pride and the selfishness of an evil heart; and for its author, in that Being, whose constant endeavour it is to sow tares amongst the wheat in the field of Christ. But if an ill-qualified ministry be not the cause, we may safely affirm that it is the most frequent occasion of schism. A garden may be productive of noxious weeds, from the natural property of the soil, but the want of diligence or skill, on the part of the cultivator, is usually the occasion of their increase.

In reviewing the history of our own church since the Reformation, we shall find abundant proof of the above statement. Previously to that period, when priest and people were alike debased by ignorance and superstition, there could be but little to disturb the unity of error in the church. The existence of schism implies a spirit of inquiry,

and a measure of light, and a freedom of thought on the part of the people, which up to that time were comparatively unknown. But when the public mind was awakened from its lethargy by the stirring spirit which was abroad, it could no longer brook the domination of a secularized and degraded priesthood. It began to canvass freely the qualifications for the ministerial office; and when they were manifestly deficient, was not backward in refusing to yield a blind allegiance. The growth of schisms in the church from this time was rapid almost beyond belief. It seemed as if the minds of men, suddenly let loose from their long bondage, could not moderately use their newly acquired freedom. It degenerated into licence and self-will.

All contemporary history justifies the conclusion, that the low standard of the ministry, at and after the Reformation, was one main cause or occasion of the innumerable rents, which were then made in the unity of the church. The clergy were too often ignorant and scandalous in their lives; and the people, eager for the bread of life, were ready to receive it with thankfulness from unauthorized but purer hands. The fire that was kindled throughout England, at the funeral piles of her martyred reformers, could not suddenly be extinguished; and if not fed by

the priesthood upon her consecrated altars, was sure to be kept alive by zealous but irregular exertions.

Here was "the beginning of sorrows." Schism after schism distracted the church; and unhappily, there were too many tempting occasions afforded by the state of the ministry, for the efforts of turbulent and ambitious sectaries. And it cannot be denied, that in many instances the pious and sincere churchman must have found his attachment to the church put to a severe trial, when he saw a purer doctrine, and a holier life, and a stricter discipline prevailing amongst those, who had severed themselves from her communion. We need not travel through succeeding periods for proof of our argument. Illustrious and venerable names—names to be had in everlasting honour—adorn the pages of her history; but the general standard of ministerial character, throughout the length and breadth of the land, seems to have been of no very elevated description. The higher and more dignified ecclesiastical stations were occasionally filled by eminent and holy men; but great as must have been their influence for good, the moral power of the church over the people will ever depend mainly upon the qualifications of her parochial clergy. And if coldness, and negligence, and heterodoxy, and worldliness of life, be

their prevailing characteristics, we cannot wonder at the growth and multiplication of heresy and schism.

The arguments against separation from the church, under such circumstances, however satisfactory in themselves, are not easily appreciated by the vulgar mind. If there be sincere piety in an individual, the ardent desire for spiritual instruction will outweigh a thousand abstract arguments. And it will not be found an easy thing to convince him, that he is doing wrong in seeking that out of the church, which he looks for in vain within its precincts. Thanks be to God, that the plea of a supposed necessity for separation now less frequently exists. And we hail it as a token of brighter and happier days, and a blessed omen of God's favour to his church, that in the time of her trial, when she has to sustain the bitter and unprovoked assaults of her enemies, He has raised up a faithful ministry, who, by their purer doctrine and their holier lives have "cut off occasion from them who desire occasion" of reproaching her.

We may add one more evil consequence to the above, and that of such tremendous magnitude, that it throws all inferior ones into the shade. A ministry, essentially defective in qualifications, involves the *loss of souls*, and thereby a frustration

of the grand design of its institution. This point requires but little proof or illustration. God has appointed the preaching of the gospel to be the instrument of "saving those that believe." He has intimately connected the success of the work with the fitness of the agents; and therefore the want of a certain measure of fitness must materially affect the due accomplishment of the result. Since God has, in his infinite wisdom, instituted an order of means for the attainment of his purposes, it cannot be expected that He should depart from his ordinary method. This however is not a matter of mere speculation and conjecture; it is susceptible of proof. Experience plainly shews us, that there is an essential difference in the actual effects produced by the ministry of the gospel, in the hands of different individuals. In some instances we find it productive, in various degrees, of the blessed fruits, which its Divine author intended it to produce; in others we look in vain for any substantial results. Where the pastoral office is faithfully discharged, there Christ's wandering sheep are usually brought home to his fold; where the flock is feebly and negligently tended, there we behold them wandering on to their destruction. It is an unquestionable fact, that, for the most part, sinners remain unconverted and unenlightened, and therefore unsaved, under a minis-

try of the word, defective with regard to its fundamental qualifications. If therefore the souls of men perish for lack of that knowledge, which alone can "make them wise unto salvation," surely it is not too much to assert, that the loss of those souls is in a manner chargeable upon those, who had solemnly pledged themselves "to feed the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers." If the people starve for lack of the bread of life, surely this effect may justly be attributed to those, whose office it was, as good stewards, to dispense it liberally to the household of God. "If the wicked man die" unwarned "in his iniquity," it cannot be but that his blood will be required at the slumbering watchman's hand. If the wall be rent and broken down, this can be traced to no others than to those, who had "daubed it with untempered mortar."

We are not therefore putting the case too strongly, when we assert, that the loss of souls is the dreadful consequence of an unqualified and unfaithful ministry. For if, by an abuse of his Christian liberty, a man may be said to "destroy one for whom Christ died,"¹ how much more by negligence and ignorance, in a matter of such unspeakable importance as the cure of souls?

¹ Rom. xiv 15.

These may perhaps be considered the chief of the many awful consequences, resulting from the defective qualifications of the ministers of Christ. We might enumerate others, but it may be questioned whether a stronger case would be made out. If the above be the inevitable results of an inefficient priesthood, they are enough to impress the mind with the awfulness of ministerial responsibility. And Oh! how tremendous will be the doom of that faithless "steward of the mysteries of God," upon whom it will be charged at the day of judgment, that through his inconsistencies of life, the holy office which he sustained was made contemptible in the eyes of the world; that through his slothfulness and negligence, the flock committed by the chief Shepherd to his charge was drawn away from "the green pastures and quiet waters" of his ordinances; and that through his unfaithfulness to his trust, the souls have perished for which Christ died!

CHAPTER V.

THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

HITHERTO we have spoken in general terms upon the subject of the Christian ministry. We have made only incidental allusions to the office, as it is constituted in that particular section of the Catholic church, established in this land. It now becomes necessary to take a more limited view of the subject, and to direct our remarks with more pointed application to the ministerial office in the Church of England. And here a wide field for discussion is opened. In the foregoing chapters little perhaps has been said, calculated to meet with opposition. In most of the arguments employed, we have probably carried along with us the assent of the serious reader. The case will now be different. We are entering upon debated ground, upon ground which has been the field of theological warfare for above two centuries, and

which, it is to be feared, will be the field of many a contest still.

It would lead us too far away from our immediate object, and too much interfere with that unity of design which we wish to maintain, if we were to follow out the various topics included under this division of the subject. It will be sufficient, perhaps, if we establish the two following points ; First—That there is a general *suitableness* in the economy of the Church of England for promoting the ends of the Gospel. And, Secondly—That its inefficiency (where such exists) is to be traced mainly to its *defective administration*, with reference to the appointment of the clergy. In other words, that the machinery is calculated to be effectual, if duly and conscientiously worked.

And first, let us attend to the *constitution of the ministry in the Church of England*. It cannot be expected, that we should travel over the oft-repeated arguments by which the legitimacy and apostolical authority of her *episcopal regimen* are established. It were vain to hope, that by any arguments we can urge, we should be able to bring conviction to the minds of those, who have not been convinced by the powerful treatises which already exist. If any subject may be considered fairly exhausted, that subject is Episcopacy. It

would be difficult to bring forward any arguments, on either side of the question, which have not been repeatedly urged by the respective disputants. And we may be permitted to add, that there are few subjects, which to a candid and unprejudiced mind, might more easily be set at rest. It is to be feared, that many who impugn the episcopal form of church government, have never duly weighed the force of argument by which it is supported. Without pretending to discuss the subject, it may be well to give a general statement of the question, for the purpose of provoking, not controversy, but investigation. And in conducting this investigation, it would be desirable to divest the episcopal office of all that is not, strictly speaking, *essential* to its being; and to regard it in its simple character, independently of the accidents of worldly rank and splendour, with which in some cases it happens to be invested.

The argument for episcopacy is of a two-fold nature; derived from *Scripture* and from *Catholic antiquity*.

The *scriptural* argument lies within a narrow compass. It is admitted on all hands, that the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* are used in the apostolical writings in a convertible manner. But if this be considered decisive in favour of the identity of bishops and presbyters, then by the same mode of

reasoning it might be made to appear, that a deacon, as well as a presbyter, is identical with an apostle.¹ It is idle thus to quibble about words, when the argument is respecting things. The question is simply this, Can we find any thing to justify the conclusion, that *episcopal power* was exercised over the churches in the apostolical times? And we point at once to the powers delegated to Timothy in the church of Ephesus, and to Titus in that of Crete. And it is incumbent upon our opponents to prove, that this was an authority, which was not intended to be perpetuated in the church, but merely to answer an immediate and urgent necessity. Until this be done, we may be permitted to appeal to Scripture, as a warrant for the episcopal office. We may be allowed to place Timothy and Titus first in the list of the early bishops of the Church of Christ.

But the argument from Scripture cannot be considered as absolutely decisive of the question.² It is vain to look for a scheme of Church polity, clearly and definitely laid down in Holy Writ. We cannot, from the writings of the apostles alone, gather up, with any degree of certainty, the

¹ See Eph. iii. 7. Col. i. 23, 25; where St. Paul calls himself *διάκονος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*—and 1 Pet. v. 1, and 2 John 1. where the writers style themselves *πρεσβύτεροι*.

² See Hooker, Eccl. Pol. iii. 2.

disjointed portions of a complete ecclesiastical regimen, and arrange them so as to form a perfect and harmonious whole. In none of his writings does St. Paul draw up distinctly the model of a church. In fact, the churches of Christ cannot be considered as settled in discipline, while the apostles exercised over them their extraordinary and temporary authority. While "the care of all the churches" devolved upon St. Paul, their regimen was evidently in an unsettled condition; it was, as it were, under the *process* of formation and adjustment. If however we can find, from the general tenor of primitive antiquity, the state of the churches immediately after the decease of the apostles, we can then form a more correct judgment of the government, which they instituted and intended to be perpetuated. And this we are enabled to do. We may say without the fear of contradiction, that the early records of the church are entirely in favour of the episcopal form of government. There cannot be found one dissentient voice amongst the early fathers; not a statement in their writings which seems to imply, that there existed, in their time, a parity of ecclesiastical authority among the ministers of the gospel. In the fourth century, indeed, St. Jerome doubted the primitive superiority of the bishop above the presbyter; but the actual superiority, he tacitly

admits, was of such remote antiquity, that he could not trace its commencement.¹

The fact is unquestionable, that the episcopal office, as distinct from and superior to that of the presbyter, has existed from time immemorial in the church. If it date its commencement after the times of the apostles, we vainly search the records of antiquity for any indication of the period of its introduction. A revolution so great, so pregnant with important consequences, so subversive of the institutions of Christ and his apostles, could not have crept stealthily into the church, unheeded and unopposed. No ambitious presbyter could have awed his equals in dignity and authority into meek submission to his usurped ascendancy. It is not to be believed for a moment, that the great body of the clergy in every Christian land, from Britain to the shores of India, should have quietly and simultaneously surrendered their rights, and yielded to the unlawful domination of an individual of their own fraternity. Could such a mighty innovation have been effected, and yet no trace be left upon the pages of the church's history?—no monument have been reared to perpetuate the memory of an event so strange

¹ See St. Jerome's words fully discussed by Bp. Jeremy Taylor in his "Episcopacy asserted," Sect. XXI. Vol. VII. 77. and by Hooker, Ecc. Pol. vii. 5.

and so unheard of? How is such a supposition consistent with the reverence of the early Christians for apostolical customs and traditions? Was there no burning zeal to protest against the guilty assumption; no spirit, zealous for the honour of the Lord Jesus, ready to denounce the base attempt upon the liberty of his church?

But we need not prosecute the argument further. Episcopacy, undeniably, has existed universally and without interruption, from the earliest ages of the church until the period of the reformation. And it is surely incumbent upon those, who deny its apostolical antiquity, to give us something more than a mere unfounded conjecture, respecting the date of its commencement. We have a right to demand of them the time, the place, and the circumstances of its birth. And if they cannot point to these, we must be permitted to maintain, that its existence is coeval with the appointment, or at least the final settlement of the ministry. In such a case as this, a peradventure is not to be admitted. We must have something definite and tangible in an objection, which goes to set aside an institution, sanctioned by the uninterrupted testimony of the universal church.

Upon the *second* order of ministers in the Church of England, little need be said. The degree of the *presbyterate* has not been the sub-

ject of much controversy. All are agreed upon the scriptural and apostolical authority of the order of presbyters or elders. Nor is there any diversity of opinion respecting their legitimate functions, excepting only the power of ordination and church discipline. Unto them is committed principally the office of feeding the church of God with the bread of life. They are the constituted teachers and expositors of the word, upon whom, in their respective parishes and congregations, devolves the duty of preaching the gospel, and administering the holy sacraments.

Respecting the *third* order of ministers in the Church of England, that of *deacons*, there has been much controversy, but with little reason. For even granting, for the sake of argument, that the first deacons, ordained by the apostles, were appointed to "serve tables," and nothing more, yet there can be no reasonable objection to the employment of this office, as introductory to the higher orders of the ministry. And since among those seven, who were first set apart to the diaconal office, some were evidently empowered to preach and to baptize, it is difficult to discover why there may not be a like combination of offices in the present day.¹ Whether they executed those

¹ See Hooker, Eccl. Pol. V. 78,

offices as *deacons*, or as *evangelists*, or in any other character, is a matter of indifference. The fact is clear, that the duties were then combined in the person of one individual, and it is difficult to conceive what reason can be alleged, why the same may not now be permitted. It would be idle in this case, to quarrel with the name, which merely expresses the idea of a servant or assistant.¹

It were indeed greatly to be desired, that in the Church of England, a parochial charge were never entrusted to a deacon alone. There is an inconsistency in appointing to the sole spiritual superintendence of a parish, one who is in all cases a novice, and is moreover not qualified to administer some of the ordinances of the church. And most desirable would it be, (were it practicable,) and most beneficial to the cause of religion, if in our wide and populous parishes, the presbyter enjoyed the co-operation of several assistant deacons.

Thus far we have considered the ministerial office in the Church of England, the scriptural character of its orders, and its general accordance with the model of apostolical and primitive antiquity. We are well aware, that many of the arguments, which have been urged, are vehemently controverted. It does not however consist with

¹ δίακονος.

our design, to enter upon any more elaborate discussion of the points at issue between the Church of England and its opponents. But, in considering the ministry of that church, it seemed to be necessary, to point out its scriptural character, and its consequent fitness to accomplish the great design of its original institution. For if it were wanting in this respect; if it were a device of man's invention; or if it were essentially unlike the ministry, as constituted by the apostles, then it might with reason be expected, that such a ministry would be ineffectual and nugatory.

The *parochial distribution* of the ministry, in the Church of England, is another point which demands our attention. And next to the purity and Scriptural soundness of its constitution, this may be considered one principal feature of its suitability to promote the cause of Christ and his Gospel in the land. This forms an integral part of the general question of religious establishments; a question which, we think, as far as argument is concerned, may fairly be considered as decided. It has perhaps during the last few years undergone a more thorough and more sifting examination, than it had ever before received. Every argument, which had been urged in its favour, has been exposed to a severer scrutiny; and not even its warmest advocates perhaps had deemed, that it

occupied so impregnable a position, as the unsuccessful assaults of its opponents have at length demonstrated.

Since these pages are especially addressed to the members of the Church of England, it appears unnecessary to argue a point which, it may be presumed, is fully admitted by them all.

We can best estimate the advantage of a parochial ministry throughout the land, by suffering ourselves to reflect upon the consequences, which would follow upon its extinction. The blessings, which result to a parish from the constant and unwearied labours of a faithful minister of Christ, are apparent in the altered habits, and improved character, and sanctified lives of its population. There is peace, and order, and civilization, and above all there is holiness, in the train of a well-ordered and duly qualified ministry. These effects are palpable to our senses. But the effects which would follow, and at no distant interval, from a breaking up of parochial organization, are not perhaps sufficiently appreciated. Let us suppose, that full play were given to what is called the Voluntary Principle, that every vestige of the present system were abolished, the whole machinery of the church swept away, and that the several districts of the land were left to seek, as best they could, the means of religious instruction.

It must be manifest, that, under such an arrangement, large portions of the country would be either destitute entirely of the word of life, or dependent upon means utterly inadequate to the necessity. The ordinances of religion would in too many cases quietly sink into contemptuous oblivion; the Lord's day would lose its sanctity in the frivolities of a worldly festival, or the secularities of worldly business; and practical heathenism, or vain superstition, would ere long spread their deadly influence over large portions of our rural population. It is impossible to contemplate the bare probability of this picture being ever realized, without being amazed that any, who call themselves Christians, should lend their aid in promoting consequences so disastrous to the cause of religion.

It is not easy, duly to estimate the benefit resulting to a community from the labours of a parochial minister. His efforts are circumscribed within the compass of an assigned district of Christ's vineyard, and this district has all the benefit of his concentrated energies. His labours are not divided and diffused over an area, too wide for his spiritual superintendence. His flock is not too numerous to be counted, and yet sufficiently numerous to engross his undivided attention. Such is, *theoretically*, the parochial system of our

church; and it is most deeply to be deplored, that the fluctuations of a populous community, and the changes incidental to commercial and manufacturing prosperity, have so augmented the sphere of duty in some of our parishes, as practically to frustrate the benevolent design of the church. The evil is great indeed, but the remedy is obvious. We call upon the legislature, for the moral and spiritual welfare of the people, to lend their aid in a cause so holy. We call upon them, for the sake of sobriety, and good order, and loyalty, and national prosperity, to second, with no niggardly and mistaken economy, the efforts which are made within the bosom of the church herself, "to lengthen her cords, and strengthen her stakes." Let churches be reared, and ministers be located, in places where of old the heart of the faithful pastor was discouraged, and his hands enfeebled by the thought, that, though willing "to spend and be spent" in God's service, he could not, single-handed, overtake the spiritual necessities of his parishioners.

We trust, that the general adaptation of the economy of the Church of England to promote the design of the gospel is sufficiently apparent. A system so scriptural in its character, and theoretically possessed of such extensive capabilities, can want only a vigorous and conscientious ad-

ministration, to render it effective. And if it should seem, in some instances, to have failed in the accomplishment of its ends, its inefficiency will be found, in most cases, to have arisen from a defect in the practical working of its machinery. There would be little difficulty, in making good the assertion, that the greatest evil, under which the church has groaned, has been the want of a spiritually-minded and devoted clergy in all her parishes—a clergy sound in doctrine, pure in life, unworldly in spirit, and respectable, if not distinguished, for intellect and learning. The Church of England has indeed been the strong-hold of protestant orthodoxy, the faithful depository of the word of life, the firm and unyielding witness for God, against the countless errors of the age. In the ranks of her clergy, of every degree, have been numbered men, to whom the universal church owes a weighty debt of gratitude,—men whose brilliant endowments, and varied learning, and devoted piety, received their highest honour, by being successfully employed in the service of God. But still it must be admitted, the cause of truth demands the admission, that a very different class of men has found too easy entrance into the orders of her ministry ; that too often the wolf has entered into the fold, not so completely disguised in sheep's clothing, but that his native character

and propensities might have been detected. It cannot be denied, that the secular, the thoughtless, the indolent, have too often been numbered among the shepherds of the flock.

We do not think, that the true interest of the Church of England lies in concealment or denial of the painful truth. If we shut our eyes to facts, there are others who will stedfastly gaze at them : if we do not examine, for the purpose of removing them, there are others who will do so, with an eagerness to expose them. Our wisest course is, openly to face, and manfully to grapple with the evil. We should look to the weak and defenceless parts of our bulwarks, in order to strengthen them, before the assailant takes advantage of our oversight. It is difficult indeed to conceive, what beneficial result can follow from a studious concealment (if concealment were possible) of occasional mal-administration in the economy of the church. There certainly cannot be a more effectual method of perpetuating the grievance. Many of the evils, to which we are alluding, arise from the unhealthy state of the public mind ; and we see not how a remedy can be applied, unless there be a thorough investigation.

The opponents of the Church of England will perhaps triumph at such an admission. But it would be well for them first to prove their own

systems to be immaculate. And we hesitate not to say, that if the great body of the English clergy were compared with an equal number of ministers of any other Christian community, they would not suffer by the comparison. At all events, instead of raising an unseemly note of triumph, it would be more in accordance with Christian charity and Christian humility, if the enemies of the church were to lay aside their enmity, and bend all their efforts to a removal of the existing evils.

We would strongly deprecate, in an argument like the present, the use of all party names of distinction within the church. In speaking of the qualifications for the ministry, it is hoped, that we have lost sight of all such inferior considerations, and have thought only of the broad, general, and indispensable properties, belonging to the minister of Christ. The church does not stand in need of partizans, but of faithful, pious, and spiritually-minded men; who with humble, unobtrusive diligence, will fulfil the solemn trust committed to their hands. When therefore we speak of unsuitable appointments to the ministerial office, as destroying the efficiency of the church, it should be remembered, that we refer to the defect of those radical qualities, without which a man may indeed be recognized among his fellow-men as a pastor of

the flock, but "when the chief shepherd shall appear," will receive only the hireling's reward.

And whether it be to the episcopal, or any inferior office in the church, that an unsuitable person is appointed, we maintain, that in proportion to the degree of disqualification, will usually be the magnitude of the evils, resulting from his appointment. The superior and more extended influence of the bishop, while it increases his personal responsibility, will of course materially augment the evil consequences of his defective qualifications. The worldly-minded and negligent prelate will necessarily exercise a most pernicious influence over the diocese, the government of which he administers. For, not to speak of the patronage, with which his office usually invests him, the church will be deprived of the benefits, which result from the spiritual supervision of a holy and venerable father in Christ. The clergy will be paralysed in their exertions, by the absence of that wise counsel and encouraging sympathy, the advantage of which it is difficult fully to appreciate.

Again, the appointment of an unqualified individual to the duties of a parochial charge will evidently frustrate the beneficial provisions of the national church. It is the obvious design of her institutions, to supply the whole mass of the

population with fit and adequate means of instruction; to bring to the very doors of every class in the community the "bread of life;" to place within reach of the inhabitants of the remotest districts in the land, a spiritual friend and counsellor; one whose whole life shall be devoted to the work of "guiding their feet into the way of peace." Now this benevolent design must be hindered, if not entirely frustrated, when the person appointed to perform these offices is incompetent or unworthy. If he be ignorant of the gospel himself, how can he duly explain it to others? If he be indifferent and careless himself, how can he excite others to "strive to enter in at the strait gate"? If he be unimpressed with the value of his own soul, how can he impress others with the value of theirs? If his mind be absorbed in the frivolities of the world, how can he exhort others to "set their affections upon things above, not on things on the earth?" In short, if his own life and character be not a bright exemplar of his teaching, how can it with any reason be expected, that the people should blindly follow him as their guide to heaven? It is manifest, that under such circumstances the pious intentions of the church are practically frustrated.

Thanks be to God, this evil is, we trust, gradually retreating from our land. A higher order

of men—of men holier in life, more spiritually-minded, more devoted to God, and in every respect better qualified for their work, is to be found in the ranks of the clergy. And never, perhaps, has the church presented a more encouraging aspect; never has she bid so fair to recover those sheep, which had strayed from her fold, when so many of her shepherds were “hirelings, and cared not for the sheep.” Oh that God would finish the work which he has begun; that he would produce a simultaneous movement in every department of the church; that he would remove out of her every scandal, and purge out all her dross! Great as is the improvement, which we have witnessed, much yet remains to be accomplished. There are still within her communion too many ministers, upon whose fitness for the sacred office even charity herself would hesitate to pronounce a favourable verdict; too many, by the fruit of whose life and doctrine it may be known, that they are essentially unqualified for the work, which they have rashly undertaken. Let not the faithful members of the church cease to pray for her peace and purity; let them, to use the prophet’s emphatic language, “give the Lord no rest, till he has established, and made her a praise in the earth.”¹ While there is one careless, or un-

¹ Isaiah lxii. 7.

enlightened, or unholy minister within her sacred precincts, let us not deem, that she can dispense with the prayerful and persevering efforts of all "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." And however difficult may be the situation in which she is placed, however paralysing may be the effect of secular interference in her administration, let us not despair of seeing that blessed time, when all her rulers shall be men, not only eminent for their scholastic accomplishments, but still more for their exalted piety, and their entire devotedness to God; when "her priests shall be clothed with righteousness," and animated by one constraining principle, the desire of saving souls.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAUSES TO WHICH UNSUITABLE APPOINTMENTS TO THE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND ARE TO BE TRACED.

IT has been candidly admitted in the preceding chapter, that the economy of the Church of England, scriptural as it is in itself, and well calculated to be effectual, is nevertheless not without some grievous blemishes in its administration. The existence of unqualified ministers within her pale has neither been denied nor palliated. It is idle to suppose, that her cause can be best advocated by the denial of abuses; nor do we think that palliation is either justifiable or expedient. Instead of seeking how much can be said in extenuation of an evil, would it not be wiser to set vigorously about the work of reformation? By such a course, we believe, that the enemies of the church would be so far from gaining an advantage, that they would be even disarmed of some

of their most effective weapons. If an evil exist, let it be boldly avowed, let it be cordially lamented, let it be speedily removed. When its existence is once admitted, the first step towards amendment is a thorough investigation of the sources in which it originates. The rudiments, from which it sprang, are to be carefully examined; and all the varied causes, proximate or remote, to which it owes its existence or its increase, are to be impartially considered. When once this is done, it will be a matter of less difficulty, to suggest sound and practicable and sufficient remedies. Without this, all the schemes for improvement which may be proposed, will be found to be the worse than futile attempts of ecclesiastical empiricism. And it must be acknowledged, that, in these days of reckless innovation, it is doubly necessary to guard most diligently against crude and ill-advised attempts at improvement.

The present chapter will be devoted to the consideration of the principal causes, to which the appointment of unsuitable persons to the ministerial office is to be attributed. And here it is necessary to tread softly and warily. Hitherto the topics, which have fallen under our notice, have presented little practical difficulty. But we are now entering upon a subject, which confessedly requires no small measure of sound judgment and

discrimination. And we would, at the very outset, disclaim all harsh and invidious censures upon any individuals or bodies of individuals, convinced that nothing is less likely to be effectual, in promoting a sound and judicious reformation, than a tone of bitter and angry invective. At the same time, the cause of truth, of God, and of his church, demands, that with all candour and “in the spirit of meekness,” we endeavour to point out abuses, and to trace them without respect of persons to their origin.

SECTION I.

ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF MINISTERIAL DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

In conducting this investigation, we must endeavour to analyse the several parts of our ecclesiastical machinery, in which the evils we have pointed out may be thought to take their beginning. But it will be necessary to carry our views beyond the defective administration of our own, or of any other ecclesiastical regimen whatever, if we wish to discover the primary cause of the disorder. It will be readily admitted, that the fundamental cause of all unsuitable appointments to the ministry, lies in *erroneous views of the nature and obligations of the sacred office*. This may without doubt be considered the prolific

parent of all other mischiefs. If this had no existence, all other subordinate causes would cease to operate. For, if right views of ministerial responsibility were universally prevalent, in every class of society, then neither would disqualified individuals put themselves forward as candidates for the office, nor, if they should venture to do so, would they be admitted. We should hear no more of a worldly-minded, or ignorant, or scandalous minister of the gospel, if the public mind were thoroughly imbued with a sense of the awfulness of the trust, which is committed by the Great Head of the Church to his stewardship. Men would tremble at the thought of incurring the guilt of trifling with holy things; or if any should be found hardy enough to attempt it, a barrier would be thrown across the path to ecclesiastical offices by the jealous vigilance of their appointed guardians, which neither the careless worldling nor the plausible hypocrite would be able easily to surmount.

Here then, we think, lies the root of the evil, which afflicts the church. The nature and responsibilities of this holy office are imperfectly understood. A very slight intercourse with general society will afford a painful corroboration of this statement. The tone of remark, which frequently prevails when the ministerial office is the subject of discussion, shews the

low estimation in which it is held, and the erroneous ideas which are entertained respecting its duties and obligations. It is truly a melancholy thing, to hear the heedless and unprincipled observations, which are too often made, even by persons who would scornfully fling away from them the imputation of contempt of religion or the ministry. But those observations, nevertheless, indicate a fundamental misconception of the design of the pastoral office. We hear it spoken of as a reputable profession, as a source of maintenance, the adoption of which involves no sacrifice of worldly rank, and implies no degradation in the scale of society. It seems to be regarded, as affording a most conveniently intermediate position between the drudgery of a lucrative profession, and the ease of aristocratic independence. The performance of its holy duties is regarded as the tenure, by which its revenues are enjoyed, in a manner not very dissimilar to that, in which in feudal times a barony was held in fief from the crown. And the value of a benefice is, in the estimation of such persons, considerably enhanced by the small amount of labour which it demands. Its desirableness is reckoned to be in inverse proportion to its importance; and that man is accounted best provided for in the church, who enjoys the largest revenue with the smallest cure of souls.

It is using language too mild and lenient to say, that such feelings arise from *imperfect* views of the obligations of the ministry. They spring from an awfully degrading misconception of its very nature and design. Is it not dishonourable and insulting to God, to put the office of his ambassador from heaven in competition with the places, and professions, and emoluments of earth?—to reckon, as the main inducements for undertaking it, the secular advantages which it offers, and to count it most desirable, when least is required to be done for the glory of him who instituted it?

And this is not the only form in which the evil exists. We discover it elsewhere in a shape, less revolting indeed to the serious mind, but not less subversive of the great design of the ministry. The ministerial office is naturally associated in our ideas with a certain measure of learning. In all ages of the church, erudition has been reckoned a most desirable accomplishment in the minister of Christ; and in some periods of its history, the clergy have been almost the sole depositories of the stores of sacred and profane literature. We would not disparage these endowments. We most earnestly desire, that the church may ever continue to number in the ranks of her ministry, men of sound and manly learning—men, whose

minds have been disciplined to vigorous thought, and richly furnished with the intellectual treasures, bequeathed by former generations. These things are useful in their proper place, and may in no small degree be made subservient to the glory of God, and the good of his church. But if we exalt them out of their proper place, if we unduly magnify their importance, we are inflicting a grievous injury upon religion. Never may the time arrive, when the church shall be encumbered and disgraced by an illiterate priesthood; but we would that the time were come, when learning *alone* should no longer be considered sufficient qualification for her service, and the best stepping stone to her high places. It is right, indeed, that theological learning should find its due reward within the bosom of the church. It is right, that men who have stood forward to put to silence the ignorance of heretics and unbelievers, should be placed in situations of dignity and emolument: and that mind must be singularly constituted, which would object to an arrangement at once so equitable in itself, and so advantageous to the church. Let honour be given to whom honour is due. Those highly-gifted men, who have manfully come forth in behalf of the church of Christ, who have sustained and repulsed the onset of her enemies, deserve all the honour

which she has it in her power to bestow. But it is high time, that secular learning should take its proper station in the church. Valuable as it unquestionably is, as a handmaid to theology, it can of itself constitute no proper fitness or recommendation for the ministerial office. There are other and higher qualities, without which a very giant in literature cannot wield the spiritual weapons of the gospel. The church should be no sheltered retreat for lettered indolence; her sequestered parishes should afford no quiet resting place for the literary trifler; her dignified posts should be no prizes for successful competition in the race of worldly fame.

We trust that the scope of the above remarks will not be misunderstood. Let the ministry be styled a learned profession, for so it ought to be esteemed; but let it not be placed on the same level with other professions, for which *learning alone* is a sufficient qualification. The lawyer or physician can qualify themselves, by persevering industry, for their respective vocations; but the minister of Christ must receive his primary qualification from above. He who instituted the office, can alone enable a man to discharge it. The possession of learning, important as it really is, in combination with other and higher qualifications, is worthless without them. A perfect mastery of

polemical theology, a thorough acquaintance with biblical criticism, and a deep research into ecclesiastical antiquity, may be possessed, and yet their possessor may be in other respects essentially unfit for the ministry. And there must be a fundamentally erroneous idea of the objects which it contemplates in the mind of him, who regards these as the primary qualifications for the office.

But perhaps the most frequent and most plausible manner, in which mistaken views of the ministry are apparent, remains to be mentioned. It is generally imagined, even by the more serious and thinking part of the community, that a correct moral deportment, and a general sobriety and steadiness of character, are sufficient indications that a youth is not unfitted for the service of the church. It is forgotten, that a spiritual office requires something more than the proprieties of a decent morality, something over and above the possession of right intentions, and a naturally amiable disposition. An elevated character, and heavenly affections, and holiness of heart and life, and all that is included in the idea of spirituality of mind, are required in a person, whose sole business it is to deal with spiritual things. To judge therefore a man to be duly qualified for the ministerial office, whose life and character shew no

marks of spirituality, betrays a lamentably defective estimate of the real nature and end of that holy institution.

We might follow out this argument further; but it must be sufficiently apparent, that, whatever inferior causes may exist, the grand producing cause of all unsuitable appointments to the ministry lies in the inadequate idea, too generally entertained, of its awful responsibility. Let this be removed, and the very fountain head of the evil is dried up. Let the public mind be generally awakened, to perceive the infinite importance of the ministry of the gospel, and the heaven-bestowed qualities, which are required in those to whom it is entrusted, and the church will no longer groan under the intolerable burden of an unqualified and inefficient priesthood. The ranks of her clergy will be filled with the choicest and best of all her sons—with men, whose hearts are warmed with zeal for God's glory, and for the salvation of their fellow-sinners—with men, who, possessing all the desirable endowments of intellect and erudition, think them devoted to the noblest purpose, when employed in the service of Christ. None will then be thought too good for an office, for which, without divine endowments, the best is as incompetent as the worst.

SECTION II.

NEGLECT OF PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE ADMISSION OF UNFIT
MINISTERS.

We must now proceed to consider the *secondary* causes, to which the evil of an unqualified ministry is to be traced. And foremost amongst these must be placed, *neglect of the precautions expressly appointed to prevent the intrusion of unfit persons into Holy Orders.* The church is manifestly jealous of the sanctity of her ministry, and has erected various outworks, as it were, to guard it from surprisal. It is plainly the design of all the documents, which are required from candidates for ordination, to place impediments in the way of unqualified persons, who may aspire to the priesthood. They are all constructed on the supposition, that the church is in the wilderness, exposed to the assaults of "grievous wolves," who if they can but gain admittance within her fold, will not "spare the sheep." The church feels her danger, and, as far as possible, guards against it. She has drawn around the offices of the ministry certain lines of defence, which, if duly guarded by her appointed watchmen, could not easily be overleapt by the worldling or the hypocrite. It cannot be said, that *in theory* the admission of an unworthy candidate to the ministerial office in the Church

of England is an easy thing. Would that it had not been so easy in practice ! But the fact is too plain to be denied, that those prudent safeguards have been negligently kept. The precautionary measures, which the wisdom of our church has appointed, are practically rendered of little avail, by the laxity with which they are enforced. In this, as well as in other departments of our ecclesiastical system, it will be found, that there is a suitable machinery already existing, which is ineffectual, simply because it is negligently worked. Let the institutions and appointments of the church be faithfully adhered to, and conscientiously enforced, according to their original design, and little else is required to work within her a sound and substantial reformation.

But we must not treat this part of the subject in too general terms. The evil is of no small dimensions, and requires to be dealt with plainly and fearlessly. We must therefore descend to particulars, and consider more in detail the nature of those precautions, to the neglect of which so large a share in producing the mischief has been attributed.

Out of several documents, which are usually required by our bishops from the candidate for holy orders, we may select the following as most worthy of observation. He is required to exhibit

' letters testimonial of his good life and conversation ' during academical residence, from the superiors of his college ; and, if any considerable time should have elapsed since his departure from college, a similar testimonial under the signature of three beneficed clergymen. When to this is added a personal examination by the bishop and his assistant chaplain, which examination embraces as wide an extent of theological reading as may be deemed requisite, it will be readily admitted, that, in theory, all due precautions are taken for securing an efficient and well-qualified clergy. And if these defences were strictly guarded, it is difficult to conceive, how any considerable number of unsuitable persons could gain admittance into the ministry.

College testimonials would present the first barrier. Here the thoughtless and unworthy would receive the first check, in their presumptuous approach to the altar of God. Here their path would be traversed by an insurmountable obstacle. Here the appointed guardians of the purity of Christ's church would meet them with a stern and uncompromising refusal. And many would thus be induced for ever to give up the thought of polluting things sacred by their unhallowed touch. The difficulties interposed would be too great, the self-denial too rigid, to be encountered by their

feeble resolution. But it must with sorrow be confessed, that this barrier is in too many cases practically abandoned. Testimonials, which were intended to be *bona fide* certificates of Christian purity of conduct, are in too many instances degraded into formal and unmeaning documents, testifying merely their own dishonesty. When almost indiscriminately given, they can be of little moral weight, as evidences of character. To answer any good purpose, they should reflect the real character of the individual, without partiality and without disguise. They should be "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well."

We are well aware, that some considerable difficulties lie in the way of an efficient administration of this part of college discipline. But there are none, which ought for a moment to interfere with a scrupulously faithful discharge of the high duty, which is owed to the church of Christ—none, which would not vanish before a conscientious desire for her peace and prosperity. The guardians of the church's portals should be swayed in this matter by no other motives than a fervent wish, that all "her priests should be clothed with righteousness." True, the rule, if rigidly enforced in one or more colleges *only*, might, in the first instance, thin their ranks, and lessen their emoluments. But

surely this inconvenience is not, for a moment, to be placed in competition with the ruinous effects, which result to the church from a lax and temporizing policy. Besides, we would demand, that the precautions of the church should be faithfully adhered to in *every* college of our venerable universities. We would earnestly desire, that our academical rulers should cause it to be generally and distinctly understood by all whom they admit into their respective societies, that college testimonials shall present clear and faithful portraitures of the character and conduct of those, whom the university sends forth from her bosom into the church. Let them be like the “*συστατικάι ἐπιστόλαι*,”¹ the “letters of commendation” of the ancient churches, honest and trustworthy witnesses of the sober life and religious conversation of the individual, to whom they refer. And let them be laid before the bishop as documents, upon the credibility of which he may confidently rely. Let him be able to infer from them, with all the certainty that the case admits of, that the candidate, whom he is about to separate for the work of the ministry, “has lived piously, and soberly, and honestly, and diligently applied himself to his studies;”² and that he is really a per-

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 1.

² See ‘Form of Letters Testimonial.’

son "worthy to be admitted to the sacred office of a deacon."

There cannot, we think, be a reasonable doubt, that this carrying out of the principle recognized by the church, would be attended with most happy and beneficial consequences to the purity of the ministry. If it were generally known, that no earthly consideration could induce the heads of a college to swerve from their high duty, surely the effect would be, that many unworthy aspirants to the ministry would find themselves baffled in their very first attempt to gain admittance. And let it not be objected, that this would be a harsh and uncharitable procedure; that it would go far to blight the prospects and ruin the hopes of an aspiring youth; and, by the disgrace which it would inflict, send a gloom and a sadness into the bosom of a happy family. We do not deny that it might so happen. But is the sanctity of the ministry to be invaded from such considerations as these? Is individual disappointment to be weighed in the balance against the peace and purity of the Church of Christ? Is any private consideration whatever worthy of a thought, when the dearest interests of men are at stake? And surely, if kindness and mercy can be shewn by one human being to another, that person must be kind and merciful, who would prevent his brother from rush-

ing heedlessly to his own destruction ; who would forcibly hold back the arm, which is stretched forward to grasp with unhallowed touch the ark of God.

When this barrier is past, there is another which immediately presents itself. Letters testimonial of precisely the same nature as the above, signed by three beneficed clergymen, are required by the ordaining bishop. Little need be added to the preceding remarks, as this second document is essentially the same as the former. But we may observe, how rigidly the church has fenced her ministry ; how careful she is, lest an unworthy person should thrust himself unheeded into its ranks. She will not leave the interval, between departure from the university and the time of ordination, unguarded. She must have the best evidence that can be obtained, of holiness of life and general fitness of character, up to the very time, when the individual is to be admitted to minister in holy things.

And this is not only a wise precaution, as affording a double security against the intrusion of unfit persons into the ministry ; but it is moreover a just and merciful appointment. It affords an opportunity to the most careless and most profligate of retrieving their lost character. It would be indeed most unreasonable, and most inconsistent

with the merciful Spirit of the Gospel, if an irreligious life, during academical residence, were for ever an insuperable barrier to ordination. However rigidly therefore college testimonials were refused to unworthy characters, this second testimonial would come in most seasonably, enabling the once dissolute, but now converted, prodigal to give himself to the service of the Lord. We believe, that instances are not rare of men who have first experienced the power of true religion, when immediately looking forward to the holy office of the ministry. The most thoughtless have been brought to solemn reflection. They have been startled by the awful vows which are required of them; they have paused and trembled, and been converted; and have afterwards been eminently blessed by God as instruments of saving souls. Now if this be no unfrequent case, when college testimonials are heedlessly dispensed, it might, we think, be well calculated to impress the minds of many with serious thoughts, to have those testimonials denied to them. It would remind them, that the office to which they had rashly aspired is a holy office, and requires holiness of heart and life in those who bear it. And, by the blessing of God, they might thus be led to pray for that converting and sanctifying grace, which is denied to none who earnestly desire it.

Then let them become probationers for the ministry; and let the honest and faithful report of three ministers of Christ, who, it is presumed, are actuated by a single desire for his glory, be presented to the bishop.

It would surely be a punishment, at once just and merciful, that the thoughtless and irreligious youth should be forbidden, for a definite period, even to *present* himself as a candidate for holy orders. Let space be allowed him to repent of his wickedness and presumption: let his hopes of immediate preferment be frustrated; and let the parish, which was awaiting his unhallowed ministry, be delivered from so awful an infliction. Let three years of strict probation pass over his head, and then, "being found blameless," let him be admitted to wait at the altar, which before he would have dishonoured.

It will readily be admitted, that the point which we are now considering is one of no slight importance to the cause of religion. Few, it is presumed, will deny, that the abandonment of these outworks is one main cause of the intrusion of unqualified persons into the holy office of the ministry. And if these pages should fall under the notice of any, to whom the church has entrusted the defence of these her bulwarks, (and to every beneficed clergyman she has in a measure

entrusted it) we would most solemnly entreat them to consider the ruinous effects, which are produced by retreating from their post of duty. We would beseech them by all that is, or ought to be, dear to them, to ponder well the dishonour which is done to God, and the mischief to his church, by their mistaken and misapplied leniency.

We must now proceed to consider the last of the defences, which the church has erected around the ministerial office. It would not be becoming, and might perhaps savour too much of presumption, were we to comment at large upon the duties of bishops in the matter of ordination. It is not for a private individual to administer instruction or reproof to those, in whom Divine Providence has reposed the sacred trust of the government of the church. And let it not be supposed, that the following remarks are made in a censorious spirit, or in any other than "a spirit of meekness" and humility. The writer would utterly disclaim any, even the slightest approach to, disrespectful interference with the prerogatives and duties of those, whom God has raised to this high dignity. Regarding them as the legitimate successors of the apostles, and the scripturally constituted governors of the church, he would not breathe one word derogatory to their honour. Theirs is indeed a

solemn trust, and an awful responsibility—a trust so solemn, and a responsibility so awful, that we cannot wonder at the ‘*nolo episcopari*,’ with which many have declined an office fraught with so much difficulty and danger.

When every legal document has been duly procured and presented to the bishop, then follows an *examination* of the attainments and capabilities of the candidates for the ministry. The nature and extent of this examination is necessarily left to the discretion of the bishop himself. Its strictness therefore, and the subjects which it embraces, must vary considerably according to his spiritual and intellectual character. If the standard of personal religion and ministerial qualifications, recognized by him, be defective, then it will follow, that the order of men, whom he admits into the priesthood, may happen to be slenderly qualified for their office. Should he frown with jealousy and disapprobation upon a doctrinal system, which he unjustly suspects to be inimical to the cause of good morals; or should he discountenance an elevated tone of spirituality of mind, which he deems too closely allied with enthusiasm, he will probably throw impediments in the way of candidates of this description, and afford facilities to others of an opposite character. If theological learning be in

his opinion the main qualification for the ministry, his examination will be well calculated to put to the test the attainments of his candidates; and there will be little perhaps, by which their spiritual character may be discerned. He will inquire into their acquaintance with the subtle controversies of scholastic theology; with the almost numberless forms of heresy, by which the peace of the church has been broken; with the important results of Biblical criticism; and with the history and antiquities of the church of Christ: but there may be little or nothing, to prove their personal acquaintance with the spiritualities of religion, their aptness to teach, their zeal and devotedness to God's service.

It is manifest, therefore, that the general purity and spirituality of the ministry will ever materially depend, under God, upon the views and character of the bishop. He is the appointed defender of the last and main bulwark of the ministry. With him rests the final decision upon the fitness or unfitness of every individual who presents himself; and none can by any possibility gain admittance, who has not received the full and explicit sanction of episcopal authority. He comes forth from the ordination, bearing the credentials of his acknowledged fitness for the office, which he is about to undertake. Most solemn and most important,

therefore, is the duty, which the Church demands from those whom God has invested with this supreme authority; and if this strongest defence of her priesthood be negligently guarded, most disastrous must be the consequences to religion.

The difficulties attending the due discharge of this solemn trust must indeed be overwhelming. To steer a middle course between an undue severity on the one hand, which might discourage some humble and devoted candidate, and a laxity on the other, which might too freely admit the secular and interested, is a task, the difficulty of which cannot easily be appreciated.¹ We can well understand the painful perplexity, in which a conscientious prelate must often be placed, when he is reduced to the necessity of admitting a candidate, of whose fitness he entertains a doubt, but whose unfitness is not so apparent as to justify his unqualified rejection. And we would recommend those, who are perhaps too ready to pronounce indiscriminate censure, to reflect upon the real difficulty of the case; to consider the circumstances in which a bishop is placed, and the wisdom, almost more than human, which is required for a just and temperate exercise of the episcopal

¹ 'There is an episcopal act,' said the holy Leighton, upon laying down his bishopric, 'that is above all others formidable to me,—the ordaining of ministers.'—LIFE BY PEARSON.

power, in the matter of ordination. If, indeed, the previous safeguards, already noticed, had been carefully and resolutely defended, the bishop would be relieved of a weighty responsibility; he would then have little else to do than to admit the candidate by the solemn imposition of hands. All manifestly improper persons would have received their merited repulse, before it could be possible for them to appear before him in the character of aspirants to the ministry. He would have, indeed, to certify himself, by personal conference, of the actual fitness of the individuals presented to him; but cases of positive and decided disqualification would seldom fall under his notice. As things are now constituted, however, it must be admitted that an undue onus is thrown upon the bishop. It is not fair to cast upon him the whole of that vast responsibility, a large portion of which ought to have been shared in common with others. It is not just that he alone should bear the odium of excluding those, whom others, competent to decide upon the matter, have pronounced 'worthy to be admitted into the ministry.'

The above remarks have been made, under the impression, that the public mind is little aware of the disadvantageous circumstances, in which a bishop is placed by the previous negligence of the appointed guardians of the ministry: and we would

soften the asperity, with which too often episcopal examinations are unjustly animadverted upon. Still it must be admitted, that the negligence of other functionaries can by no means justify or palliate an undue laxity on the part of bishops, in granting admittance to holy orders, but rather demands from them a double measure of vigilance. If the outposts have been heedlessly abandoned, it becomes the keepers of the citadel itself to put forth a nobler spirit in its defence. Without stretching their prerogative too far, or laying themselves open to the charge of excessive rigour, we think that in many cases the door might be closed against the ignorant or careless, with manifold advantage to the Church. And surely not a murmur of disapprobation would be breathed, by a reflecting person, against that high-minded and conscientious prelate, who should kindly yet firmly refuse to lay hands upon one, who betrayed a general want of qualification for the work of the ministry.

The sacredness of the trust committed to the episcopal order, the important results dependent upon a right or wrong exercise of their authority, the peace of their own consciences, and the prosperity of the Church of Christ, demand that with the most inflexible justice, tempered by the most fatherly compassion, they refuse to consecrate to

the service of God those who are unworthy of the high calling. Let them 'lay hands suddenly on no man.' Let their examinations be such as to elicit, not merely the information, with which the study of a few months may furnish any man of ordinary abilities, but more especially to prove his acquaintance with the saving truths of the Gospel, his personal experience of the power of religion, and his general aptitude to guide the souls of men into the ways of peace. Let them duly impress upon the minds of the candidates, that they have come to no scene of worldly emulation, to no theatre for the display of their literary attainments; that admission to the ministry is another and a different thing from admission to an academical degree; in short, that they have come to be proved, as in the sight of God, whether they be fit to execute an office, at once the noblest and the most awful which man can sustain.

It is greatly to be feared, that, in the minds of some youthful candidates for the ministry, there is too little distinction drawn between the rivalry of the schools and an examination for holy orders. They bring with them the feelings and the thoughts, which are still fresh in their minds from the scenes in which they have but recently been engaged: and the broad and palpable difference, which exists between competition for an earthly

honour, and probation for a heavenly office, is almost entirely overlooked. The spiritually-minded bishop will guard against this fearful mistake. He will solemnly admonish those, whose capabilities he is about to put to the test, that they are gathered together, not before a frail and fallible mortal, but in the presence of Him whose sole prerogative it is, to "search the hearts and try the reins of the children of men."

It is hoped, that in the above observations we have justified the disclaimer, with which they were commenced. Without shrinking from the duty, which we owe to God and his church, we have endeavoured to keep aloof from a presumptuous and censorious spirit, which would ill become us in dealing with the subject under consideration. We are free to confess, that in some instances we suspect admission to holy orders to be granted with too indiscriminate laxity. When we see deplorable ignorance of the fundamental truths of the gospel, and a tone of ministrations directly and palpably at variance with the formularies and articles of the church, we are naturally led to inquire how such a state of things can exist, without negligence on the part of some, whose office it is to preserve the purity and efficiency of the ministry. We cannot therefore but come to the conclusion, that the episcopal prerogative of

ordination is in some instances exercised with too lenient a hand. And we would respectfully invite the most serious attention to the subject. The admirable Hooker did not hesitate, in his meek and gentle manner, to point out sundry crying grievances which existed in his day; and he introduces them to our notice, with words so characteristic of himself, and so apt to our purpose, that we cannot forbear quoting them. "Wherefore, notwithstanding mine own inferior state and calling in God's church, the consideration whereof assureth me, that in this kind the sweetest sacrifice which I can offer unto Christ, is meek obedience, reverence, and awe, unto the prelates which He hath placed in seats of higher authority over me, emboldened I am, so far as may conveniently stand with that duty of humble subjection, meekly to crave, my good Lords, your favourable pardon, if it shall seem a fault, thus far to presume: or if otherwise, your wonted courteous acceptance.¹"

There would be but little reason for complaint, if all who are appointed to ecclesiastical dignity were indeed men of God, men devoted to the one object of promoting the welfare of the church of Christ. "They would do good (as Hooker ob-

¹ Eccl. Pol. Book vii. 24.

serves) in ten thousand ways more than any man knows how to set down." But if the bishops of the church be secular in their minds and habits, if the purity and efficiency of the ministry hold not the chief place in their affections, what wonder, if they open wide the door of admission to persons ill qualified to execute the holy office? What can hinder the existence of a corrupt and worldly-minded priesthood, if the constituted guardians of the church desert their posts in the hour of her greatest necessity?

SECTION III.

CHURCH PATRONAGE.

It remains to consider another cause, to which the appointment of unsuitable persons to the ministry may be attributed. And though it has fallen last under consideration, we hold it to be second to none in the importance of its results. That cause is the *abuse of Church patronage*. Few subjects, connected with the economy of our ecclesiastical establishments, have occupied a larger share of the public attention than this; and few perhaps have more deserved or demanded it. It must be obvious to every one who gives the subject a moment's reflection, how exceedingly the

welfare of the church, as it is at present constituted, must depend upon a right or wrong exercise of this sacred privilege. The importance of the subject has challenged investigation; and in these days of ecclesiastical controversy, it has been the frequent theme of amicable, as well as hostile discussion. We feel therefore as if we were attempting an almost exhausted argument. The evils are sufficiently manifest, so manifest indeed, that they require but little exposition; while the remedies, which lie within the range of a probable accomplishment, are so few, that we despair of suggesting any feasible plan of amelioration, which has not already been debated almost to satiety. But we are not without hope of attaining a considerable modification, if not removal of these grievances. And the fairest and likeliest prospect of amendment seems to be afforded, by a candid and impartial discussion of the subject, and by presenting it frequently and forcibly before the attention of those whom it concerns.

The history of church patronage is easily told. Its existence was probably to a certain extent coeval with the introduction of Christianity into the land. At any rate it may safely be affirmed, that it was coeval with its general establishment. As soon as our untutored forefathers were re-

deemed from their barbarism and idolatry, it became a matter of importance by all means to encourage the building of churches, and the maintenance of a settled ministry of the gospel. This could hardly be done without the consent and assistance of the lords and proprietors of the soil. To encourage this co-operation, it was natural and reasonable, to assign the right of appointing the officiating minister to the individual, by whose private liberality the church had been built and endowed, for the population amidst which he resided. ‘The building of churches, (says Hooker,¹) and consequently the assigning of either parishes or benefices, was a thing impossible without the consent of such as were principal owners of land; in which consideration, for their more encouragement hereunto, they which did so far benefit the church had by common consent granted, (as great equity and reason was) a right for them and their heirs till the world’s end, to nominate in those benefices men whose quality the bishop allowing might admit thereunto.’²

¹ Eccles. Pol. Book V. 80.

² ‘And here we must look for the true origin of what is called *the right of patronage*, which was introduced among Christians with no other view, than to encourage the opulent to erect a great number of churches, by giving them the privilege of appointing the ministers that were to officiate in them.’—*Mosheim, Eccles. Hist.* Century IV. Chap. 4.

Such is a simple and obvious view of the origin of this important privilege. And nothing can be conceived more equitable in itself, or more likely to draw forth in so blessed a work the cheerful assistance of the great and powerful. The right of patronage was subject to a limitation, essentially necessary for preserving the purity of the ministry. The patron's choice of an individual to fill his benefice was always subject to the condition of the bishop's approbation. He could appoint none, who had not previously been admitted by episcopal ordination to the holy ministry; and his choice was in all cases to be confirmed and ratified by the highest ecclesiastical authority. Under such circumstances, there could be little danger of an appointment essentially improper, provided that there were no previous negligence on the part of the bishops of the church. The proprietor of the soil, and of the benefice attached to it, had no arbitrary and irresponsible right to thrust in whom he pleased, qualified or unqualified; there was a power at hand, ready to lay an immediate interdict upon the appointment of an unsuitable person. The bishop of the diocese could, by his sole authority, refuse to institute an individual, against whose fitness he entertained a well-founded exception. So that the patron's power, which might otherwise have seemed prejudicial to the interests

of the church, was simply limited to the nomination of one out of several ministers, whom the rulers of the church had already decided to be competent to the charge.

Such, in theory, still remains the system of patronage in the Church of England. The right of nomination to a benefice is recognized by the law of the realm, as belonging to, and transferable with, the property or office to which it was originally annexed. In some cases it is independent and separable. This however appears to be a perversion of the original privilege. It is indeed most heartily to be deplored, that the law has ever allowed it to be dealt with as, in itself, an independent and marketable property. Had the privilege been always inseparably annexed to the proprietorship of the soil, from which at first it derived its existence, subject to the necessary limitation of episcopal sanction, it would probably in a great measure have escaped the manifold abuses, with which it is now encumbered. But we shall have occasion to recur to this point hereafter. Our object has been, to shew that patronage, as it was originally constituted, was neither so unreasonable in itself, nor so injurious in its effects, as many have represented. And we think it may be demonstrated, that, even in the present day, the machinery which it provides requires

only a due application, to make it productive of a greater aggregate of good, than any scheme which may be proposed to supersede it could accomplish.

Let us attend only to the real state of the case, supposing the privilege to be limited, as the spirit of the Church of England evidently requires it to be. The nomination to a living is vested in one or more individuals, either in a public or private capacity; but the minister is selected from a certain number of persons, all of whom must have passed an episcopal examination, before they were qualified to execute any ecclesiastical office whatever. Moreover, the patron has merely the power of nominating one, who must be presented to a higher authority for approval. It is the prerogative of the bishop alone to *institute* the person presented. And *by the laws of the church*, he is empowered to refuse admission to those, who may be incompetent or unworthy. The thirty-ninth Canon is explicit on this point. ‘No bishop shall institute any to a benefice, who hath been ordained by any other bishop, except he first shew unto him his Letters of Orders, and bring him a sufficient testimony of his former good life and behaviour, if the bishop shall require it; and lastly, shall appear upon due examination to be worthy of his ministry.’ Here, in the first place,

is demanded a certificate from the bishop, by whom the person presented was ordained, testifying that he was legally admitted to the ministry, and that he was then considered not unworthy of the office; here again is required a testimonial of his virtuous life and character, up to the very time of his presentation; and here is also another personal examination of his capabilities before the bishop of the diocese, in which the benefice is situated.

In considering the question of patronage, it is exceedingly unfair to lose sight of these restrictions upon the patron's authority—restrictions which, if duly and conscientiously enforced, would go far to render the appointment of a decidedly unqualified person in the highest degree improbable. According to this view, there is no unlimited and irresponsible power vested in the patron of obtruding upon a parish one, who may be utterly unfit to be its pastor. The utmost that he can do, is to place before the bishop a candidate for his acceptance and approbation. And the question whether that person shall or shall not be the recognized minister of the charge, to which the patron has appointed him, rests, according to the tenor of the canon law, with the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the diocese. Here then is all the necessary apparatus for interposing an

effectual *veto* upon every unsuitable appointment. Here is a check, which if carried out into practice, would so modify the evils to which any system of private or official patronage is necessarily liable, that virtually they might be said to have no existence. But here the secular power steps in with its uncalled for and obtrusive interference. The authority of the bishop is in the present day, to a certain extent, fettered or neutralized by the stronger arm of the civil magistrate. It does not lie within his power, in all cases, to put in force the plenary authority with which *the church* has invested him. He might perhaps find himself placed in opposition to the code of national law, if he were to attempt to enforce his just and scriptural prerogative. A writ of 'quare impedit' might be issued, which would place the decision of the matter beyond his control, and probably hand it over to others, who might be little qualified to decide upon the spiritual fitness of the individual in question. Certain it is, that a bishop, who should conscientiously refuse to institute an improper person to a benefice, would find his intentions not unfrequently thwarted, and his decision reversed in a temporal court; and the authority, which was expressly assigned to him for the protection of the church, would practically be rendered of no avail, by the intermeddling of

worldly policy in matters of purely spiritual jurisdiction. It is a most lamentable circumstance, that the "godly discipline" of the church, which, were it left to itself, would be capable of remedying innumerable disorders, should thus be frustrated. And there could not dawn a brighter or more auspicious day upon the church of England, than that wherein her rights and privileges should be delivered from this usurped domination.

We have wandered in some measure from the subject immediately before us. But it can scarcely be deemed irrelevant to point out the existence, within the bosom of the church, of a well-organized machinery, the parts of which are so nicely adjusted, that one shall act as a corrective of the deviations of another. There is a natural liability to abuse in one part of the system of patronage; but there is a power at hand prepared to check and control it. Let this machinery be left free to produce its proper results, and let it be faithfully and conscientiously worked, and the evils of patronage as they now exist, would well nigh be extinguished.

But patronage is abused and perverted. We cannot turn to any department of the church without meeting with indubitable proofs of the fact. Whether we look at her dignified hierarchy, or her collegiate foundations, or her parochial endow-

ments, we cannot help beholding the baneful effects of a practically unrestricted and irresponsible patronage. The evil pervades every part of her constitution. On every side she lies exposed to, and almost defenceless against, the encroachments of a secularizing and a deteriorating influence. Her barriers, which ought to have shielded her from the inroads of worldly policy, are broken down; and the crown, and the statesman, and the noble, and the landowner, and the civil corporation, and, in a word, any persons to whom by any means the right of patronage may appertain, have it in their power to exercise a privilege, which, without a sufficient restraint, must work most disadvantageously for the purity of the ministry. And although the Church has provided a sufficient restraint, by lodging the power of a *veto* upon every appointment in the hands of her Bishops, yet is this restraint practically rendered nugatory by the liberty of appeal to a court of civil judicature. We do not say, that there should be no appeal from an episcopal decision, for that might possibly open the door to other abuses; but there should be no appeal to a *secular* tribunal. A matter of this description, relating to the fitness or unfitness of ministers, is one which, from its very nature, should not be cognizable by any extra-ecclesiastical authority.

It has been asserted that patronage is abused ; and to this abuse has been referred the appointment of unworthy and unqualified ministers. It remains to point out, more in detail, the manner in which the evil is connected with the cause. In the first place, it may be observed, that the *nature and responsibility of the privilege is not sufficiently understood*. This is the fountain-head of the evil. What was originally granted as a solemn and responsible *trust*, has in the lapse of ages come to be regarded merely as a *property*, liable, with some limitations, to be dealt with according to the rules by which ordinary property is regulated. The spiritual is subordinated to the secular. The temporalities of the benefice are looked upon as a source of revenue, transferable at the will of the patron, for a limited or unlimited period, by a legal act of conveyance ; and are subject, under certain circumstances, to the same contingencies as any other source of revenue. In case of the insolvency of the patron, for example, the right of presentation may be sold for the satisfaction of the creditors. In fact it is, in almost every respect, treated as a subject of legal transfer, for pecuniary considerations ; liable only to certain restrictions, for the prevention of simoniacal abuses. It would be unreasonable indeed to pass an unqualified censure upon this treatment ; for, in a civilized coun-

try, all property must be subject to certain general regulations; and we see not how ecclesiastical property could or ought to be exempted from the cognizance of the law. But it is much to be lamented, that the spiritual trust, connected with the property, should ever be dissociated from it, or disregarded when it is dealt with. The law, indeed, can do no more than guard the privilege from flagrant abuse. It cannot provide, that it shall be always exercised in a manner most calculated to further the design of its original institution. This evidently lies beyond the province of law, and must be left to the conscience of the patron and the authority of the bishop.

Our present remarks are directed against the erroneous views, too generally entertained by patrons themselves, respecting the responsibility which attaches to their office. The fact that they are merely trustees of a privilege, involving the most important consequences to the welfare of the Church, is in too many instances overlooked. The duties which they owe to God, as His stewards, are but little understood or regarded; and the extent, to which a right or wrong distribution of their patronage may affect a diocese, or a parish, does not enter into their consideration. It matters little what be the motives by which they are actuated, if the paramount motive be not the

spiritual welfare of the people, whose interests are involved in their choice. To promote that was the original design of granting to them the privilege; and it must be perverted and abused, where that design is not mainly and steadily kept in view. We fear that those patrons are still in an inconsiderable minority, whose single aim, in the exercise of their trust, is to bring glory to God by the salvation of souls. And yet this is the legitimate motive by which mainly a patron's choice should be guided.¹ Other considerations may lawfully bias him. Ties of consanguinity, or friendship, or gratitude, need not be disregarded; but if the one prevailing motive which, as it were, absorbs all others, be not the welfare of the Church of Christ, the patron must be considered regardless of his solemn responsibility.

It would be tedious, to enumerate all the va-

¹ 'I am bound to remember, in the disposal of any living,' Wilberforce remarks, 'that the interest the parishioners have in the nomination is that of as many persons as the parish consists of, and is of an everlasting, infinite value; that which the clergyman to be presented to it has in it, is the temporal interest of one individual. It follows, of course, that I must attend to the two following principles in my recommendations to Church preferment: 1st, That of naming the man, whom in my conscience I believe, on the whole, likely to do most good in the station to be filled; and, 2dly, That of endeavouring to employ my influence, so as that any given measure of it may be productive of the utmost possible benefit.'—*LIFE*, vol. ii. 289.

rious cases of abused or misdirected patronage, arising from the prolific source of evil, which we have been considering. When the mind of the patron is uninfluenced by lofty and disinterested motives, we do not wonder at great and grievous perversions of his power. If he value not the pure doctrines and blessed privileges of the gospel himself, it can hardly be expected that he should be anxious to communicate them to others. If he look upon his patronage as a portion of his estate, and thereby as a legitimate source of emolument to himself or his family, or as the means of wielding a more extended influence over others, we cannot be surprised if he so dispense it, as may most further his worldly and selfish ends. And it matters not, whether it be the statesman, whose main object it is to reward or to purchase political adherents: or the dignitary of the church, whose prevailing motive is to provide a liberal maintenance for his kindred; or the collegiate body, whose learned members are presented simply on account of seniority; or the private patron, who is actuated by pecuniary considerations; one and all of them are under the influence of motives, in themselves essentially defective; and the appointments, resulting from them, are too generally ruinous to the integrity of the ministry, and the spiritual well-being of the church.

The cases of misdirected patronage, which usually occur, may perhaps be generally traced to one or other of the following motives, which, for the sake of convenience, we may term the POLITICAL—the FAMILY—the LITERARY—and the MERCENARY.

1. And first we are to trace the effects of POLITICAL MOTIVES. We are almost ashamed of quoting from an author, whose eloquent pages have been liberally transferred into every treatise upon the subject which we are considering: and we would rather refer the reader to the whole of his admirable discussion, from which it is difficult to make selection. Speaking of the mistaken distribution of state patronage, Dr. Chalmers remarks, “We believe there is no one subject on which our statesmen are more woefully in the dark, than the right exercise of church patronage. They apprehend not its bearings upon the political welfare of the country.”¹ It is indeed a most melancholy thing, that the power and influence with which they are entrusted, which rightly exercised might be so beneficial, and which abused is so fatal to the cause of religion, should ever be debased to secular and selfish purposes. Most sad it is, that state policy should ever form

¹ Christian and civic economy of large towns. Chap. v.

an element in the consideration, when an ecclesiastical appointment is to be made. What, we would ask, have worldly politics to do with the fitness or unfitness of an individual for a heavenly office? If a bishop is to be appointed, why should his political bias be accounted by the dominant party in the state a matter of such transcendent importance? If the interests of the church of Christ were nearest to the statesman's heart, he would not ask, with what aspect an individual regards the rivalry of contending factions; he would simply ask, what capabilities he has for ruling with discretion the house of God. He would select the wisest and the best, whom he could find amongst the clergy—the man of greatest repute in the church for holiness and learning, and confessedly most calculated to promote the spiritual welfare of the population. Such alas! are too seldom the motives, by which preferments to the highest offices of the church are regulated. “Devotion and the feeling sense of religion (says Hooker¹) are not usual in the noblest, wisest, and chiefest personages of state, by reason their wits are so much employed another way, and their minds so seldom conversant in heavenly things.” Our statesmen have not only lost sight of the spiritual welfare of

¹ Eccl. Pol. Book vii. 24.

the church, but also of the moral and social improvement of the people. They know not how powerful an engine of good government they have spoiled of its efficiency. They have crippled and paralysed an arm, which, properly directed, might have wielded a mighty influence for good over the whole community.

The evil will not stop with the mere appointment of the bishop. He himself becomes the centre of a wide spreading and commanding influence. He is invested by his office with as much power to do harm, as to do good: and the probability is great, that if morally and spiritually unqualified himself, he will be the cause of many unsuitable appointments to inferior offices. There will not be wanting abundant and plausible pretences, for filling up the vacancies in a diocese from the number of his kindred or dependents: and conscience will perhaps be easily satisfied, if there be not, on the part of these individuals, any thing which can fairly be construed into positive and decided disqualification. Thus the evil will propagate and extend itself; and it becomes utterly beyond the powers of human calculation, to determine the amount of mischief to the cause of God and his church, of which the appointment of one single unsuitable individual may be the occasion.

2. A second order of motives, to which a misdirection of patronage is frequently to be attributed, is that which we have styled FAMILY MOTIVES. And by this we mean, motives arising from the ties of consanguinity and domestic relationship. There is perhaps no more plentiful source of corruption than this: it pervades every description of preferment, which the church possesses: and there is something in the motive, which so closely touches the warmest feelings of the heart, and something, moreover, so calculated to blind the judgment, and warp the rectitude of its decisions, that we can scarcely wonder at the extent, to which its influence is felt in appointments to the ministry. A family living is often a family curse. It is looked upon as the patrimonial estate of a junior member, who from his very birth is destined, qualified or unqualified, to enjoy its tempting emoluments; and thus a parish is encumbered with a pastor, all whose likings and habits may be alien from the work of the ministry, and who sighs in vain for that liberty, which he would gladly have sought in some more congenial employment.

And again, official patronage is liable to the same abuse. A civil or ecclesiastical functionary may be invested with an extensive right of patronage. And here the motive of providing for

his kindred will operate most powerfully, in directing the preferments, of which he is the dispenser, into a wrong, or at least not into the best channel. That man must possess a mind, braced by the constraining influence of vital religion up to a high pitch of disinterestedness, who can turn a deaf ear to the appeals of natural affection, and pass by one, who has no very decided claim upon his selection but his affinity, in favour of a stranger better qualified for the ministry. This spirit of nepotism has been a crying grievance in the Church of England; and we fear that the evil has sprung up too frequently within her own bosom, and amongst those, who should have set an example of lofty principle and disinterested zeal for her purity. We would not argue in favour of the utter exclusion of family considerations; for nature pleads strongly in their behalf; and religion does not condemn a partiality for those, who being duly qualified for the ministry, have also the advantage of relationship to the patron. And no reasonable person would censure an appointment of this kind, where the individual is manifestly endued with the requisite qualifications for the discharge of his holy functions. But it is evident, that there is danger of abuse; and the probability is great, that the voice of conscience should be overborne by the stronger pleadings of

consanguinity or friendship, or by the still stronger yearnings of paternal affection.

3. The next in order are those which we have called the LITERARY MOTIVES, or such as have respect to mere literary and scholastic attainments. To this source is frequently to be attributed the appointment of persons, to responsible and important offices in the church, whose capabilities are by no means equal to the efficient discharge of their duties. A man is not necessarily qualified for the office of a bishop, who stands preeminent for learning; whose previous life has been spent in literary seclusion within the cloisters of a college; who has never known the difficulties or the pleasures of a parochial ministry; and who, from his entire ignorance of their trials, can have little sympathy with his clergy, and can be little qualified to admonish or encourage them in their arduous work. Such a man may be a learned and a dignified bishop, he may grace his exalted station by the amiability of his character, or the splendour of his literary fame; but he can hardly be one, who will administer the affairs of his diocese with discretion—one, to whom his clergy will look up with confidence, as their wise counsellor, their faithful friend, their spiritual father.

And the evil will scarcely be less, though more limited in its operation, when the preferment is to

a parochial charge. A merely literary clergyman is not such as the church requires for her parishes. If a powerful influence is to be brought to bear upon the moral and religious improvement of our population, an energetic, pains-taking ministry is imperatively demanded. Our beneficed clergy must be men trained and disciplined by experience to parochial ministrations. The feelings and the habits, contracted by long-continued residence within the walls of a college, are not such as best suit the incumbent of a parish. And here we cannot help observing, that, whatever may have been the wisdom of the original institution, the present mode of dispensing our academical patronage is by no means calculated to further the spiritual welfare of the parishes affected by it. College livings are usually bestowed upon the Fellows according to seniority; and are regarded as the merited rewards of a patient and protracted endurance of collegiate restraints. The meridian of life is generally past, the vigour and energy of youth are evaporated, and the habits of mind settled into inflexible rigidity, before the period arrives, when the expected benefice becomes vacant: and the individual presented is plunged into scenes and employments, altogether alien from his disposition, and for which his previous life had as much as possible unfitted him. He

consequently spends his declining years either in dignified repose, or in literary indolence. An arrangement, less calculated to promote the efficiency of the ministry, can scarcely be conceived.

4. Much need not be added upon the last order of motives which was mentioned, the MERCENARY or PECUNIARY. Where such motives exist, they are worthy of indignant reprobation. The patron, who can put up his privilege for sale, regardless of the qualifications of him whom he presents, must be dead to every feeling which ought to actuate a Christian's mind—he must be indifferent alike to the glory of God, and the salvation of men. And it is a most grievous thing, that custom, and law, and the prescription of many generations, should have thrown their sanction around a practice, which otherwise would meet with universal condemnation. We do not indeed complain of the legitimate transfer of a right, contingent to property, but we could wish that there were devised a prompt and powerful restraint, which would check this reckless desecration of things sacred. For a spiritual privilege to be subjected to the rude traffickings of the market and the auction, is a degradation and a scandal, which we pray God may soon cease to be heard of in the church.

We need not further prosecute this part of our

argument,—especially as we shall have occasion hereafter to recur to it. It would not be difficult to swell these pages, by a more lengthened detail of the abuses of misdirected patronage. Sufficient however has been said, to shew that not a few of the evils, which afflict the church, are chargeable upon this cause. Our immediate object in this chapter has simply been, to trace the existence of an unqualified and inefficient ministry to some of the most obvious and prolific causes. And this we have done, preparatory to the suggestion of safe and sufficient remedies: for it were vain to expect a cure, until we have traced the disorder to its seat, and detected the cause or causes which may have contributed to produce it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEANS MOST LIKELY TO BE EFFECTUAL IN REMOVING OR MODIFYING THE EVIL OF AN UNQUALIFIED MINISTRY.

IF there was difficulty in treating the subjects discussed in the last chapter, the difficulty will be tenfold greater in that, which we are now commencing. It is an easy thing to detect and declaim against abuses. It is not so easy, perhaps, to investigate the sources from which they spring, and to analyse the several parts of the system in which they originate. But the most difficult part of the matter still remains,—to take a comprehensive view of the evil in all its bearings, and then to apply those remedial measures, which, without deranging the system, or giving birth to new, and perhaps greater evils, may remove those which already exist. “ Few there are, (observes Hooker, with his usual acuteness,) of so weak capacity, but

public evils they can easily espy: few so patient, as not to complain when the grievous inconveniences thereof work sensibly smart. Howbeit, to see wherein the harm which they feel consisteth, the seeds from which it sprang, and the method of curing it, belongeth to a skill, the study whereof is so full of toil, and the practice so beset with difficulties, that wary and respective men had rather seek quietly their own, and wish that the world may go well, so it be not long of them, than with pain and hazard make themselves advisers for the common good.”¹

Here then lies the main difficulty of the subject. We do not want acrimonious invectives against existing abuses. We do not want the aid of those, who with eagle-eye are always keenly on the look out for corruptions, and ever watching their opportunity to drag them forth, and hold them up to public reprobation. But, in the present state of the church, we want the aid of those who look with no friendly aspect upon abuses, who with discriminating judgment can detect them, and having traced them to their respective sources, are quick to discern, and prompt to apply the remedies most suited to the case.

That serious evils do exist in the administration of our ecclesiastical system, is almost universally

¹ Eccl. Pol. V. 1.

admitted. There are comparatively few, who are hardy enough to stand forward as the champions of those things, which all serious and disinterested persons admit to be abuses. We must confess, that we have no sympathy with those who would perpetuate an evil, on account of some inferior and contingent advantage which may happen to result from it. That abuse must be glaring indeed, in behalf of which nothing whatever can be alleged, no apology be made, no palliation be admitted, and from which no indirect and incidental and occasional benefit can be shewn to result. But we must beware, how for the sake of such inferior considerations, we overlook the number and magnitude of the real evils which it occasions.

We must bear in mind, in this part of our discussion, that our business is not to *construct* an ecclesiastical system, but to *promote the efficiency* of one which already exists; not to remodel it after a new design, but simply to suggest the removal of abuses, with which the lapse of ages seldom fails to encumber institutions, handed down from remote antiquity. There is in the Church of England a mechanism, sufficiently adapted in itself for all the purposes for which it was originally designed. And our object is to point out the mode, by which its operation may be rendered most effectual, the impediments to its efficiency may be

best removed, and the greatest amount of good may be wrought by its instrumentality. We need not therefore occupy ourselves with schemes, which are built upon the hypothesis of a complete and fundamental change in the present edifice of the church. For it were futile to propose plans of amelioration, which are utterly impracticable, unless the whole existing framework were swept away, and the ground were left clear for raising a completely remodelled edifice. We would take the church as it now stands, venerable and stately, notwithstanding the unseemly excrescences which time has accumulated around it, and set about the work of improvement, with a confident expectation that it shall come forth a nobler and godlier structure, than the best efforts of modern innovation would be able to erect. Our object then, in this chapter, will be, to point out the mode by which our ecclesiastical system may be restored to its efficiency, and to suggest the means, by which, under the Divine blessing, the evils of an unqualified ministry may be modified, if not entirely removed. And here we shall be compelled, by the very nature of the subject, to go over much of the same ground which was traversed in the preceding chapter.

SECTION I.

AWAKENING OF THE PUBLIC MIND TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

The first and most obvious remedy which presents itself, that indeed without which all others are likely to prove ineffectual, is *to awaken the public mind* to a just view of the Christian ministry. We have already dwelt largely upon the erroneous and defective estimate, too generally entertained, of its importance and obligations. This we considered as the primary and fundamental cause of all unsuitable appointments to holy offices. By calling attention therefore to the subject, and by impressing right views and opinions upon the minds of the people at large, we are laying the axe at the very root, and are taking the most effectual steps to promote a mitigation, and we trust eventually, an eradication of the evil. Every treatise which is sent forth, calculated to arouse the spirit of inquiry, and to lead the public to more correct and exalted views of ministerial responsibility, must, within the range of its influence, have a tendency to promote the work of reformation. It may assuredly be taken for granted, that at present the subject is imperfectly understood, and its importance woefully underrated, by a large

majority of those whom it most concerns. We want therefore to bring to bear upon all classes of the community, and especially upon those who in any measure are invested with power in ecclesiastical matters, an influence which shall tend to promote the purity and efficiency of the priest-God. We would hail with satisfaction whatever is calculated to produce a deep moral impression upon the nation, and to turn the tide of popular opinion strongly in favour of a more spiritual and enlightened ministry. Unless this be done, nothing will be done effectually. Laws may be enacted, and restrictions imposed, but they will in numerous instances be evaded or infringed. The only sure preservative against mal-administration is the influence of Christian integrity and uprightness of heart. Let this one point be gained, and we have a sufficient guarantee for the right discharge of every duty and every trust, upon which the well-being of the church depends. In their dealings with ecclesiastical matters, men would be animated by one spirit, the desire of locating in every parish throughout the land, a laborious, and faithful, and spiritually-minded minister of Christ. It must be acknowledged, that before this blessed state of things can be realized, a great moral revolution must have taken place in the views and sentiments of our men of

influence and authority. Our civil and ecclesiastical rulers, and the great mass of our patrons, must be men of another stamp, men of more genuine piety, and more single and entire devotedness to God. There must be another spirit pervading the cabinet and the senate. And all the sources, from which proceeds any commanding influence upon the church, must be purified from that spirit of worldliness which has too long paralysed her efforts, and impeded her efficiency. This will not be a sudden and violent revolution; it will be the product of principles, slowly and silently leavening the whole lump of the community. And we know not how it is, instrumentally, to be brought about, otherwise than by presenting the subject frequently and forcibly before the attention of the public, and by urging upon patrons of every description the solemn responsibility with which their privilege invests them. It is most earnestly to be desired, that the whole community should be aroused from its insensibility to spiritual matters; that the restless spirit of innovation, which is abroad, should be diverted from its course, and be bent upon the accomplishment of nobler purposes. Instead of the senseless craving for experimental reform, which leads men to think that every change must be improvement, we would rather that the nation, with calm but

determined resolution, should demand, that right principles already recognized be carried out into practice, and that the ecclesiastical machinery already existing be cleared of all impediments to its efficiency.

And let us not be discouraged by the apparently hopeless difficulty of effecting this change. Let us bear in mind, that every individual, who may thus be awakened to the importance of the subject, constitutes one step in the general progress of amelioration ; that every patron, who is induced by spiritual motives to nominate a faithful pastor to the charge of a parish, is one unit in the aggregate of national improvement. And unimportant as a few solitary instances of well-directed influence may seem, yet to the eye of faith, each one of them is fraught with consequences, which the day of judgment alone will be able to reveal ; upon each one of them depends, under God, the spiritual welfare of a section of our population, and each one may become a centre, from which there shall go forth on every side a renovating influence upon society. In this view of the subject nothing can be unimportant which is in any measure calculated to promote even one solitary instance of improvement.

SECTION II.

STRICTER MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING PRECAUTIONS.

Neglect of the precautions, appointed to preserve the purity of the ministry, was mentioned above as a fertile source of evil to the church. Here the very mention of the cause at once suggests the remedy. *Let those precautions be maintained* with a jealous and uncompromising vigilance. Let the sacred altar be rigidly defended from the approach of the unworthy aspirant to the ministry. We would most respectfully, but most earnestly entreat those, to whom the church has entrusted the moral and intellectual culture of her candidates for Holy Orders, to give full effect to the powers with which they are invested; and with firm but parental authority to put in force the discipline, which they are commissioned to exercise. Let them remember, that they are the keepers of the first outwork, by which the sanctuary is defended from invasion; that neglect on their part involves consequences detrimental to the prosperity of Christ's church, and practically impedes the exercise of episcopal authority in the matter of ordination.

We would that our colleges and halls were

literally places of rigid probation for the ministry ; and that all who enter their venerable walls, with the expectation of becoming hereafter candidates for Holy Orders, were impressed with the fact, that there is resting upon them a jealous superintendence ; that their conduct and character are subjected to a never ceasing observation ; and that the tenor of their lives will be accurately delineated in the testimonials, which they are to receive at the termination of their academical course. If this principle were fully carried out in every college throughout the land, it must be obvious, that multitudes of unqualified individuals would at once be debarred from the first entrance upon the ministry, and would probably be induced to devote themselves to pursuits, more congenial with their habits and dispositions.

The same remark will apply to every other testimonial, which is required to be laid before the bishop, previous to ordination. Let them all be credible witnesses of a holy life, and virtuous demeanour, and competent learning. Let them cease to be considered as *pro formá* documents, to refuse a signature to which would argue incivility and want of ordinary courtesy ; but let them be accounted things of too serious a nature to be trifled with,—as involving interests too important to be sacrificed to the rules of worldly compliment,

and the maxims of worldly expediency. The clergy have it in their power to do much, towards checking the progress of the evil. And if the bishop were to require either personal knowledge of his candidates, or a *boná fide* and satisfactory evidence of their general fitness, it would be no easy matter to overcome the impediments, which would thus be thrown across the approach of an unsuitable person to the ministerial office.

SECTION III.

MORE PROMPT AND UNFETTERED EXERCISE OF EPISCOPAL JURISDICTION.

In the preceding observations, we have referred to the means of preventing improper persons from introducing themselves into the ministry. But in this imperfect world, it is not to be expected that any precautions, however wisely planned, or any defences, however vigorously maintained, should in all cases be successful in preventing "the evil from mingling with the good."¹ This is one of the inconveniences, to which the church, in her militant state, must patiently submit. It is not

¹ XXVIth Article.

sufficient, therefore, to guard the *portals* of the Church of God. There must be an internal organization, for the purpose of removing out of her, as far as possible, all things that offend. There should be a principle of self-purification in her economy, which will not tolerate the existence of evil within her precincts. This does actually exist, *in theory*, in the Church of England. Her episcopal regimen has undoubtedly the capabilities for the exercise of a prompt and effectual discipline. But its operation is impeded, and in some cases neutralized, by an undue interference from without. We would therefore suggest, as an important means of promoting a pure and consistent ministry, that there should be *a more vigorous and unfettered exercise of episcopal control over the clergy*. We would not require the bishops to be armed with new and extraordinary powers. The authority, with which they are at present invested, is abundantly sufficient for the purpose, if it were not in many cases subjected to an extra-ecclesiastical limitation. The power to which we are referring is of a judicial nature, the power of taking cognizance of clerical delinquency, and of inflicting summary punishment, either by suspension or degradation from the ministerial office. This authority has ever belonged to the highest order of ministers in every age of the

church.¹ It is part of their lawful and *scriptural* prerogative.² And to a certain extent, it remains with them to the present day. But the exercise of this authority, in the Church of England, is encumbered with legal and technical difficulties, of such a nature as practically to frustrate its utility. And a bishop, who should desire to inflict the censures of the church upon a delinquent clergyman, would find himself most grievously hindered by the tedious process of the ecclesiastical courts. A protracted and costly suit, or perhaps a series of suits, must be engaged in, and years may elapse before the matter is finally settled, and the offender degraded from the office, which he desecrates. This is a state of things, which ought not to be tolerated in a Christian land, and in a church, to uphold the authority of which the state professes to lend its powerful assistance. And it is most earnestly to be desired, that a speedy and effectual remedy should be provided, which might put an end to the crying grievance. Let all needless impediments be removed from a due exercise of the authority, which is implied in the very name of bishop or overseer. Let not the rulers of our church have a nominal power, while, in matters most intimately

¹ See Bishop Jeremy Taylor's "Episcopacy Asserted," Sect. 36. vol. vii. 159.

² 1 Tim v. 19.

connected with her spiritual welfare, their authority is practically rendered almost nugatory.

We would strongly urge upon our government the importance of facilitating, by every possible means, a prompt and decisive degradation of an immoral and scandalous minister. The Church would be greatly benefited, if the tedious and complicated machinery of our Ecclesiastical Courts were entirely broken up, and the purely *ecclesiastical* part of their functions transferred to the legitimate seat of Church discipline. Let the external and temporal affairs of the Church be still administered by the existing authorities; but let the exercise of episcopal animadversion be set free from the trammels of secular interference, and forensic delay; and let the bishop, assisted by his presbyters, constitute a court, before which all charges of heresy or immorality may be fairly and openly tried. Let the bishop sit as judge in his consistory, and a definite number of presbyters, the peers of the delinquent, act as a jury of assessors; and let their verdict be held decisive of the cause at issue. Or if an appeal be necessary, let it be made to the archbishop and a council of bishops; and beyond this court let there be no further appeal. In matters relating to the integrity of the ministry, to soundness in the faith, and purity of life, none can be so qualified to

decide as the appointed overseers of the Church of Christ. To carry causes of this description before a temporal court, (for such virtually are our present ecclesiastical tribunals,) is to surrender the liberty of the Church, and to set aside the legitimate authority of its constituted rulers.

If human nature could be safely trusted with such plenary authority, it might be a more speedy and effectual method to vest the judicial power in the bishop alone. But it may be doubted whether this would be altogether expedient. Power is always liable to abuse, and when unlimited has a natural tendency to degenerate into tyranny. It would be safer, therefore, in matters of ecclesiastical censure, to assign some limitation to the exercise of episcopal jurisdiction, by appointing a co-ordinate authority, without which the bishop shall be incapable of acting. The constitution of our civil courts of judicature supplies a model, which might be safely transferred to our ecclesiastical consistories. Let a jury of presbyters sit upon every case of ministerial delinquency, and let the episcopal censure be pronounced according to their impartial decision. The sentence thus delivered would be free from the suspicion of autocratical and despotic rigour, and the individual under the censures of the Church would have no reason to complain of injus-

tice, when a majority of his peers, impartially selected, had concurred in his degradation. By this method, many great and crying evils might be speedily and effectually removed. Bishops would not be deterred, by the difficulty and delay of ecclesiastical suits, from proceeding against ministers, whose lives and doctrines are a scandal to the Church and to religion. They would at once cite them before their tribunal, and by a summary but impartial process, either suspend them for a time, or degrade them for ever, from their unhallowed and unprofitable ministry.

Such a discipline existed in the purer and holier days of the Church of Christ; and we see not why it should be now restrained. The time is not far distant, we trust, when the subject shall be brought before the notice of our legislature. The minds of reflecting men are gradually awaking to the fact, that the Church has been too much stripped of her rightful authority by the overbearing influence of the secular power: that her arms have been tied by the trammels of worldly legislation; and that she only requires to be set free from this unnatural restraint, to re-assert her rights, and to carry into effect her wholesome regulations. Let those who wish for her prosperity exert their influence in this holy cause, and let it be their united and manly endeavour, to

obtain for her a restitution of that liberty and those privileges, which the intermeddling of this world's policy has so long withheld.

But let not the tendency of these observations be mistaken. It is not for the dissociation of Church and State that we are pleading. It will be a woeful day for our country, if ever such an event should be realized. May the ark of God ever remain within our borders, at once our glory and our defence! We are simply pleading for the liberty of the Church in matters of spiritual jurisdiction; that she should be left free to exercise her legitimate authority, unawed and unrestrained by any superior power from without. This is entirely foreign to the question of national religious establishments; and the most zealous advocate of the connexion between Church and State, may be a no less zealous defender of the independent and supreme authority of the Church, in things pertaining to her internal discipline and organization.

SECTION IV.

MODIFICATION OF CHURCH PATRONAGE.

The next remedy, which we would propose, is *a modification of the present system of patronage in the Church of England.* We say a *modification* of the system; for *abolition*, under existing cir-

cumstances, is neither practicable nor desirable. Were it proposed to draw up the model of a new ecclesiastical system, it might be a question, whether private patronage should constitute an element of that system. It might reasonably be doubted, whether some safer and more advantageous plan of nomination to the ministry might not be substituted in its room. But this is not the question now before us. We are not called to decide upon the comparative merits of the different modes, by which the allocation of ministers may be arranged. Our business is with *existing*, not with *hypothetical* systems; not to point out the best schemes that can be *imagined*, but the best that are *practicable*. Church patronage in this empire has, by the prescription of ages, become so bound up with the rights of property, that the two may be regarded as inseparable, without a subversion of the present framework of our constitution. The overthrow and abolition of the system could scarcely be produced by anything short of an entire revolution in the laws, by which property is regulated and controlled: and however desirable it might be that it should be superseded, still it were beyond the bounds of probability that our senators, deeply interested as for the most part they are in its continuance, should consent to its destruction. But even if the thought of its

overthrow were not so chimerical, we would that those who clamour for a change would suggest something, which, upon the whole, would be less liable to objection. Whatever may be the abuses attendant upon the present system of patronage, it may be more than doubted, whether a vastly larger amount of evil would not ensue, from any system which could be adopted in its stead. It would lead us into a wide field of irrelevant discussion, were we to argue this point. The precise subject upon which we wish to fix attention, is this,—that we are to look to the *modification*, not to the abolition, of Church patronage for an increased efficiency in our ministry. There is much truth in the remarks of Dr. Chalmers upon this point:—‘When we think for what essential purposes this right may be acquired; and how fairly it may be appropriated and handed down in families, from one generation to another, we are led to look to its guidance, and not to its overthrow, for any great Christian reformation of the Churches in our land. The holders of this important right will at length participate in the growing spirit and illumination of the age; and while others regard patronage as the great instrument of the corruption and decline of Christianity, we trust, that under the impulse of better principles, it will at length become the instrument of

its revival.' Most entirely concurring in these sentiments, we would now endeavour to point out some methods, by which the system of Church patronage may be so modified, as to be productive, upon the whole, of a greater amount of good than could be expected to arise from its abolition.

It has been freely admitted, that in its very nature the system has a *liability* to abuse, unless there exist somewhere a competent check upon its administration. In acknowledging this, we are only acknowledging, what may be predicated of every human institution, that it shares in human frailty and imperfection. If then a restraining power upon church patronage be essentially necessary, for the preservation of its purity, it becomes an important question, *where* this power is to be lodged, and *how*, and with *what limitations* it is to be exercised. Various have been the modes, which have been suggested, of accomplishing this object. Against many of them there lies the insuperable objection of a manifest impracticability. They imply organic changes in our ecclesiastical system, which, supposing them to be desirable, no reasonable person can expect to be realized. Others, again, partake too much of the nature of *experiments*, which might eventually be found to produce more and greater evils, than those which they are intended to remedy; and it were the

extreme of folly, in curing one, to lay the foundation of another, and perhaps a severer malady. It were surely better to apply palliatives to the existing evil, than to subject the church to such empirical treatment.

Where then is the necessary restraint upon patronage to be deposited? Few persons would advocate the plan of an *absolute popular veto* upon the appointment of the clergy. The mischiefs, which would result from such an arrangement, are too obvious and too serious to allow it for a moment to be entertained. Undoubtedly it would be an effectual check upon patronage, but it might be fully as effectual in impeding a *right*, as a *wrong* exercise of the privilege: it might exclude from a benefice the faithful, and therefore obnoxious minister, as well as the more pliant and worldly-minded; and a patron's conscientious nomination might thus be quashed, by a majority of the careless and ungodly inhabitants of a parish. Besides, we would most strongly deprecate a system, which would bring with it all the evils of popular election, and make the appointment of a minister the occasion of those unholy scenes of faction and disorder, which sometimes in dissenting congregations are a scandal and disgrace to religion.

But this plan is susceptible of limitation and

improvement. It may be proposed to confine the power of a veto to the householders of a parish, who are *communicants*, and therefore professedly men of piety and Christian character. This is the plan, which has recently been adopted or revived in the Church of Scotland.¹ What measure of success may have attended its introduction, we are unable to declare. It may, for all we know, operate most beneficially in that quarter of the empire, where the mass of the population is generally more enlightened, and more capable perhaps of forming a correct judgment upon questions of religion, than in the southern portion of the land. But it may be doubted whether it would work advantageously in the Church of England, and especially in her rural parishes. It pre-supposes the existence of right judgment and Christian feeling, on the part of the parishioners, which would not generally be found. It would have a tendency to perpetuate a low standard of religion, in parishes where the gospel had previously been imperfectly preached, and might occasionally present an insurmountable obstacle to the appointment of a spiritually-minded and devoted

¹ Since this was written, the decision of the General Assembly has been declared illegal, by a majority of the Civil Judges of Scotland, and the question remains to be decided by a superior tribunal.

clergyman. Let there be in a parish a decided majority of enlightened and sincere Christians, and such a plan would undoubtedly prevent the appointment of an unsuitable individual to the ministry: but otherwise it might, as in the former case, interfere with a conscientious, as well as an improper exercise of the right of patronage. Besides, no reflecting person would wish to establish, as it were, a court of judicature in every parish, before which the capabilities of every newly-appointed minister should be tried: it would not be beneficial to the cause of religion, nor to the parishioners themselves, to make them the supreme and arbitrary judges of their ministers. And in many of our country parishes it would often happen, that one wealthy and influential inhabitant would, by his authority over his inferiors and dependents, virtually transfer to himself the rights and privileges of the lawful patron, and become, as it were, the sole arbiter of the spiritual instruction of the people. In many points of view, therefore, it is evident that matters would be little amended, if a plan of this description were brought into general operation.

But why should any new apparatus be devised, for effecting the object which we are contemplating? It has been stated in a former chapter, that there is one already existing, sufficient in

itself, with some slight alteration, for every purpose of practical reformation. By the constitution of our church, there exists a check upon every exercise of church patronage. Two things are in all cases requisite, for the legal possession of an incumbency ; first, the formal *deed of presentation* from the lawful patron ; and, secondly, the *ratification* of the appointment by the bishop of the diocese. The one without the other is null and void. When an individual is presented to the bishop for institution, he is virtually placed before him in the capacity of a *candidate* for his approbation. This is evidently implied in the process, which is to be undergone. The presentee must bring a certificate of his virtuous life, and general fitness for the ministry ; he must subscribe the formularies and articles of the church, in proof of his soundness in the faith ; and, if it be required, he must submit to a personal examination of his capabilities. These requirements plainly shew, that, according to the spirit of our ecclesiastical constitution, there rests with the bishop the right of a veto upon every nomination of the patron. All that we want therefore, in order to restrain a reckless distribution of patronage, is to give full effect to this reasonable authority ; to remove the impediments to its legitimate exercise, and to enable the bishop, fearless of

ulterior proceedings in a civil court, to consult the best interests of the Church of Christ.

It might perhaps be advantageous to facilitate, as much as possible, a reasonable accommodation to the wishes and inclinations of the people, over whom a pastor is about to be appointed: and if there should exist, on the part of the parishioners, a strong and decided, and not groundless and fantastic, alienation of mind and affection from him, it might be well that this should form an element in the question of his fitness for the charge. It would be worse than useless, to indulge the whims and fancies of censorious religionists; but assuredly that person can have but little prospect of usefulness in his ministerial labours, from whom a serious and sober-minded people turn away, with a feeling of dissatisfaction and dislike. And if the good of the church be the primary consideration, as it unquestionably ought to be, and the wish of the patron one of only secondary importance, then it is clear, that, under the circumstances we are supposing, the inferior should give place to the superior, and the nomination of the patron be subject to revision and amendment. If the respectable and serious inhabitants of a parish can produce *reasonable* grounds of complaint, if they can specify any definite and tangible objection to the appointment of the patron, if, after full ex-

amination and mature reflection on the part of the bishop, he find sufficient reason to conclude, that the ministry of the individual presented will be obnoxious and unprofitable, we see not what, in reason or equity, should hinder him from setting aside the appointment, and calling upon the patron to nominate an individual more calculated, by God's blessing, to minister to the edification of the people. For surely it is a strong ground of objection against the institution of a minister to a parish, that it sends a general feeling of disappointment and sorrow into the hearts of the best and most enlightened inhabitants; and that his character and ministrations are of such a nature, as to afford no reasonable prospect of usefulness and success. This would be altogether a different thing, from giving to the people the unqualified and irresponsible right of a veto upon the appointment of their minister; a privilege with which they could not safely be entrusted. It would not be yielding an undue deference to their puerile conceits and frivolous partialities. No power would be granted to the parishioners, but the power of representing to the bishop the objections, which they may entertain against an individual, about to be set over them as their spiritual guide; and it would remain with him to decide what weight should be attached to those objections, and

how far they ought to go in thwarting the nomination of the patron.

Exceptions will be made, we are aware, against this, as well as against every other scheme, which may be proposed. For where is the plan, which can be pronounced perfectly unexceptionable? The occasional inconveniences however, which might arise from adopting the proposed restriction upon the power of the patron, would, we think, be vastly less considerable, than those resulting from the present irresponsible mode in which it is exercised. According to this plan, no organic change is introduced, no new power called into being, no new tribunal erected, no new principles recognized. It confers no power upon the bishop, which he does not at present *nominally*, and which he ought not *really* to possess; but merely enables him to put in force the authority, with which the church and the church's Lord have rightfully invested him. It gives no power to the people, but the liberty of appeal and remonstrance; and *deprives* the patron of no power, but that which he ought never to have enjoyed, and which he possesses only by a kind of usurpation and encroachment upon the liberty of the church.

Here then is a machinery already prepared, for interposing an effectual restraint upon the perversion of the sacred trust of patronage. Without

deranging our ecclesiastical system, or subjecting it to a questionable process of innovation, we have the means of placing a decisive veto upon the presentation of an improper and unqualified person. And we would strongly urge it upon the attention of the legislature of our land, at once to sweep away the impediments, which itself has created, to the rightful exercise of ecclesiastical authority ; to cease from its undue interference with the spiritual affairs of the Church of Christ ; and to suffer her godly discipline to be enforced, without fear of clashing with the stronger and weightier arm of the civil power. Let patrons be taught by the law of man, if they will not listen to the voice of God, that power is given to them, not for their own aggrandisement, nor for the promotion of their own worldly ends, but for the welfare of the church of Christ, and for the promotion of vital godliness and true religion in the land.

We shall now be led to consider, somewhat more in detail, the several kinds of patronage which exist in the Church of England, and to suggest some modes, by which the administration of them may be amended. The restriction, which we have just been engaged in considering, is applicable to every kind of parochial preferments, from whatever quarter the patronage may proceed. But the subject would be imperfectly treated, if we

were to prosecute it no further. There are several parts of the system, not yet noticed, which are susceptible of improvement.

Patronage in the Church of England is of a three-fold nature—*crown, corporate* and *private*. The most important and influential is the *crown* patronage, or that which is nominally dispensed by the sovereign. This comprises all the episcopal sees, together with the principal dignities of the church, and about one tenth of the parochial endowments. Here, then, is a mighty mass of influence, the right or wrong direction of which must have a prodigious influence upon the well-being of the church: and here it must with sorrow be admitted, that the *appointment of bishops* has hitherto been subjected to an influence, which has tended most fatally to wither up the spirituality of the church. When by a mighty effort she had shaken off the baneful domination of the Papacy, she too tamely surrendered her liberty to the civil magistrate: the power of nominating her supreme rulers was either feebly given up in the hour of her weakness, or forcibly wrested from her by the arm of tyranny. Whatever may have been the cause, she was deprived of the rightful power of controlling the appointment of her bishops, and was left to the mercy of the crown, and its political advisers. The mockery of election

and the semblance of choice were indeed retained, but the reality was no more. Here is an apparatus, most completely adapted to secularize the church. It opens wide the door to incalculable abuses. Under such an arrangement, the appointment of a bishop virtually rests with the prime minister of the day; and who does not perceive, how frail a security is thus provided for the righteous exercise of the trust? Political partizanship, or aristocratic influence, or family connexion, will too frequently determine the nomination; and thus it is dreadful to contemplate the amount of mischief, which the cause of religion has sustained, by this intermeddling of the world with the spiritualities of the church. Her hand has been grievously wounded by the staff, upon which, in the time of trial, she too confidingly ventured to lean for support.

We see not how a remedy is to be provided, otherwise than by completely severing the appointment of bishops from all connexion with worldly politics, and by preventing the minister of state from at all interfering in the decision. It would be of no practical utility, to discuss the various schemes, which have been suggested, for remodelling the present system. The prerogative of the crown has been so long established, that it were hopeless to think of any fundamental altera-

tion. And moreover, it is very questionable, whether such alteration, if effected, would be improvement. Still, it must be admitted, that the royal prerogative in this respect is too unlimited. Some restriction is obviously necessary, for preserving the purity of the episcopal order. At present, a sovereign, hostile to the interests of the church, would be able to bring it into supreme contempt in the eyes of the nation, by a wilful degradation of its chief ministers.¹ And this is a power, which assuredly no earthly sovereign ought to possess. Nominally, indeed, the chapter is empowered to object to an appointment of the crown; but this power is reduced to a nullity, by the fear of a '*præmunire*.' To contest the point with the sovereign, as matters now stand, would be to battle with the wind: and although the consciences of the clergy concerned might be delivered, yet the church would gain nothing by the opposition. We would therefore, in the first place, recommend, that instead of being guided by the

¹ 'Herod and Archelaus are noted to have sought out purposely the dullest and most ignoble that could be found amongst the people, preferring such to the High Priest's office, thereby to abate the great opinion which the multitude had of that Order, and to procure a more expedite course for their own wicked counsels, whereunto they saw the High Priests were no small impediment, as long as the common sort did much depend upon them.'—Hooker's Eccles. Pol. VII. 24.

ministers of state in the selection of bishops, the crown should be advised by an *exclusively Ecclesiastical privy council*, consisting of the archbishops and a given number of bishops. Let the political influence be entirely set aside; and let the fittest among the clergy, the wisest, and holiest, and most respected, be pointed out to the sovereign for approval; and let the decision be guided by no other motive, than the welfare of the church.

We would moreover recommend for consideration, that there should be devised some effectual mode of restraining a reckless appointment of unqualified bishops. Let the voices of the clergy of a diocese be heard in the matter. Let a respectful petition and a temperate remonstrance, from the parochial clergy, be considered of some weight in arresting the consecration. If the absolute power of a veto be not granted, at any rate, let the decided voice of a diocesan synod be empowered to check the appointment, at least for a time, until the merits of the case shall have been investigated before the archbishops and bishops of the church. It would not frequently happen, that such a power would be called into exercise: nor do we think that it would be frequently necessary. The clergy would not be too forward in objecting to a nomination. The case must be one of obvious and glaring impropriety, to call forth so

distinct, and unanimous, and emphatic an expression of dissatisfaction. But the very existence of such a controlling power, at all times ready to check an act of aggression upon the church, would have a salutary effect upon the purity of ecclesiastical preferments.

But whatever may be the plans of amelioration which may be desirable, one method lies open to all the pious members of the Church of England. Let them unite in fervent prayer, that God would powerfully influence the minds of those, upon whom instrumentally the prosperity of the church so materially depends. And Oh that he would, by his Holy Spirit, "so dispose and govern the heart" of our youthful and beloved Queen, that she may rise superior to the solicitations of time-serving politicians and worldly-minded statesmen; that she may sink politics in religion, and the support of party in the promotion of the cause of God; and single out the best and fittest men, whom she can find to fill the highest and most influential stations in the church! Oh that she may feel, that a pure and holy priesthood throughout her dominions would be the choicest gem in her crown, and the strongest security of her throne! May she feel, that the prosperity of the church of Christ will occupy a brighter page in the annals of her reign, than the splendour of military achieve-

ments, or the more real but less dazzling glory of wise and beneficial legislation! May her name go down to posterity, like that of her still more youthful predecessor,¹ of blessed memory, associated with a bright epoch in the history of the Protestant church of England! And unlike him, too quickly removed from an earthly to a heavenly kingdom, may she be long spared to preside over its destinies, and to behold its increased and increasing purity and peace! Hers will be then indeed a more glorious reign than has ever yet been recorded in our national history.

We cannot leave this part of our subject, without throwing out a brief observation upon the *parochial patronage* at the disposal of the crown. This has hitherto been dispensed at the discretion of the Lord Chancellor; and perhaps no patronage, upon the whole, has been subjected to a worse management than this, or has been productive of greater injury to the church. This extensive right originated probably in times, when the office of Chancellor was invariably filled by ecclesiastics. The influence of secular and political motives, in appointments proceeding from this source, is too obvious to require explanation. The probability is great, amounting almost to certainty, that state

¹ Edward VI.

policy and parliamentary influence will in most cases regulate the disposal of this patronage. From no quarter therefore is the church more exposed to injury than from this. Nearly a thousand parishes in our country depend, for the purity of their ministry, upon the right exercise of this commanding influence. We know not whether there be any thing in our constitution, which of necessity attaches this privilege to the highest legal functionary in the land ; or whether it be not altogether accidental to, and therefore separable from, his office. If the Lord Chancellor be, as we suspect, only the *agent* or *steward* for the crown in this matter, we would strongly recommend that another and a more suitable agency and stewardship be established. Let this patronage be entirely removed from a quarter, where it is necessarily subjected to grievous abuses ; and let it be dispensed by the Crown itself, with *the advice of the respective bishops*, in whose dioceses the benefices may happen to be situated. And we would moreover suggest, that it should *in all cases* be bestowed, as the merited reward of faithful and laborious services to the church, within those dioceses. Let the bishop be consulted with on the matter, upon the *explicit understanding*, that his recommendation shall in all cases be for the furtherance of that object.

Little need be added upon the subject of *corporate and private* patronage. We know not that any security for its right exercise can be suggested, which has not already, directly or indirectly, fallen under our notice. The power of a veto, deposited with the bishop, and the liberty of remonstrance on the part of the parishioners, backed and supported by the force of public opinion, form, it is thought, the best and most practicable method of restraining an undue exercise of this privilege. But there is one point, connected with private patronage, which must not be left unnoticed: the *sale of advowsons* is an evil which certainly demands an attentive consideration. The subject has already been alluded to; but its importance requires that we again advert to it. It is difficult indeed to suggest any mode, by which an effectual restraint can be imposed upon the practice. The system has been too long tolerated to be easily removed. It has struck its roots, as it were, so deeply, and interwoven itself so closely with the foundations upon which the rights of property rest, that it cannot at once with safety be eradicated. The transfer of advowsons, for pecuniary considerations, independently of manorial possessions, has so long been legalized, that the difficulties in the way of its immediate abolition appear almost insuperable. The law has so long allowed

ecclesiastical property to be bought and sold, that to abolish the system at once might, in some cases, be an act of injustice to individuals. Something, however, may be done immediately, and still more may eventually be accomplished, to restrain the progress of the evil. We see no reason why a prospective arrangement should not be made, by which benefices, as a distinct and separate property, shall hereafter be no longer subject to the unholy competition of the auction mart. With a transfer of landed property, indeed, the privileges, as well as the encumbrances, annexed to it, must be transmissible; but, after a definite time, let it be no longer possible to put up the independent privilege of Church patronage for sale.

After all, however, the practical evil perhaps is not intrinsically of such magnitude, as at first sight may appear; for, supposing the privilege to be limited to the appointment of an approved person, it becomes a matter comparatively of little real moment, upon whom the right of appointing devolves. And the case is not materially different from that of a chapel, the endowment of which arises from the pew-rents, and which, of course, like other property, must ever be the subject of legal transfer, by sale or otherwise. A spiritual trust, with pecuniary emolument, is equally transferred in both cases; and whatever objections lie against the

one are, to a certain extent, valid against the other. But nevertheless there is something, from which the serious mind revolts, in allowing so sacred a privilege to be treated, even indirectly, as a marketable commodity. And were it only for the sake of appearance, and decency, and reverence for things sacred, it is most earnestly to be wished that some effectual restraint or modification were applied to the practice.¹

¹ It is well known, that during the last half century, several attached members of the Church of England have devoted a considerable portion of their energies and property to the purchase of various important benefices throughout the land, solely for the purpose of insuring in them, as far as possible, a faithful and efficient ministry. The plan has been assailed with reproach and disapprobation; but with what justice or propriety, it is difficult to determine. We do not say that, *in itself*, the scheme was desirable; for whatever objection lies against the sale of Church patronage in general, is, of course, fully applicable to the particular case in question; but under *existing circumstances*, and in the present unhealthy state of the system, we must consider the plan at once wise and commendable. If advowsons be a legitimate subject of merchandize, it is surely better that they should fall into the hands of conscientious than of worldly-minded patrons. And if the transaction be not in itself sinful or dishonourable, which can hardly be alleged, then it must be regarded as patriotic and beneficial.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

We must now bring the subject, which we have been considering, to a conclusion. It has been the main design of this essay, which, we trust, has been uniformly and steadily kept in view, to promote the spirituality and efficiency of the Church of England. 'We honestly believe (to adopt the language of Dr. Chalmers with respect to the Church of Scotland) that there is not a better range of Christian usefulness to be found, over the whole face of the country, than within her walls, and that a man of principle and zeal, when backed by the independence she confers, and shielded about by the amplitude of her securities and her power, stands on the highest of all vantage ground for the work of honest and faithful ministrations.' We regard the established church as the only apparatus, at present existing, for the moral and religious amelioration of the people. It is impossible to predict, what the power and goodness of God might raise up from the ruins of its overthrow, if such an event should be permitted; but judging from what has been accomplished by the united efforts of all our sectaries together, we have little reason to desire, that the voluntary theory should be put to the test of a

general experiment. There can be no doubt in the mind, which is not blinded by party zeal, that the destruction of the church establishment would cause the spiritual destitution of large sections of our land, and leave considerable masses of our fellow-countrymen to the precarious supply of itinerant and incompetent instructors: our more sequestered parishes would virtually be restored to their primitive heathenism; and ere long we should have to begin again amongst them the process of missionary operations.

But it would be foreign to our immediate purpose, to follow out this argument. Most firmly convinced, that the present constitution of the Church of England has the capabilities of wielding a more powerful and more extensive influence over the people, for their spiritual good, than could be possessed by any substitute that can be devised, we are bound to direct our most vigorous efforts towards promoting her purity and efficiency.

There must be a marvellous principle of vitality in her system, or she could scarcely have survived the rude treatment, which she has received from without, and have endured the protracted continuance of an unhealthy state of things within. It is a most remarkable fact, and a proof of God's favour to his church, that under propitious circum-

stances, she so quickly recovers her vigour and her spirituality. Though the fire may have sunk upon her altar, and to outward observation may seem to be extinguished, yet it requires only the breathing of another spirit upon it, and its dying embers are at once resuscitated. Let a parish have been subjected, for a long series of years, to the deadening influence of an incompetent and unscriptural ministry, yet when this obstacle is removed, and an enlightened pastor begins his labours of love amongst the people, we behold a change coming over them, and that portion of the church, which before was lying in the stillness and the lethargy of spiritual death, by the blessing of God becomes instinct with spiritual life and energy.

The course, then, which ought to be pursued, is sufficiently clear. Let the church only be 'rightly extended and rightly patronized;' let manifest abuses in her administration be rectified; and let every impediment be removed out of the way of her operations; and we shall see her deeply rooted in the affections of the people; we shall see her ministers penetrating, with the message of the gospel, into the dense masses of our outcast and abandoned population, and guiding into the moral wilderness around them the fertilizing streams of the water of life. This is a consummation, which we devoutly desire may be speedily accomplished :

for this would we exhort all those who love the cause of God, and desire the prosperity of his church, most earnestly to pray, and most assiduously to labour. “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.”¹

¹ Psalm cxxii. 6—9.

THE END.

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