

BOOK,

No. 39

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THE

CONFESSIONAL;

OR,

A Full and Free INQUIRY

INTO THE

RIGHT, UTILITY,

EDIFICATION, and SUCCESS,

Of Establishing

SYSTEMATICAL CONFESSIONS

OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

Quàm vos facillime agitis, quam estis maxume Potentes, dites, fortunati, nobiles; Tam maxume vos æquo animo æqua noscere Oportet, si vos voltis perhiberi probos.

TERENT.

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MDCCLXVI.



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PREFACE.

PREFACE.

HE author of the following performance, freely confesses himself to be one of those, who, in common with an eminent prelate, " have been seized with that epi-" demical malady of idle and visionary men, THE ec PROJECTING TO REFORM THE PUBLIC *. 35 Nor would he have any reason to be ashamed of classing with so conspicuous a character, were it not that he hath unhappily taken an antipathy to that course of medicine, to which so many others of the fraternity owe the recovery of their bealth and senses. He is still, alas! labouring to bring his project to bear, even when all the world about him, is exclaiming at the folly of every one who is engaged in fo desperate an enterprize.

The honest truth is, he thinks the remedy worse than the disease; having seldom observed any one of these patients perfectly cured, but by

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^{*} See, The first Dedication prefixed to the second volume of The Divine Legation of Moses, &c. published 1758. p. 5,

the application of a charm, which usually operates in the other extreme; and, in the shape of political spectacles, represents the public as too good to need reformation; a fort of vision which, of course, ends in a perfect conformity to the principles and manners in fashion, and not seldom puts the restored fanatic in a hopeful way of recovering with advantage, whatever he was in danger of losing, by persisting in his former reverie.

Our fage advifers will, no doubt, fuggest that there is a middle way between the two extremes; and that a man of prudence and probity, having tried his talent at reforming without success, may well sit down contented, enjoy his own opinion, and practise his own virtue in some corner out of the way of temptation, and, for the rest, leave others, who are willing to take the public as they find it, to make their best of it.

To this fober counsel, I, for my own part, should have the less objection, could I be satisfied, that a neutral character in matters concerning public reformation, where talents are vouchfased, though ever so sparingly, were to be justified; and particularly where, as in this country, every man may, within decent restrictions, publish, as well as enjoy, his own opinion.

There are certain provinces and stations, where, if the public really wants to be reformed, they who occupy them, must be at some trouble in stifling their own convictions, before

they can lie down peaceably in the repose of a neutrality. To many of these provinces belong considerable degrees of influence and authority, sufficient to give weight and success to seasonable and spirited remonstrances. And they who are in the lowest stations of watchmen and labourers, may bear their testimony, perhaps with more advantage than may be apprehended by those, who consider not, from whom we are to look for the increase of what is planted or watered by any hand. And wherever the obligation exists, I should think it can hardly be removed out of view, without opening the prospect of some discomfort, at that awful period when every man's final account shall be called for.

But indeed, indolent neutrality is not a common, and hardly a possible effect of the cure performed upon idle and visionary reformers of the public. Idleness, in the proper sense of the term, is not their failing. They are commonly persons of active and lively spirits, who are not easy under want of employment. Their inexperience leads them into sanguine hopes, that same, honours, and rewards must crown their labours. It is inconceiveable to them, that where the public is so grossly and notoriously wrong, it should not acknowledge its obligations to those who interest themselves to set it right, by the most substantial instances of its gratitude. And

this is the idle part of the character, in the figurative lenfe.

But when the astonished visionary finds his mistake, and perceives that public error of the most palpable kind, has its champions ready armed at all points, and prepared to dispute every inch of ground with him, - that nothing would be got by the unequal conflict but difgrace, contempt, and poverty; human-nature, and an impatience to be figuring with eclat, commonly bring him over, without much hesitation, to the furer fide; where he fets himfelf to act the part of a true proselyte, that is to say, to reform backwards, with a violence and precipitation proportioned to the fuspicions his new allies might entertain of his hankering after his old deviations, should he not give the most spirited proofs of his effectual conversion.

Were not the subject of too serious a nature, (for the particulars above are to be understood of reformation and reformers of religious matters) and were not the *Dramatis personæ* of too solemn a cast to be exhibited in *Comedy*, one might give very diverting instances of this kind of frailty, in more than one of those who have not only affected, with a kind of philosophical grimace, to ridicule their own former conduct as idle and visionary, but also, to fill up the measure of their merit with their party, have been the forwardest to expose, reprobate, and to the utmost of their

their Goodwill, persecute those who persist in this

epidemical folly.

The perfifters indeed are but few; and no wonder. All their discouragements considered, they may be faid, like Abraham, against hope, to believe in hope. In the first ranks of their adversaries appear those who enjoy plentiful emoluments from the nature and construction of the establishment, who are therefore concerned to defend every thing belonging to it, not because it is true, or reasonable, or righteous in itself, or with respect to the design of the Gospel, but because it is established. With litigants of this complexion, arguments drawn from reason, from scripture, from the most notorious facts, are of no force. When particular answers fail them, they have general ones at hand, which do their business effectually. Public authority, long possession, the concurrence of the majority, the danger to public peace from attempts to innovate, &c. &c. &c. have fuch a formidable appearance, even in the eves of some of the warmest friends of Reformation, that they will often shudder at the temerity of their own champions, when they confider with whom, and with what they are to engage, and (fuch are the effects of this kind of intimidation) will suppress their own speculations, to avoid suspicions of being connected with a fet of men, whom the nature and tenor of such answers, go near to ftigmatize. 2 3

stigmatize with something more heinous than faction and sedition.

This whole case with its several appendages, it set forth by Mr. Bayle in so masterly a manner, that I cannot resist the temptation of giving a pretty long extract from him, without any fear however of disgusting the sensible reader with the prolixity of it, for which the justness of that great man's sentiments upon so interesting a subject, will make him ample amends, as well as surnish me with some reslections arising from the case as stated by Bayle, compared with the Conduct of the anti-resormers in our own country.

John de Launoi, a Parisian doctor of the Sorbonne, having, in the course of his learned disquisitions, found out the falsehood of many legends and traditions concerning the saints who were honoured with places in the popish calendars, made no scruple to publish his discoveries, and in consequence of them, to propose, that these imaginary beings might be expunged from those Calendars, Martyrologies, &c. as occasioning an highly criminal superstition in those who paid religious adoration to them. He even ventured to attack the angelic doctor Aquinas, as chargeable with great ignorance, or great infincerity, in building his arguments against heterodoxy, upon fabulous traditions.

One Baron a Jacobine friar, undertook the defence of Aquinas, maintaining, that "the traditions "tions he built upon had been derived from primitive times; that Launoi's refearches and conclusions, were the employment of a pragmatical genius, more concerned to obtain a great than a good name; that Launoi ought, like St. Thomas, to have let things alone when they were well; and that, admitting some of these traditions were of doubtful authority, or even fabulous, Launoi should have paid a promer regard to that maxim of the physicians, Malum bene positum ne moveto." Which being transferred into Divinity, signifies, that, false traditions, which do not burt faith, and promote piety, ought to be retained, and not disturbed. Upon which Mr. Bayle, thus reasons.

"If all the circumstances set forth by this Jacobine were true, there is no doubt but John de
Launoi was deservedly condemned, as one, who
to make himself talked of, and to satisfy his
ill nature, would oppose many general opinions, which had obtained time out of mind, to
the advancement of piety, without detriment
to the faith.

[&]quot;But this is not the case of our Sor"bonne doctor. The traditions he opposes,
"have no good title, and his arguments a"gainst them are unanswerable. Now, in this
"case, it is plain there is all the right in the
"world to bring the most general and ancient
a 4 "opinions,

" opinions, to a trial, especially when their falsity keeps-up a criminal devotion.

"I defire it may be observed, that the reasonings of this doctor were of such force, as to
undeceive abundance of people; but yet the
abuses have not been removed. Things remain upon the same foot in *Provence*, and
elsewhere. They tell you still the same stories
they told your ancestors, and you see the same
worship and the same ceremonies. This proves
the difference there is, betwixt private persons
and the public. Particular people are most of
them, one time or other, undeceived, and yet
the practice of the public remains the same."

After which Mr. Bayle brings some parallel instances from *Cicero*, and *Juvenal*, to shew that public institutions in the *Roman* state, kept their ground against the conviction even of a majority. And then goes on thus.

"There is no likelihood that they who follow the steps of John de Launoi, can do any service, whilst things are only carried on by way of literary dispute. The patrons of false devotion will never recede. They find their account too much in not bating an ace, and they are powerful enough to secure themselves from any violence. The court of Rome will second and support them. The Romish church seems

^{*} Where a fictitious Mary Magdalen is worshiped as the converter of the country.

"to have adopted the religion of the god Tere" MINUS of the Roman republic. This god ne"ver yielded a tittle, no not to Jupiter himself;
"which was a sign, said they, that the Roman
"people should never recede, nor yield an inch
"of ground to their enemies. If any Pope should
be willing to facrifice something to the reunion of the schismatics, some insignificant devotions, some superannuated traditions, he might
apprehend as great a murmur against him, as
the heathers made against the scandalous
peace of the emperor Jovian."

He then proceeds to give fome modern inftances of the bad fuccess of Reformers. - Of the Jesuit Papebroch, and his affistants, "who at-" tempted to purge the Asta Sanstorum of many " fabulous and feandalous particulars, for which " fervice the Carmelites and other monks pro-" cured feveral volumes of the faid Alls fo purg-"ed, to be burned by the Inquisition of Toledo." - Of Father Mabillon, who "having laid down " fome very good rules concerning the worship " of some faints, and the judgment to be made of relics; — was answered, Physician heal thy-" felf; - reform first the worship paid in some "houses of your order of St. Benedict to faints " as dubious as any. He was likewise told of " the injury he did the church, and the advan-"tage he gave to Protestants." - Lastly of Mr. Thiers, who "fet up against false relics, ex-" amined

"amined where the bodies of martyrs lay, "
published some differtations upon the boly tear
of Vendôme, and upon St. Firmin. All, says
Mr. Bayle, was lost labour. The King's
council suppressed his book about St. Firmin,
as the bishop of Amiens had condemned a
letter he had published upon the same question."

Mr. Bayle's concluding reflection is as follows. "The fruits of a discreet zeal are destroyed in "the bud. They build upon this principle, "that it is dangerous to abrogate old customs; "that boundaries ought not to be removed; and that, according to the old proverb, we should leave the minster where we find it. The prosperity of the Christian Rome, just like that of the Pagan Rome, is founded upon the preservation of ancient rites. Consecrations must be complied with; religion will allow no alteration in them, sed illa mutari vetat religio, et consecratis utendum est. In our days, said a sub- prior of St. Anthony, let us beware of innovations."

We see then how it is. How numerous, how well disciplined the forces that are brought into the field against reformers; how able the generals that head them, and how determined the whole body not to yield an inch even to the united powers of piety, truth, and common sense.

But,

But, methinks, I hear a zealous anti-reformer, steady to his point, and not easily disconcerted, expostulating with me to the following effect.

"We fee, indeed, from this representation of " Mr. Bayle, how it is; but only, how it is in 56 popish countries. Do not Protestant churches " reprobate faint-worship of all forts? Have we " any fuch instances among us of gross idolatry, stat of worshiping an imaginary saint? And " can you pretend, there are any errors or cor-" ruptions in the church of England, any thing " like to have so ill an effect upon the people, as "the shameful superstitions attacked by the "French reformers above-mentioned? On ano-"ther hand, is it fair to put the reformed " churches, and particularly the church of Eng-" land, which pretend to no infallibility, and "which are founded upon principles of Chri-" flian liberty, upon the same footing of obsti-" nacy with the church of Rome, the very genius 66 and spirit of which excludes all examination, " and all right of private judgment? And is it " not upon record, that the church of England " hath made alterations in her public forms, 66 and doth she not declare that she is ready to "make them again, upon just and weighty ocse casions?"

To the first part of this remonstrance I answer, that neither Launoi, Papebroch, Mabillon, nor Thiers, made the least question about the lawful-

ness of worshiping those whom they esteemed to be real faints, or venerating what could be proved to be true relics. They faw not the least idolatry or superstition in either practice. And it being presupposed by them, that saint-worship was both lawful and edifying, I apprehend, it would not be of much fignificance, with respect either to the piety or moral principles of the people, that they were under the delution which these reformers endeavoured to remove. Mr. Bayle, indeed, calls it a criminal devotion; but, upon principles which he hath well explained elsewhere, it could not be criminal in the party who intended his worship to a real saint. If a French papist was perfuaded that his prayers to St. Firmin or St. Renatus were as properly directed as those he made to St. Peter or St. Paul, his inward spirit of devotion would be no less zealous and fincere in the one case than in the other; nor would the merit of it suffer any diminution on account of a mistake of which he was not, nor could be made fensible. And this is the circumstance which gives all its worth to Father Baron's maxim, Malum bene positum ne moveto.

The case, indeed, is different, when you ascend from the common people to their governors and directors, who were conscious of the delusion, and still kept it up, or who were capable judges of *Launoi's* reasonings, and resused to examine them. But even here it would be difficult, perhaps, to state the comparative guilt of popish and protestant rulers in the like circumstances, within their respective departments; and the whole (as it seems to me at least) would turn upon the true answer to this single question, whether certain particulars which are equally proved to want reformation among protestants, have not as ill an effect upon a protestant people, while they continue unresormed, as the mistake of a false saint for a true one, has upon a papist, who believes saint-worship to be an indispensable duty? I forbear to give instances, though there are more than one at hand.

With respect to the second member of the expostulation above, I would beg leave to observe, that Mr. Bayle's speculations are founded upon the nature and genius of religious establishments in general. Nor can the church of England take it amiss to be ranked with the church of Rome, nor the church of Rome to be ranked with a Pagan establishment, so far as the parallel really and in fast will hold. To me there does not appear one confideration which impeached the prudence, or obstructed the success of Launoi, Mabillon, or Thiers, that would not operate equally to the difreputation and disappointment of an English Protestant Reformer. In all exclusive establishments, where temporal emoluments are annexed to the profession of a certain

certain fystem of doctrines, and the usage of a certain routine of forms, and appropriated to an order of men fo and fo qualified, that order of men will naturally think themselves interested that things should continue as they are. A reformation might endanger their emoluments. though it should only begin with such things as are most notoriously amiss, the alteration of which would no way affect their temporal interests, yet. by opening a door to farther inquiry (which would be the natural effect of it), their dignities and revenues might possibly be brought into question, and be thought to need fome regulations, which it can hardly be supposed they would approve. So that they who ask, Who knows where a reformation may end? by way of giving a reason why it should not be begun, are certainly not unwife in their generation. A man of fense, though he may love his money better than any thing elfe, may nevertheless be capable of discerning the particulars where a reformation is wanted.

For the rest, the clergy of protestant establishments have been protected in their opposition to innovations by the higher powers, as well as monks and augurs. The commonalty in our own country, as far as ever I could see, are kept in their prejudices and adherence to their present forms, by the same considerations and ways of arguing that attach the vulgar in other countries

to things of a worse complexion*. We have an example in the renowned Tillotson, what murmurs the prefiding character in our church experienced, upon giving way to a reformation of our public forms and fervices, though in the least important particulars. The arguments against a reform, taken from possession and antiquity, and the expedience of adhering to ancient rites, have been as often and as warmly urged by some protestants in England, as by the orthodox in foreign lands. How dextrous we are at recrimination, the late Mr. White's Letters to a Diffenting Gentleman remain a memorable and standing evidence. Father Mabillon himself could not hear more of the advantage he gave to Protestants, than the authors of the Free and Candid Disquisitions have been told of the countenance they gave to the English Protestant Dissenters +. And I am not

* See Bishop Beverege's Latin Sermon before the Convocation, 1689: and most of the Sermons at Hutchins's Lecture.

^{† &}quot;This book of yours [The Free and Candid Disquisi"tions] will be a means to lessen very much the credit and
"estimation of the church of England in the eyes of many of its
"members, as well as to confirm and encourage the dissenters
"in their present ways, perhaps also to increase the number of
"them. —Your Disquisitions, doubtless, will be considered
"as a grand Arsenal, stored with ordnauce of almost all sorts,
"fit to attack the church of England, which our adversaries, no
"doubt, will thank you for, and have recourse to, upon all
"occasions." Free and impartial Considerations on the Free and
Candid Disquisitions, by Mr. White, p. 59, 60.

certain that he would be mistaken, who should affirm of the church of England (what Luther did of the church of Rome *) that the remonstrances of these Disquisitors have rendered the church more firm and inslexible, even with respect to some particulars which seemed to be given up on all hands, till they were pointed out for reformation by these idle and visionary men.

To what the alterations that have been made in our ecclefiaftical fystem amount, and consequently how far the church may be disposed to a further reformation upon just and weighty occasions, will be seen by and by.

Here is more than sufficient, one would think, to deter a reformer, who is able and deliberate enough to count the cost, from ever meddling with public error, even with more than half the courage of Luther. A man must be in a very uncommon situation, as well as of an uncommon spirit, even in this land of liberty, who is bold enough to undertake the patronage of a cause, to which so many, at different periods, have fallen martyrs. Not always, indeed, by fire and sword,

^{*} Verum concordiam fidei, seu doctrinæ, frustra quærit Erasmus, eo consilio ut mutuum cedamus et condonemus, non tantum quod adversarii prorsus nihil cedunt, nec cedere volunt, quin potius rigidius et obstinatius nunc omnia desendunt quam unquam antea, etiam talia ausi nunc exigere, quæ ante Lutherum ipsimet damnaverant, et reprobaverant. Luther apud Seckendorf, lib. iii. p. 53.

but oftener, perhaps, by what kills as furely, though not fo quickly, hunger and nakedners.

For the misfortue is that the malady of reforming the public, is most apt to seize upon those, whose profession leads them to a more intimate fludy of the holy scriptures: whose views in life, and, ordinarily, whose scanty circumstances require, that they should preserve some credit with their ecclefiaftical fuperiors, in order to procure themselves a decent maintenance. Nothing can be more fatal to fuch than a mutinous spirit of reformation. They are marked of course as forbidden and contraband men. A fprightly academic was one day making some free observations upon the Canons, before an eminent fage of the law: "Beware, young man, favs the prudent " counsellor, of the hely office, and remember that "there are starving, as well as burning Inquisi-" tions."

But after all, they who can get above these alarming considerations, or who are in a situation not to be affected by them, will not be absolutely destitute of some gleams of hope and comfort, over and besides what results from the inward testimony of having done their duty.

Mr. Bayle, as the reader hath feen, observed, that "the reasonings of Dr. Launei, had force e"nough to convince abundance of people," and those of course, people of the best sense, and the most rational piety. So, no doubt, hath it hap-

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pened to the pleaders for a farther reformation in our own church, many of whom have been not a whit behind the Sorbonne-doctor, either in the evidence of facts, or in the force of their reafoning. Nor is it unreasonable to presume, that as farther devellopments are made, the number of the convinced must be increased.

The weakness of the few answers that have been made to the important remonstrances of ferious and judicious men on the article of a farther reformation, and the supercilious contempt with which the most respectful, as well as the most reasonable of them have been passed by, must detract something from the estimation of those whom the thinking part of mankind will suppose to be chiefly concerned to take notice of them. It will look like a combination to adhere to the established system, for some political purposes not fit to be owned; while no follicitude is perceived to relieve the reasonable scruples of conscientious diffenters, or to consult the real neceffities of our own people by fubstituting, in the room of hackneyed, and not always justifyable forms, more intelligible, as well as more animating methods of public worship, and public edification.

To be plainer still, this temper and conduct in a fet of men, many of whom make it appear, on other occasions, that they want neither learning nor capacity to form an accurate judgment on so interesting a case, will hardly allow us to think them in earnest in their weekly exhortations to christian piety and virtue, or the zeal they occasionally express for the protestant religion and government. Their doctrine, contrasted by their practice, will look to the discerning part of the public, as if nothing was meant by these terms, in their mouths, but mere conformity to an ecclesiastical establishment, and a resolution to support and defend that at all events, with, or without reason.

But if ever the mask should fall off in some future skirmish *, (the probable and frequent effect of a rivalship for temporal honours and emoluments) and one of the parties should be reduced to the necessity of leaning upon the friends of reformation, by way of balance to the other;

^{*} This was once very near being the case, when, in the memorable year 1-45, two of our leading churchmen could not agree, whether, upon the received fythem of divinity, the Rebellion then on foot, was to be confidered as a judgment upon the state, or only upon particulars. The difference, however, was happily compromifed in the following manner. -- " In " the mean time, most polemic Sir, let us agree in this, however " different we may go in other matters, TO REVERENCE AND " support our happy constitution. And that I may " bring the matter as near to you [might he not have added, " and to myfelf,] as I can, what other conftitution but this, let " me ask you, would have heaped Chancellorships, Archdeacon-" ries, Pretends, &c. with so liberal a hand, and on so worthy " a jubject?" - This was an argument ad utrumque, which would admit of no demur, and fo, we may inppose, they shaked hands, and parted friends.

tis then that the labours of these idle and visionary men may come to have their weight, and some of those, at least, who are now pining away in a desponding obscurity, under the frowns of their disobliged superiors, may possibly live to see the way they have been preparing, gradually opening to the accomplishment of what all well informed christians and consistent Protestants have been so long and so ardently wishing for in vain.

But let this happen when it will, the church will not get half so much credit by a reformation into which she is compelled by an unwelcome necessity, as would attend her undertaking it freely and of her own bounty; and there is one consideration above all others, in which her honour is intimately concerned, that should dispose her to think of it seriously.

It is an objection which, by turns, has been made to all the reformed establishments in Europe, that their respective plans are too narrow and circumscribed; nor is it to be denied, that along with all their professions of afferting christian liberty, they have, more or less, imposed upon their members, certain doctrines and modes of worship, for which they have no other than human authority.

When this is objected to any of them, as inconfiftent with their original foundation, the holy foriptures, they constantly appeal to the practice of each other, as a common justification of them all; as if that were sufficient to preclude all appeals to any other authority.

The learned and excellent Dr. Mosheim hath complimented the church of England, with the title of, The chief and leading branch of that great community, which goes under the denomination of the REFORMED CHURCH*. What prescriptive or equitable right the church of England has to this preference, I shall not stay to inquire. It is sufficient for my purpose that she accepts the compliment, having, indeed, paid it to herself an hundred times †. And yet, when her own unscriptural

^{*} See his Compendious View of Ecclefiastical History; translated by Dr. Archibald Maclaine, lately published for Millar, vol. ii. p. 575.—— a work for which the christian, as well as the literary commonwealth, is highly obliged both to the author and translator, as it is calculated to correct, with a very singular impartiality, though, at the same time, with great candour and tenderness, the salse and delusive views in which the religious conduct of our foresathers has been placed, both with respect to sacts and systems.

^{† &}quot;We think, says a learned Bishop, our own church the best; every body thinks it far from the worst." — "The Lutherans, says another (if another) prefer it to the Calvinist communion, the Calvinists to the Lutheran, and the Greeks to both." — Which is explained to mean, that every one thinks the church of England, the next best to his own. "But this, fays Dr. Maybew, is said without proof." Second Defence, p. 6. — And mark what a bitter pill the Doctor gives us in the room of this fweetmeat, with which we treat ourselves. "There is indeed, says he, one church, a very ancient and extensive one, which it may naturally be concluded, for a reason that

[&]quot; shall be nameless, considers the communion of the church of b 2 impositions

impositions come to be objected to her, she hath the condescension to alledge in her defence, the usages of protestant churches abroad, nay hath sometimes been humble enough to take shelter under the differing churches at home, — those very affemblies, which, on other occasions, she hath resused to acknowledge as sister churches; a degree of humblity, in my poor opinion, much below the dignity of a leading church, which surely should maintain her ground, and vindicate her practice by original authority, without accepting any supplemental aid from the examples of those, whom in every other light, she looks upon as something less than her inferiors.

But would the church of England, indeed, perfectly atchieve this honour of being the leader and chief of all reformed churches? The way is open. Let her be the first to remove every stumbling block out of the way of her weak (if so she will needs call them) but conscientious fellow-christians. Let her nobly and generously abolish and disavow, all impositions, all bonds, and yokes, all beggarly elements, disagreeable to the spirit and design of christianity. Let her remove all grounds of suspicion of her hankering after Romish superstition, by renouncing every

[&]quot;England the next best to her own," Observ. p. 127. For my part, I should think we are well off, if, for this nameless reason, all other Protestants do not think our church the avorst but one.

rite, ordinance, and ceremony, which may nourish this jealousy among the dissenters, and for which she is driven to make apologies that so remarkably contrast her pretensions to an authority to decree them. Let her do this, and set the glorious example to the other Protestant churches of Europe, and then will she be justly intituled to those encomiums, which, while she affumes them in her present situation, will only pass with the judicious for the meanest of all mean things, self-adulation.

But to wave our speculations for the present, and to come to a few plain facts. Let us take a cursory view of the steps taken, by authority, to reform the church of *England*, after the settlement of it by Queen *Elizabeth's* Act of uniformity.

Elizabeth would enter into no treaty with the old puritans to alter or reform any thing. They were delivered over to Parker and Whitgift, for correction only; which the latter exercised with fo unseeling an hand, and so far beyond his legal powers, that, upon the Queen's demise, he began to be terribly frighted at the approach of K. James's first parliament; and it is probable enough his apprehensions hastened his death.

He lived, however, to be present at the Hampton-Court conference, where all objections were happily sitenced by the commodious maxim, of, No bishop, no king. The whole assair ended with

extravagant compliments to the royal moderator, which some people, who were not puritans, thought christian bishops should not have carried so far.

Barlow's account of it, might well enough have been called, A Farce of three Acts, as it was played by his majesty's servants at Hampton-Court, &c. But it proved to be no farce to the poor conscientious puritans, with whom Fames faithfully kept his promife, viz. that " if they would " not conform, he would barry them out of the " land, and even do worse *." Accordingly many of these worthy confessors found it more eligible to quit their country, and to feek their peace in an uncultivated defart, than abide the fury of the bishops. And when they, who first fled to New England, had made this a comfortable afylum, the authority of government was most cruelly interposed, to deprive those who would have followed their brethren, of this relief, that the bishops might not lose the satisfaction of tormenting them at home ‡. And afterwards, when, in the reign of Charles I, these refugees began to be happy and prosperous, the malicious Laud, that they might reap no advantages from their in-

* Fuller's Church Hift. B. X. p. 19. and Heylin's Hiftory of of the prefbyterians, B. XI. p. 376.

[†] See Pierce's Vindication, Part I. p. 170, 171. Tindal's Rapin, 8vo. 1731, vol. IX. p. 312.-395. Maccaulay, vol. I. p. 6-. But above all, Willon, p. 74.

dustry, commercial genius, and christian liberty, contrived to cramp their trade by foolish proclamations *, and, to complete their mortification, was upon the point of sending them a bishop with a military force to back his authority, if the Scots had not found him other business +.

Fuller tells us, humourously enough, that, after the Hampton-Court conference, "many cripples in conformity were cured of their halting therein, and such who knew not their own, till they knew the King's mind in this matter, for the stuture quietly digested the ceremonies of the church \$."

It is more than probable, that James himself was one of these cripples, till he talked with his bishops; the time had been, when he could no more digest these ceremonies, than his new puritan subjects, and when he talked against those of the church of England, in particular, with scorn and contempt ||.

No doubt, but, upon the event of this conference there was a confiderable falling off. So it will always be in such cases, even with those who know their own minds well enough. Bancrost pretended to Spotswood, Archbishop of St. Andrews,

^{*} Rushavorth, second part, p. 718.

⁺ Heylin's Life of Laud, p. 369.

[§] Fuller's Church History, B. X. p. 21.

^{||} He called the English Liturgy, " an evil faid mass in English; which wanted nothing of the mass but the lift-

[&]quot; ings." Calderwood, apud Harris, p. 25.

that "when the rolls were called of those who food out, and were deposed, which was some years after, they were found to be forty-nine in all England, whereas the ministers in that kingdom are reckoned nine thousand and a- bove *."

Bancroft probably forgot to tell his brother Spotswood, how many shiploads he had terrified into the plantations. It might be too, that he found no more than forty-nine, whom he held it safe to perfecute; poor friendless and moneyless men, who had nothing wherewithal to buy off their censures, nor any patrons to protect them. There are authentic accounts, that the Nonconformist ministers were not so thin sown even in Bancroft's reign.

But perhaps a little anecdote, preserved by a sensible and candid conformist, may help us to account for this gross misrepresentation. "In the year 1669, says he, we had several articles fent down to the clergy, with private orders to fome, to make the conventiclers as sew and inconfiderable as might be. The eighth and last was this, Whether you do think, they might be easierly supposed by the affishance of the civil maginary strate †?"

^{*} Spotfavood's Hist. of the Church of Scotland, p. 479. and Heylin's Hist. of the Presbyt. p. 376. Calderwood says, that the number of silenced, and deprived ministers, on that occasion, were 300. Altare Damasteenum Præfat.

[†] Conformists plea for Nonconformists, Part I. p. 40. This

This was a cast of Sheldon's politics, the system of which he took from those excellent originals, Bancrost and Laud. It would not have looked well to the civil magistrate to do the Hierarchical drudgery of the prelates, while the nonconformists were esteemed considerable for their numbers and quality. Even Charles's ministers might have boggled at this.

But Spotswood's reflection upon Bancrost's report, must not be forgot. "Such a noise, says "he, will a few disturbers make, in any society "where they are tolerated." Experience hath shewn, that the more such disturbers are tolerated, the less noise they make. But Spotswood, by the word tolerated, meant, suffered to live. Nothing like a halter to make a man cease his noise!

What the puritans aimed at, and hoped to obtain by this conference, may be feen in that excellent rescript called the *millenary petition*, preferved by *Fuller* (no bad model for a reformation even in these days); what they did obtain, was imprisonment, deposition, and exile.

The violence with which the ruling bishops drove on during this and the first part of the succeeding reign, (over which a good natured man would throw a cloak, if he could find one large enough to cover it) lost them first their seats in parliament, and afterwards their whole episcopal authority.

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Of those great and wise men who composed the parliament of 1641, (and greater, or wiser, or more of them at one time, *England* never saw) all were not of one mind, with respect to the bishops.

Some thought that particular delinquents being punished for examples, the order might remain, with such limitations, as would prevent its being mischievous for the time to come.

With this view, archbishop *Usher* drew up his plan of the reduction of Episcopacy, and would the bishops have contented themselves with the powers reserved to them in that plan, some have supposed they might have saved themselves, and very probably the king.

But they were wifer. They supposed the king was interested in their preservation, and that if ever the crown should recover the prerogative claimed by James I. and Charles I. episcopacy must rise again with that, in all its pomp and lustre, and in a condition to bring all those who had or should oppose it, to effectual repentance; and in this, such of the bishops as lived to the year 1662, found they had not been mistaken.

This may be called the fecond attempt to reform the church of *England*. Whether it miscarried for having in it too much, or too little episcopacy, would be hard to fay.

The third was the Savoy conference 1661. Charles II, impatient to accomplish his restora-

tion, and having some misgivings, suggested probably by Lord Clarendon, that the anti-episcopal party might still be strong enough to give him much uneasiness, published a declaration at Breda, giving the presbyterians to understand two things, which were never intended to be carried into execution, but upon the extremest compulsion. 1. A quite new model of the church of England. 2. Where this should fall short of satisfying tender consciences, all possible ease and relief, by a large and comprehensive toleration.

Charles foon found that the differences were in no condition to molest him. Nevertheless, as the royal word was given twice over, some shew must be made of keeping it. And this produced the Savoy conference so called; a complication of sophistry, hypocrisy, and virulence on the part of the orthodox, hardly to be paralleled in popish history.

Clarendon, Sheldon, and Morley were the conductors of the Drama, the two latter true fons of Bancroft and Laud. Clarendon passes with many for a man of integrity, seduced, in this instance, partly by his own prejudices, partly by the artifices of the bishops.

Bishop Burnet puts the inflexibility of Clarendon towards the nonconformists, to the account of his gratitude to the bishops, for the services they did him in the affair of his daughter's marriage

with the duke of York *. If this was the case, and if Clarendon was otherwise inclined to moderate and healing measures, more shame for the bishops who required such a requital.

But upon the supposition, that Lord Clarendon had really the least inclination to relax the terms of conformity in favour of the dissenters, he must have been the most disingenuous man that ever lived. For in the posthumous history of his Life, published 1759, he lays it down for a maxim, that, "nothing but the severest execution of the law, can ever prevail upon that classis of men, to conform to government." What could a vindictive prelate of those times have said more?

Be it here noted that Lord Clarendon wrote this account of his own Life at Montpelier, when he could have no temptation to diffemble. Did he then, always think so highly of established ecclesiastical forms, as this maxim imports? Certainly not, if we may judge from two of his essays, written likewise at Montpelier, the one, On the regard due to antiquity, the other, On multiplying controversies. However, if any one chuses to add his Lordship to the examples in the last chapter of this work, of great churchmen labouring under invincible prejudices, I have no objection.

Clarendon's removal from the helm made way for a fourth attempt to reform the church of Eng-

^{*} Hist. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

land, in the year 1658, in which the undertakers on the side of the church were sincere and hearty. These undertakers were, judge Hale, bishop Wilkins, Dr. Tillotson and a few more, with the countenance of the lord keeper Bridgman. Names, one may venture to say, sufficient to recommend a plan of reformation, to any christian government.

"But, fays Burnet, what advantage foever the men of comprehension might have in any other respect, the majority of the house of commons

" was so possessed against them, that when it was

"known in a fucceeding fession, that a bill was ready to be offered to the house for that end,

" [drawn by lord chief justice Hale] a very ex-

"traordinary vote passed, that no bill to that

" purpofe, should be received +."

How the house of commons came to be so posfessed, or perhaps, how it came to be known, that such a bill was prepared, is fairly accounted for by the following anecdote.

"Bishop Wilkins, who was a candid, ingenuous, and open hearted man, acquainting bishop

"Ward [SETH lord bishop of Salisbury] with

"the whole matter, hoping to have met with his concurrence in it, he [Ward] fo bestirred

" himfelf, and all his friends, and made fuch a

" party that nothing could be done in it ‡."

[†] Hift. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

¹ Calamy's Abridgment, p. 322.

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This same bishop Ward, "to get his former "errors to be forgot (for he had complied dur- ing the late times, and held in, by taking the covenant) went into the high notions of a se- vere conformity, and became the most confiderable man upon the bench *."

To finish his character. "He was so far in"censed with some things contained in the first
"part of [the learned and truly antipapistical]
"Dr. Daniel Whithy's Protestant Reconciler, that
"he obliged him to make a retractation." Which, if I had room, I would add in the margin, just as it was imposed by this steady, holding-in bishop, as it may serve for a precedent, in case retrastations should once more come into fashion. I cannot forbear, however, putting down two of the obnoxious propositions retrasted †.

Some faint attempts towards an accommodation with the protestant dissenters, by abating in the terms of conformity, were afterwards made during the reign of Charles II, particularly in the years 1673 and 1674. Popery was then making so formidable a progress, that even Morley and Ward were frightened into an appearance, at

+ 1. It is not lawful for superiors to impose any thing in the

worship of God, that is not antecedently necessary.

least,

^{*} Burnet, u. f. 192.

^{2.} The duty of not offending a weak brother is inconfishent with all human authority of making laws concerning indifferent things. Qu. Are these propositions orthodox, upon the principles of the ALLIANCE, or are they not? See, A short Account of Dr. Whithy, p. 6.

least, of desiring to make room for the nonconformists in the church, as an accession of strength against the common enemy. Calamy, in his abridgment of Baxter's history, hath given some particulars, and a sketch of abatements drawn up by Baxter, at the desire of Lord Orrery, in the year 1673 *.

Morley's character is highly painted. "The " bishop of Winchester, that it might not seem to " be for nothing that he oft pretended to be of " fo peaceable a disposition, furthered an all on-"Iy to take off the affent and confent, Ito the " book of common-prayer] and the renunciation " of the covenant. But when other bishops were " against even this shew of abatement, he told "them openly in the house [of lords], that, had it been but to abate them a ceremony, he would not " have spoken in it. But he knew they sthe dis-" fenters] were bound to the same things still by "other clauses or obligations, if these were repeal-" ed +."

This is so black and infamous, that I should hardly blame a zealous churchman who should demur to the competency of the evidence, as coming from a diffenter. There it hath flood however, for above fifty years, uncontradicted, as far as I know, by any one:

[#] From p. 338. to 343.

⁺ Ibid, p. 340.

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There is a letter of Dr. Tillotson, not far from this passage, in Calamy's Abridgment, by which it appears that Ward had played bim much the same trick in 1675 that he had played Wilkins in 1668, only perhaps with a little more hypocrify. Tillotson there says, that "the projected bill cannot pass in either house, without the concurrence of a considerable part of the bi-floops, and the countenance of his majesty, which at present I see little reason to expect *."

The reason why these two bishops Morley and Ward pretended to be so often for accommodation, seems to have been, to prevent any meetings being held without their knowledge, and consequently a reformation from coming upon them by surprize. No doubt but Ward kept in mind, not without some degree of horror, how narrowly Bel and the dragon, had escaped an ambuscade by the seedom and openness of honest bishop Wilkins.

The next attempt to reform the church of *England*, had not only the concurrence of fome worthy bishops who did real honour to their order, and of a number of pious and learned divines in inferior stations; but was undertaken under the auspicious authority of *William III*. in the year 1689.

By a fatal mistake, it was agreed, that the matter should pass through the forms of convocation, where it met with an effectual defeat from the zeal, and activity of a faction in the lower house, led on indeed, as was suspected, by some of the bench, particularly Mew and Sprat.

Dr. Birch brings some authentic proofs of bishop Compton's intriguing to have Dr. Jane chosen prolocutor, in preference to Tillotson, not out of a disaffection to the cause, but to the man *. But he who could put the cause in so fair a way of being ruined to gratify his own personal resentment, could not be very cordial to it at the bottom.

One fingle circumstance will serve to characterize the spirit and piety of these convocation men.

"We, fay they, being the representatives of a formed established church, do not think fit to mention the word RELIGION, any farther than it is the religion of some formed established church."

The word for religion in the Greek testament, is Senonea, which is no where appropriated to a formed established church. Paul speaks of sets in the Jewish religion +, some of which were just as much established, as the presbyterians and quakers are in England. Fames defines pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, in terms

^{*} Life of Tillotson, p. 179.

[†] Acts. xxvi. 5.

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which shew, that such religion may be practised and conformed to, where there neither is, nor ever was, an established church *. But this sort of religion the pious convocation-men did not think sit to mention.

Their notion of religion, indeed, hath rather a pagan cast. Religionem eam quæ in metu et cæremonia Deorum sit, appellant, says Cicero. † But another pagan seems to have had a more evangelical idea of religion. Religiosus, est non modo deorum sanstitatem magni æstimans, sed etiam officiosus adversus bomines ‡.

One cannot well call the Free and Candid Difquisitions, relating to the church of England, or the excellent Appeals which followed them, by the name of attempts to reform the church. These were rather attempts to feel the pulses of the ruling ecclesiastics of that time. So, however, matters were managed at that period, that neither the authors, nor the public were the wiser for those attempts. An ingenious fencer was employed on this occasion, to parry the home thrusts of these reformers, who had the dexterity to handle his weapons so, as to appear in the eyes of the spectators, to part at least on equal terms with his antagonists.

^{*} James i. 27.

⁺ De Inventione, ii. 22.

[†] Festus in verbo, Religiosus.

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Here then hath TERMINUS fixed his pedestal, and here hath he kept his station for two whole centuries. We are just where the Acts of uniformity left us, and where, for ought that appears in the temper of the times, the last trumpet will find us, — if POPERY will please to let us be quiet, and leave us to our repose with the same complaisance that we have left her to go about and perform all ber functions, without offence and without observation.

Having now given a short series of instances of the church of *England's* disposition to reform the exceptionable parts of her constitution, I hope I may be indulged in a few remarks upon it.

1. The professed motive of those great churchmen who gave way to any movements towards a reformation before the revolution, was not, if you will believe them, any conviction in their own minds, that any circumstance of doctrine, discipline, or worship in the established church, was really wrong. It was always afferted, that the church needed no reformation, and only condescended to these mootings partly to oblige the nonconformists with a hearing, and partly to convince them by argument, how little their dissent was to be justified: but might not one say with more truth, — much oftner to entertain the church's friends with a triumph after a victory preconcerted with the civil powers?

The

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The divines, indeed, who were employed under King William's commission, were free enough in acknowledging and characterizing the blemishes in the church of England, at least, if the remaining, tho' imperfect, accounts of that transaction may be depended upon. And this has been given as a reason, why the original papers relating to it have been so carefully secreted from the public, as hitherto to have escaped the most diligent inquiries after them.

And this fecurity is, no doubt, one circumflance which hath given fresh courage to the church of England, once more to hold fast her integrity, and to return to her old posture of desence, in memorials, schism-bills, alliances, and other expedients, some of which shew that even Bancroft and Laud would not have been disparaged by learning some particulars of churchartisce from more modern masters of conformity.

2. Another thing the foregoing detail will help us to judge of, is the value of an argument supposed to be of great weight towards disculpating our great churchmen in their backwardness to promote a reformation; namely, that this matter is in the option of the civil powers, without whose concurrence (which perhaps might not be obtained) our most dignified clergy could not stir a step.

But here I would ask, what reason the clergy of the present times can have to doubt of the

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concurrence of the civil powers in the work of reformation?" By looking back to former times, we fee the civil powers have always made it a point to oblige and fland by the established clergy in all their perils; and, in one instance, actually fell with them for a feason. But even then, their days of darkness were but few, in comparison with the prosperity they have enjoyed in the course of two centuries. Since when, we have feen them rife from their light afflictions with redoubled vigor and advantage, fo remarkably as to be able to check a reformation against the united endeavours of some of their own false brethren in the highest stations, and the most sanguine disposition in the sovereign himself to effect it.

Nor have we the least reason to imagine that their interest with the civil powers has declined to this hour. It is not much above ten years since the public was told by a great churchman, that "Things were then come to that pass, that "the state seemed to be in more need of the sup-"port of the clergy, than they of the state's *." The reasons given for that presumption still sub-sist in their sull force: not to mention some later appearances which seem to tend towards a farther need, in no long time. So that it is to be hoped we shall hear no more of this plea for the inactivity of the ruling clergy, till sull proof is given to the world by a fair and open trial, that

^{*} View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, 8vo. 1754. p. 5.

their fincere and zealous endeavours for a farther reformation, are actually controuled by the civil powers.

3. The last remark I shall make upon the foregoing facts is, that the alterations made in the forms of the church of England, instead of relieving the scruples of conscientious nonconformists, greatly increased them. The Savoy-Conference has been compared to the council of Trent. Both were the effects of an unwelcome necessity. In both the obnoxious party presided, and gave judgment: and the event of both convinced the remonstrants respectively, how vain a thing it was to contend against the plenitude of church power, and how much wifer they had been in their generation, in dispensing with things as they stood before these two reforming bodies undertook to review them.

I doubt not but the intelligent reader, who is moderately conversant in English history from the commencement of the present century, will perceive what room is left for pursuing reslections of the same fort through the last fixty years. But, as I may be thought by some to have already exceeded the just bounds of a presace, I shall, for the present, content myself with a few remarks upon one interesting circumstance in our present establishment, which has not a little employed the speculations of men of the first abilities of all parties.

There is not, perhaps, an inflance of a law enacted in a protestant community, which is less defensible in a religious view, than that of the facramental test, enjoined as a qualification for holding civil offices.

In Charles II.'s reign, which gave birth to it, a man who should have proposed the repeal of this law, with respect to protestant diffenters, would have passed for a Socinian at the best, perhaps for an atheist.

In the next reign, the inconveniences, and possibly the unrighteousness, of it were seen and felt, even by some of the great churchmen themselves, among whom Sancrost is named for one; and it was not imagined at that time, but that, upon any such deliverance from popery as the Revolution, the protestant interest would be relieved from such an incumbrance for all suture time.

Perhaps, at that particular juncture, little more was confidered among churchmen, than the ill policy of excluding so confiderable a body of protestants, who were, to a man, zealous enemies to popery and arbitrary power, from provinces where they might have supported the common cause of public liberty, with the best effect.

But, after Mr. Locke's letters for toleration had appeared, it was presently perceived, tho' the title of them ran only for toleration, that his arguments concluded against the authority of any

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Christian society to prescribe religious tests or modes of worship, which were not clearly, plainly, and indisputably agreeable to the scriptures, whether with or without the sanction of the civil magistrate *.

The first effect of Mr. Locke's reasoning appeared in a very sensible protest, in behalf of the rejected bill for abrogating the sacramental test, in the year 1689. No more, however, could then be obtained but a bare toleration, or exemption of protestant differences, from the penalties before laid upon them for holding and frequenting conventicles.

In the reign of Queen Anne, the friends of religious liberty were kept under by church memorials, and other alarms of the church's danger, calculated to inflame the people, which had all the fuccess the party could wish. And no wonder, if it be true, what Swift tells us in his history of the four last years of the Queen, "that the "whole facred order was understood to be con-"cerned in the prosecution of Sacheverel+.

^{*} It is well and truly observed, in the Presace to the last beautiful edition of Mr. Locke's letters concerning Toleration, in quarto, 1765, "that Mr. Locke was not the first writer on "this subject; for that the argument was well understood "and published during the civil war." All, therefore, that is meant by what is said above, is, that the attention of the public as well as the subject was then revived, which may easily be accounted for by the eminence and known abilities of the living author.

But nothing exhibits a more lively picture of the fense and temper of those times, than the several attempts in favour of a Law against Occafional Conformity, related in Bishop Burnet's and other Histories; which, after three unsuccessful efforts, was at length carried in the year 1711. The game was then in high-church hands, who played it so dextrously, as in the end to win the Schism-bill, and were within an ace of winning something else of infinitely more consequence.

But, providentially for the public, the reign of these politicians was now at an end. They were totally eclipsed by the accession of George I, a pattern to good and righteous men, as well as to wise and upright sovereigns. Such, however, was the remaining leaven of the former reign, that all that could be effected in favour of Christian liberty, and even that after many struggles and violent opposition, was the repeal of the two acts, that against Occasional Conformity, and the other to prevent the growth of schiss.

Attempts, indeed, were made to relieve the Protestant dissenters from the hardships of the Test-act, both in this and the next reign, and perhaps something more ought to have been ventured on those occasions, than the politicians of those times were willing to put to the hazard. What we certainly know is, that these attempts did not miscarry for want of the hearty concurrence of the princes upon the throne,

In the mean time, whatever the political reasons might be for desisting from any farther molestation of the Test-act, it would have been strange if, under the auspicious patronage of a Sovereign of the illustrious house of Brunswick, the sons of liberty should have been wanting to their cause, by sitting down in profound silence. The right-eousness of Test-laws were now discussed in form, by the accurate Bishop Hoadley, and the principles on which they were defended in a religious light, so essectionally exposed and disgraced, that even the abilities of the inimitable Sherlock were found unequal to the task of supporting them.

In this state things remained for some time. The eyes of the most prejudiced began to open, and to see the equity of relieving the protestant dissenters from this ignominious distinction; and great hopes were conceived, that in no long time it would be removed; the rather, as even the conformists themselves were occasionally obliged to comply, not without some reluctance; some of them, I mean, who perhaps never had, nor would have given the church of England that particular assurance of their being in communion with her, if they had not been called upon by motives, in which their respect for her and her institutions had no share.

It may well be supposed, that this was a stroke which the high-church party could not bear with tolerable temper. But what was to be done?

The

The argument was at an end, and personal attacks upon the adversary were to little purpose, who was equally unexceptionable as a writer and as a man, and who was only vulnerable in point of his conformity to a church, whose forms of discipline and government he had shewn, upon Gospel-principles, to be liable to so many important objections.

In this distressful hour of despondency, and when things, on the part of the test-men, were going on fast towards a state of desperation, arose a champion for the church, who, changing the old posture of desence, undertook to vindicate the test-law upon the hypothesis of an Alliance between Church and State.

Two circumstances, indeed, appeared upon the outset of this undertaking, which bore an unpromising aspect towards the learned author's success.

The first was, that the question concerning religious liberty had already passed thro' the hands of Milton, Locke, Hoadley, Sherlock, and other masters of reasoning of the first reputation, which could not but raise some little prejudice against an undertaker, who proposed to strike into a new road. The learned author, moreover, could prevail with himself to say, even after the labours of these great men, that he found the subject in an embroiled condition*. Which how-

^{*} View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 33.

ever did not tend to abate the prejudice, more especially when it appeared that, in order to disembroil it, he availed himself of the aid of such writers as De Marca and Bossuet.

The other circumstance which incumbered his enterprize, was his proposing to support a Test on such reasoning as would not destroy a TOLERATION *; by which it appeared that he meant such a TOLERATION only as presupposed the establishment of a national church, — a toleration consisting in an indulgence with respect to separate places of worship or different modes of discipline, or in allowances of partial and occasional conformity.

Whereas the toleration contended for by the advocates of religious freedom, was "abfolute" liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial "liberty upon the principle that neither fingle perfons, nor churches, nay nor even common-"wealths, have any just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion †." An attempt to make a Test-law confishent with this only true sense of toleration, may be considered in the same light as an attempt to make a thing beavier than itself, the want of which secret hath ruined many a hopeful trial at a perpetual motion.

^{*} View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 83.

[†] See the Preface to the English translation of Locke's first letter concerning Toleration, and the letter itself, p. 42. of the last edition.

For the rest, our learned author's principles are chiefly of the *political* kind, leading to expedients of *civil utility*. He was not, however, insensible, that, so far as the church was to contribute her *quota* to *this kind* of utility, she must have the authority of the GOSPEL.

Bishop Headley, from the circumstance that our Saviour had declared his kingdom not to be of this world, had inferred, that "Christ is himself "the sole Lawgiver to his subjects, and himself "the sole Judge of their behaviour, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation; — that he hath, in those points, left behind him no visible human authority; no vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his place; no inter"preters, upon whom his subjects are absolutely "to depend; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people *."

Hence it followed, that no subjects of Christ's kingdom, under the name or notion of the church, could convene, as our author expresses it, with the civil magistrate, so, as to give up any points of conscience to his direction; nor could the magistrate accept of such overtures, or such convention, without usurping upon the province which Christ had reserved to himself.

This was immediate death to the theory of alliance; nor would the Bishop's interpretation of the text admit of any inference in favour of it.

[·] Sermon on the Nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ.

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Our learned author, therefore, was under a necessity of finding another interpretation, which would better bear what he had to build upon this text. And here it follows.

"Our Saviour faith, My kingdom is not of this world, which bears this plain and obvious fenfe, that the kingdom of Christ, to be extended over all mankind, was not, like the kingdom of God, confined to the Jewish people, where religion was incorporated with the state, and therefore of this world, as well in the exercise of it, as in the rewards and punishments by which it was administred; but [the kingdom of Christ] was independent of all civil communities, and therefore neither of this world as to the exercise of it, nor as to the rewards and punishments by which it was administred *."

That a kingdom to be extended over all mankind, should not be like a kingdom confined to one particular people, is indeed plain and obvious enough; but is equally plain and obvious with respect to the Roman as the Jewish kingdom: and why the former should not be pitched upon as the instance put into comparison with Christ's kingdom, especially as the declaration was made to a Roman Governor, who might be apprehensive of our Saviour's pretensions to supplant Tiberius, is not quite so obvious. The difference too was the very same in the Roman as in the

Jewish kingdom, both as to the exercise of it, and the rewards and punishments by which it was administred. Can any one suppose it to have been our Saviour's intent, on this occasion, to give Pilate an idea of the peculiarities of the Jewish government?

Be that as it may; our learned author's interpretation will even yet bear Bishop Hoadley's inferences. Whether it will bear any other, we may see as we go along.

"But, continues our author, whoever imaingines that from this independency by inflituition, the church cannot convene and unite with the flate, concludes much too fast."

Here the kingdom of Christ is turned into THE CHURCH, which in this place must mean some particular formed society of Christ's subjects, impowered a priori to act for themselves and all the rest, that is, for all mankind. But then, where is this church to be met with? A necessary question, which should have been answered before the learned author had stirred a step farther. And now for the reasoning by which this hasty conclusion is obviated.

"We have observed, saith the learned author, that this property in the kingdom of Christ,

"[viz. of being not of this world] was given as

" a mark to distinguish it from the kingdom of

"God. That is, it was given to shew, that this

d

" religion extended to all mankind, and was not, " like the *Mosaic*, confined to one only people."

And why not as a mark to distinguish it from all the rest of the kingdoms of this world; a distinction as certainly intended in our Lord's declaration, as that mentioned by our learned author? The reason is plain. In that case, the kingdom of Christ could have allied with none of the kingdoms of this world, fince the moment fuch alliance should take place, the mark would be extinguished of course; and for this I appeal to the learned author's own interpretation of the text, who makes the property of the kingdom of Christ, of being not of this world, a consequence of its being independent of all civil communities. But fink this independency in an union or alliance with civil community, and the kingdom of Christ becomes, to all intents and purposes, a kingdom of this world, both as to the exercise of it, and as to the rewards and punishments by which it is administred.

This mark of distinction, therefore, was not to appear with respect to any kingdoms of this world, but the Jewish only; and with that there was no danger that the kingdom of Christ should enter into alliance, as it was now upon the point of being broken up.

But the dexterity of our learned author appears to the greatest advantage in the consequence he draws from the foregoing positions. "Consequently, that very reason which "made it proper for the Mosaic religion to be "united by divine appointment to the state, "made it fit the Christian should"—what? The cast of the argument and the mark of distinction prepare you to expect — "should not "be united to the state." But, no: this would have embroiled the theory of alliance with a witness; and therefore happily and seasonably does our learned author turn aside, and conclude—— "made it sit that the Christian [religion] should "be left free and independent."

Agreed; free and independent of every legislator, judge, vicegerent, or interpreter, but Christ alone, TO THE END OF TIME.

No, here we part; for the learned author asks,

- "But to what end, if not for this, to be at li-
- " berty to adapt itself to the many various civil
- " policies by a fuitable union and alliance?"

And thus we fee, not without some degree of surprize, that this very independency of the kingdom of Christ, which distinguished it from all civil communities, as a kingdom not of this world, is made an instrument of turning it into as many kingdoms of this world as there are civil policies among the sons of men.

But to the question, "To what end, if not for "this?"—And is our learned author really in earnest? Can he not perceive one other end for which the Christian religion was lest free and in-

dependent? — An end proclaimed in every page of our Christian oracles. ——In one word, the great, the gracious, the generous end of communicating its bleffings and benefits to every INDIVIDUAL OF THE HUMAN RACE, even though he should be unconnected with, or excluded from, the privileges of every human establishment on the face of the earth.

Let the learned author now try to make his end confishent with this, to which the scriptures bear so ample and so often-repeated a testimony. We will be reasoable. One single passage of the New Testament, proving that "the Christian re-"ligion was left free and independent, that it "might be at liberty to adapt itself to the many "various civil policies, by a suitable union and "alliance," will satisfy us. Nay, one single passage from which it may be clearly inferred *.

^{*} The learned author refers us, indeed, to a prophecy of Isaiah, xlix. 22, 23. which he cites thus: Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people—and Kings shall be thy nursing mothers. This prophecy, he would have us believe, receives its ultimate completion, by the Christian religion's "adapting its elitest to the many various civil policies, by a suitable union and alliance." Well then, let us see how this completion will turn out. If the Kings and Queens here mentioned represent the slate, the party to be nursed by them represents the church in alliance with them. Now let us go on with the prophecy, for the learned author hath left it short. They sthe Kings and Queens, i. e. the states states shall bow down to thee street

And thus much furely the learned author owes to his own argument; as many a plain, fincere Christian, even after all the pains taken with him in the book of Alliance, may, without such additional evidence, be extremely at a loss to conceive, what union or alliance between a kingdom which is, and a kingdom which is not, of this world, can with any propriety be called suitable.

Let us now attend to the upfhot. "An alli"ance then we must conclude the Christian
"church was at liberty to make, notwithstanding this declared nature of Christ's kingdom.
"So far is true indeed, that it is debarred from
"entering into any such alliance with the state,
"as may admit of any LEGISLATOR in Christ's
"kingdom but himself [that is, a power in the
"magistrate to alter doctrines]. But no such

CHURCH] with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet. If this is to be the ultimate completion of the prophecy, we have reason to be thankful that it hath not yet taken place, and that we have no intimation in the Christian scriptures that it ever will, as the prophecy is here interpreted. The learned author hath all along taken it for granted, that church tyranny must be the consequence of the church's being independent on the state, and hath been at some pains to load the protestant affectors of this independency with this invidious papifical consequence; being willingly ignorant, as it should feem, that the independency contended for by the advocates for Christian liberty, is not the independency of any wishele society, but of individuals only. But, to take the matter at the very word, what will the state gain by bringing the church into its dependency, if the humiliation above described is to be the effeet of this laboured alliance?

" power is granted or usurped by the supremacy of the state, [which extends only to discipline] *."

I must confess my ignorance. Till now I have thought discipline as proper an object of legislation as dostrine. And, unless Christ hath lest no rules of discipline for the subjects of his kingdom, the civil magistrate and the church too are excluded from altering discipline by the same considerations which prohibit their altering doctrines. That Christ hath lest rules or laws of discipline for his subjects, I think I may venture to affert on the testimony of the learned author himself, who, when the merits of this complex theory were not in agitation, could plainly see the superior authority of the Christian discipline in comparison with that of the alliance.

The case was this: A certain Chancellor of a diocese, an officer appointed to execute the code

^{*} See the Alliance, p. 180. and View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 146.—There is not a word in the whole controverfy concerning Church-authority of a looser and more equivocal fignification than the word discipline. Rites and Ceremonies are reckoned by somewriters among the articles of discipline. And yet Rites and Ceremonies may be idolatrous. Tests and subscriptions are considered by others, under the notion of discipline; and thus the magistrate, upon the principles of the Alliance, may have the power of altering doctrines. Bishop Hoadley's state of the case prevents this consustion. Wherever conscience is concerned, whether in matters of doctrine or discipline, there all lawgivers or judges, Christ alone excepted, are excluded.

of discipline by the powers in alliance, having unhappily incurred the learned author's displeafure, is summoned by him before a foreign
JUDICATORY (a judicatory foreign to that wherein the said Chancellor presided), that is to say, HOLY SCRIPTURE. If this be really the case, what becomes of the ALLIANCE?

To this foreign judicatory, however, let us all appeal; and, when the facramental test can stand its ground before this tribunal, it will readily be given up as an object of REFORMATION.

It may now, perhaps, be expected that I should give some account of a publication, which has in it so very little of the complexion of the times, and which appears at a season, when there is but little prospect of engaging the attention of the public to subjects of this nature and tendency.

The reader will perceive, that some part of these papers were written at times very distant from others, and not in the same order in which they now appear. Persons and facts are mentioned or alluded to, which, when they were noticed, were still upon the stage, but have now many of them disappeared; nor has the author perhaps been sufficiently careful to adjust his remarks upon them to the present period, so as to avoid the imputation of anachronisms

The Free and Candid Disquisitions, and afterwards the Essay on Spirit, gave occasion to several d4 little

little pamphlets on the subject of a review of our public service, and to the discussion of several particular points, which were supposed to be proper objects of it. And at the same time, when cards were not in the way, the same topics were debated in private parties.

Into one of these the author was accidentally thrown, where it was his hap to mention a glaring inconsistency in the case of subscription to our established articles of religion. Some gentlemen of good sense and respectable stations, then present, expressed the utmost surprize on the occasion; nor did a dignished divine, who also made one of the company, seem to have been apprized of the impropriety before it was then mentioned, tho, for the honour of the church, he made an attempt at a solution by that fort of casuistry, of which several samples may be met with in the ensuing discourses.

One of the lay-gentlemen defired to have the case stated upon paper, which, after some time, was presented to him, and makes a part of the following work, though placed at some distance from the beginning. In going through the particulars then to be considered, the author sound new matter arising upon him; which he pursued at leisure hours, without thinking of putting any thing into form upon the subject immediately.

In those days, the two principal sees were filled with two prelates, well known, while they were in subordinate stations, for their zealous attachment to civil liberty, and for their enlarged, generous, and christian sentiment in religion; in which one of them persisted to the last moment of his life, and in the highest eminence of station, and gave proof of it in a remarkable instance, which, when the time comes to give his character its full lustre, will do him honour with our latest posterity.

Here was then encouragement to venture fomething for the truth, and on that fair occafion, the author methodized and put the finishing hand to his collections. But a sudden change in the face of affairs quickly convinced him, that a publication of such sentiments would be now quite out of season.

It will certainly now be demanded, if out of feason then, what is it that hath brought to light a work of this fort at a period, when there is not only so considerable a change in the public taste, but when other circumstances, unfavourable to the cause of reformation, seem to dissuade an enterprize of this kind, for still more cogent reasons?

It may look like a paradox to allege (in anfwer to this expostulation) that there are others who who can give a better account of this matter than the author himself; which however is pretty much the case. Suffice it to say on the part of the author, that his principal inducement to acquiesce in the publication was, his observing the redoubled efforts of popery to enlarge her borders, without being at the pains, as heretofore, to cover her march, and the surprizing indifference with which some public and even clamorous notices of her pogress were received, where, one would have thought, both interest and duty were concerned to remark and obstruct her passage.

As this is a matter of some consequence, I must beg a little more of the reader's patience for a few reslexions upon it.

Dr. Mosheim hath observed, that, "in these latter days, this great and extensive commuinity [the reformed church] comprehends in its
bosom, Arminians, Calvinists, Supralapsarians,
Sublapsarians, and Universalists, who live together in charity and friendship, and unite
their efforts in healing the breach, and diminishing the weight and importance of those
controversies, which separate them from the

" communion of the Romish church *."

^{*} Mosheim, Comp. View, p. 574. Vol. II.

There feems to me to be a want of precifion in this passage, as it stands in Mr. Maclaine's translation; and how it is in the original, I have not an opportunity of being informed. Dr. Mosheim certainly means upon the whole, that the reformed churches have, in these latter days, shifted nearer to popery; and I cannot but think we may safely trust his knowledge and his integrity for the matter of sact, however he may be mistaken in accounting for it.

Mr. Maclaine indeed, in his note upon this passage, calls it, "a strange and groundless asper"fion, and finds it dissicult to conceive how
"it should escape the pen of this excellent hi"ftorian. He thinks the reformed churches
"were never at such a distance from the spirit
"and doctrine of the church of Rome, as at this
"day; and that the progress and improvement
"of science and philosophy seem to render a
"relapse into popish superstition morally impossible, in those who have been once delivered
"from its baneful influence."

I must freely own, I cannot see the force of this reasoning. Has there been no progress, no improvement in science and philosophy, in popish countries? This cannot be said. Are the improvements in these articles in some of those countries less and sewer than in any reformed country?

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country? Neither will this be affirmed. What intelligence, then, have we from those popish countries where these improvements are the most conspicuous, of a proportionable progress of religious reformation in them? Have we no reason to suspect, that if an accurate account were to be taken, the balance in point of conversions, in the most improved of those countries, would be greatly against the reformed religion?

On another hand, improvements in philosophy, are said to have made many sceptics in religion, in all churches reformed and unreformed. And scepticism, when, in a melancholy or a departing hour, it is mixed, as is frequently the case, with a certain degree of apprehension of what may be bereafter, is very apt to take its repose in the bosom of that church, which offers the speediest and most effectual security every way, without putting the perplexed patient to the trouble of examining and determining for himself. And of all the churches in Christendom, that which offers this sort of security with the greatest considence, is, out of all question, the church of Rome.

But this is not all. There is one science wherein the reformed churches, perhaps in most countries, have made as remarkable improvements,

as in any other. I mean the science of POLI-Ties, which, as fome think, has had no obscure effects upon them all. And church politics, in reformed countries, chiefly aim at accommodating all the peculiarities in their respective fystems, as much as may be, to the religon of the magistrate; a conduct, which, out of all doubt, cannot be defended in every instance. upon any principles which are of protestant original. It is the fame fort of policy which hath laid to sleep so many controversies among the reformed, which some perhaps may think a bleffing. Controversies, however, have had this good in them. They have kept the feveral parties among the reformed upon their guard not to incur the reproach of each other of advancing too near to the quarters of the common enemy. We are told, with some degree of exultation, that this contentious spirit is subsided. It is a good hearing, if it hath not funk along with it, the fimplicity, godly fincerity, and truly apostolical zeal of our first reformers against popery: otherwise we may have no great occasion to rejoyce; and should be sent to learn what that meaneth, MY peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you; NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

But not to lay too much stress upon circumstances, suppositions, and inferences from mere appearances, let us attend to a remarkable sact, brought indeed on another occasion by Dr. Mospeim, but which fully justifies his observation above cited, and, which is more, has the sanction of Mr. Maclaine himself, and is the more interesting to us, as it immediately relates to our own established church.

"As to the spirit of the established church of "England, says Dr. Mosheim, in relation to those "who dissent from its rule of doctrine and go-"vernment, we see it no where better than in the "conduct of Dr. Wake, archbishop of Canterbury, "who formed a project of peace and union between the English and Gallican churches, founded upon this condition, that each of the two communisties should retain the greatest part of their respective and peculiar doctrines *."

What a door is here opened for reflexion! A Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, a pretended champion too of the protestant religion, sets on foot a project for union with a popish church, and that with concessions in favour of the grossest superstition and idolatry; and this represented as the spirit of the established church of England,

^{*} Comp. View, vol. II. p. 576.

in relation to those who diffent from its rule of doctrine and government!

'Tis true, there are protestant dissenters from the rule of government of the established church of England, who agree with her in her rule of doctrine; and Dr. Mosheim's instance being brought as an indication of the spirit of the church of England in general, it might be supposed this established church would go as far to meet these differers, as to meet the papists. - I wish this could be faid. But our history affords no instance of an archbishop of Canterbury negotiating with protestant dissenters upon any fuch condition as that mentioned by Mosheim: and fuch of them as, fince the Reformation, might have had an inclination that way, have been to'o wary to go fo far as Dr. Wake is faid to have done with Du Pin. And if the conduct of the church of England is to be judged of by that of Archbishop Wake, the opposition of that prelate to the repeal of the Schism-bill shews, that an union with protestant diffenters, upon the condition offered to the papifts, is the last thing the established church of England would think of.

But, happily for us, Dr. Mosheim was mistaken in taking his measure of the spirit of the established church of England, from the spirit of an archbishop of Canterbury. Bishops are as apt to be intoxicated with power and pre-eminence as

other mortals, and have too often been tempted to extend their domination beyond its established bounds, when, if they had been called to account, the church established (even upon principles of the Alliance) must have disowned their authority, because the law and the magistrate would. I am not sufficiently informed of the circumstances of this transaction of Archbishop Wake, to know what progress he had made in it. But I take it for granted, that, before he could bring it to bear, it must have passed through other hands; and I remember enough of the times when Dr. Wake figured at the head of the church, to be very certain that it would then have been loft labour to follicit the confent of a majority even of the members of the church of England to an union with the Gallican (that is, the French popish) church, even tho' all the bishops upon the bench had recommended it.

Is our historian then to be condemned for his temerity in making such a judgment of the church of England? By no means. A treaty of this kind, openly avowed, espoused, and promoted by an Archbishop of Canterbury, and with respect to which there was no apparent opposition, might appear to a foreigner a sufficient indication of the spirit of the whole community, and

no improper instance of one reformed church, at least, " using her efforts, in these latter days, to "diminish the weight and importance of those " controversies that separate her from the com-" munion of the church of Rome."

But what shall we say to Mr. Maclaine, who, in a note upon this passage, not only acknowledges and confirms the fact by additional circumstances, but seems to give it the sanction of his approbation?

"The interests of the protestant religion," says he, "could not be in safer hands than Archbishop He, who had so ably and so success-" Wake's. " fully defended protestantism as a controvérsial "writer, could not furely form any project of " peace and union with a Roman-catholic church, " the terms of which would have reflected on his " character as a negociator.".

Could Mr. Maclaine be ferious when he wrote thus? Had he reflected upon the condition upon which that prelate founded his treaty, namely, that " each of the two communities should retain THE "GREATEST PART OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AND "PECULIAR DOCTRINES?" And has he confidered to what these amount, even in the modified popery of the French, or what would be the confequences of our uniting with the Gallican church in these circumstances?

Dr. Wake's merit, as a controverfial writer for the protestant religion, will be readily acknowledged,

ledged, nor is his conduct (friendly to reformation) at the trial of Sacheverell forgotten. he was not then Archbishop of Canterbury. is well known what alteration an elevated fituation makes in the magnitude, arrangement, and effect of objects, in the same prospect taken from an inferior position. This had its influence upon Dr. Wake, and it has had the same upon others. After all, this instance of a reformed church growing more placable towards Romish doctrines, is, on the behalf of Dr. Mosheim, an instance ad hominem to Mr. Maclaine, even with Mr. Maclaine's own fuffrage, who will therefore, it is hoped, abate of his refentment towards that excellent historian, and confider his remark in a less invidious light than that of an aspersion.

Mr. Maclaine, indeed, must be much better informed concerning the state of religion abroad, than we in this island; and he assures us, in this present year, 1765, that "the reformed churches" were never at such a distance from the spirit "and doctrine of the church of Rome as at this "day;" and if this is said upon good grounds, we cannot but rejoice that our foreign protestant brethren are so stedsfast and immoveable, and have less reason to be alarmed at the contrary appearances at home, where Mr. Maclaine will allow us to be competent judges in our turn.

It hath been lamented of late, that the zeal and vigilance both of pastors and people in the church of England, against popery and popish emissaries, is visibly declined. The papists, strengthened and animated by an influx of Jefuits, expelled even from popish countries for crimes and practices of the worst complexion. open public Mass-houses, and affront the laws of this protestant kingdom in other respects, not without infulting fome of those who endeavour to check their insolence. It is not long ago, that we were told, with the utmost coolness and composure, in a pamphlet written expressly in defence of some proceedings in a certain episcopal fociety, and, as is conjectured, by fomebody in no ordinary flation, that " Popish Bishops go " about here, and exercife every part of their "function without offence, and without " observation *." A circumstance that can no otherwise be accounted for, than upon the supposition that the two hierarchies are growing daily more and more into a resemblance of each other; which supposition is indeed necessary for the support of the point, in proof of which this notable fact is employed. Surely these phanomena were not common, even in Archbishop Wake's time.

^{*} Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations.

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Our protestant dissenters in general have, I hope and believe, very different conceptions of the malignity of popish principles, and of their fatal aspect upon the civil and religious rights of Great Britain. I know fome of the worthiest and most judicious among them, who fee with concern and anxiety the little interruption that is given to the unwearied endeavours of treacherous priefts to pervert his Majesty's protestant subjects to their intolerant superstition, and consequently from their allegiance. - A late cafe, however, remarkable enough to have taken up no little room in the public prints, hathedifcovered, that all the leading characters among them are not of the same stamp, and that popery itself may be divested of its terrors in the eyes of a once zealous champion for religious liberty in its fullest extent, when taken into the protection of a man, who, for the time being, had the distribution of the loaves and the fishes.

But let us now proceed to inquire what popery hath done to entitle herself to this complaisance from the reformed churches; what sleps she hath taken, or what disposition she hath shewn, to meet all or any of these churches haif-way?

And here I will not ask whether the papists have endeavoured to diminish the weight and importance of those controversies they have with us, which are merely of the *religious* kind. I

will not inquire whether and how far the church of Rome hath modified her abfurd and impossible doctrine of Transubstantiation. I will not examine her on the head of purgatory, faint-worship, relics, masses for the dead, penances, and other articles, which have no immediate ill effect upon civil fociety. I will only inquire whether popery hath reduced her ancient pretentions fo far, as to become a friendly, benevolent, and charitable neighbour to perfons of the reformed religion.

In the first place, hath she acquitted the protestants of beresy? If not, is she convinced that beretics ought to be tolerated, and that she ought to keep her faith and perform her covenants with them, as well as with persons of her own communion? Or hath she receded from her claim to infallibility, on which these other doctrines are built?

Have the papifts of Great Britain, in particular, given the King and his Government the fecurity of their allegiance, as protestant subjects do? Do they acknowledge no King of Great Britain but his majesty King George III? Have not a majority of English papists of rank and fortune Jesuits in their houses, as directors of their consciences? Have not their youth been fent to be educated among Jesuits? Are not the Roman-catholic priefts, stationed all over England.

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land, chiefly of the Jesuitical order? Is it not the doctrine of the Jesuits that princes may be excommunicated by the Pope, and afterwards deposed or murdered? Are not all Protestant princes, and particularly the King of Great Britain, considered by this order of men, as already excommunicated? Are not all persons whose consciences are directed by Jesuits obliged to believe as the Jesuits themselves believe? And are not they who hold these opinions, sworn enemies to the protestant government of these Kingdoms?

If these questions cannot be answered to the statisfaction of a protestant people, it behoveth every good subject to our gracious Sovereign, and every friend to this country, to keep up a spirit of vigilance and attention to every motion of these dangerous inmates, whom we daily see strengthening their hands with new converts, of whom the leaders of this malignant party will not fail to avail themselves, the moment they find their numbers sufficient to give them an equal chance in a struggle to wrest out of our hands our inestimable rights and liberties civil and religious.

But you will ask, "what has all this to do with subscription to Articles of religion, and

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"the establishment of Confessions of faith and detrine in protestant churches?"

Not so little as you may imagine. All religious impositions in protestant societies, not warranted by scripture, and which must be submitted to, on the pain of wanting bread, have a tendency to lessen the apprehensions, that they who have so much at stake as British subjects have, ought to entertain of the incroachments of Popery. Men of liberal education, finding they cannot be completely qualified for certain public stations, without complying with terms, of the rectitude of which they are not fatisfied, and with which they must comply, or lose the expence as well as the fruits of their education, will naturally be loath to forego the means of their subfistence for a scruple which is not countenanced by one example in a thousand, and will therefore comply at all events. They will be apt to suspect, that a free examination into the merits of the case might leave impressions, which would either disappoint their prospects in life, or, in case of compliance, bring upon them anxieties that would embitter every emolument arifing from their profession. What wonder that, in these circumstances, they should take up with the first slimfy casuistry suggested to them by a fellow-feeling brother? or, which is the **fhorter** 4

fhorter cut, and by far the most current anodyne, repose themselves in the authority of the church?

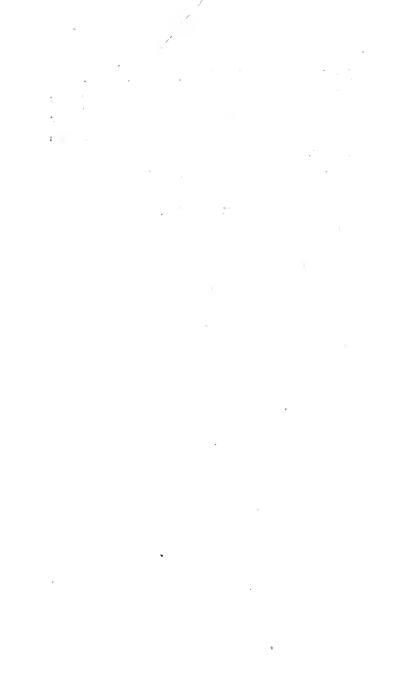
In either case, they are in a train which would lead them with equal security to acquiesce in the genuine impositions of popery. The cases only differ in the degrees of more and less: and they of course must be tender in afferting the privileges of christian liberty, on the peril of being mortisted with recriminations, which the reproof of their own hearts would force them to apply, not without painful sensations. Nor is there any alternative, but a state of profligate secularity, disposing men to seek affluence, power, and dignity at any rate, and by any means that will give them the speediest possession; and with such men, popery and protestantism, the evange-lists and the mass-book, are upon a level.

This is the way that some people have of accounting for the omission of the MASTER ARGUMENT against popery, in those few and superficial discourses on the subject, which are now-a-days heard from the pulpit.

It can never be for the interest of a free state to have men under this kind of distress in any public office; much less those who are callous, and perfectly proof against such feelings. It may be

for the interest of a church to have a hank of this kind upon the clergy; but it must be the interest of a church, with which it is not for the interest of a free protestant state to cultivate an alliance.

It is not usual for Authors to apologize for their Title-pages. But I am told, that the word Confessional is quaint and uncouth, liable to a perverse interpretation. I wish those Critics may find nothing more exceptionable in their Review of the work itself, and then I may hope to abide their censures with tolerable patience. Perhaps, when the candid Reader observes what kind of Confessions from the Defenders of Subscription are exhibited in the course of this work, he will not be disgusted with an allusion to a fort of Penitential Exercise, which another kind of votaries would probably undergo with extreme reluctance, were it not for their extraordinary veneration for the injunctions of the church.



THE

CONFESSIONAL.

CHAP. I.

A summary View of the Rise, Progress, and Success of established Confessions of Faith and Dostrine in Protestant Churches.

HEN the Protestants first withdrew from the communion of the Church of Rome, the principles they went upon were fuch as thefe.

- " JESUS CHRIST hath by his gospel " called all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty
- " of the fons of God, and restored them to the
- " privilege of working out their own falvation
- " by their own understandings and endeavours.
- " For this work of falvation fufficient means are
- " afforded in the holy scriptures, without having
- " recourse to the doctrines and commandments
- " of men. In these scriptures all things needful
- " for spiritual living and man's soul's health are
- "mentioned and shewed. Consequently, faith В

" and

"and conscience, having no dependence upon man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's authority; and none other hath the Church of *Rome* to shew for the spiritual dominion she claimeth. The church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man's law; nor are the King's laws any farther to be obeyed, than they agree with the law of God."

Private Christians being thus left at liberty, by the original principles of the Reformation, to search the scriptures for the grounds of their religion, and to build their faith on this foundation only, a very moderate share of sagacity would enable the leading Reformers to foresee, that diversity of opinions concerning many points of doctrine would be unavoidable; and that from hence frequent occasions of offence would arise among themselves, not without some advantage to the common adversary.

Whether they might not, in a good measure, have prevented any very ill consequences of this liberty without departing from the simplicity of the Scripture-plan; that is to say, whether they might not have kept the terms of communion sufficiently open for pious and reasonable Christians of very different opinions to have complied with them, without abridging their Christian liberty, or doing violence to their consciences, cannot now be determined. Certain it is that such an experiment was never tried, nor perhaps ever thought of, till the distemper was gone too far to be cured.

Instead of making this experiment, the Reformers, having unhappily adopted certain maxims as felf-evident, namely, that "there could be no edification in religious fociety without uniformity " of opinion," - that " the true fense of scripture " could be but one," * and the like, prefently fell upon the expedient of preventing diversity of opinions, by contracting their original plan in agreement with these maxims. The one sense of scripture was determined to be the fense of the primitive church, that is to fay, the fense of the orthodox fathers for a certain number of centuries. From these they took their interpretations of scripture, and upon these they formed their rule of faith and doctrine, and so reduced their respective churches within the bounds of a theological fystem. The confequence of which was, that every opinion deviating from this fystem, whatever countenance or support it might have from a different fense of scripture, became a declared herefy.

Hence it came to pass that many Protestants of very different characters and tempers, finding these incroachments on their Christian liberty, and themselves not only excluded from communion with their brethren, but stigmatized with an invidious name, were provoked to separate from their leaders, and to set up for themselves; which many of them did on grounds sufficiently

^{*} See Mosheim's Compend. View of Eccles. Hist. vol. II. p. 159. and Maclaine's note [a].

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justifiable: whilst others, whose pride, passion, and self-conceit knew no bounds, and whom probably the most reasonable terms of communion would not have restrained, under the pretence of afferting their liberty against these dogmatical chiefs, formed themselves into sects, which afterwards made the most infamous use of it.

That some of these sects were scandals to all religion, and nuisances to ail civil fociety, was but too visible. That they were the offspring of the reformation, was not to be denied. doctrines which afterwards diftinguished the sober and ferious Protestant churches, were not yet made public, nor perhaps perfectly fettled. They were yet only to be found in the writings of some private doctor, whom his brethren were at liberty to disown, or in catechisms for youth, or directories for ministers within their several departments. - A concurrence of unhappy circumstances, which afforded the Papists a most favourable opportunity of calumniating the whole Protestant body as the maintainers of every heresy, and the abettors of every fedition, which Europe had heard of or feen in that generation.

It was to no purpose that these hot-headed irregulars were disowned, and their doctrines reprobated, by some of those eminent doctors on whom the credit and success of the Reformation seemed chiefly to depend. These might speak their own sense; but it did not appear by what authority

authority they undertook to answer for the whole body. The nature of the case called for such apologies as these, that their desection from Rome might not fall under a general odium; and it might still be true that all Protestants thought in their hearts, what these indiscreet sectaries spoke out. A suspicion which was not a little confirmed by the leading principle of the most outrageous Anabaptists, which was expressed in the very words of Luther himself [A].

These circumstances laid the Protestants under a necessity of publishing to the whole world explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal attestations of the leading members of their respective churches. That of the Protestant Princes of Germany led the way; being folemnly tendered to the Emperor Charles V. in the diet held at Ausburgh in the year 1520. This precedent other Protestant states and churches thought fit to follow on different occafions; and by this means acquitted themselves, at least among all equitable judges, of the scandal of abetting the schismatical and seditious enthusiasts, who about that time infested different countries under the pretence of promoting reformation.

These confessions, being laid before the public with this formality, very soon became of more importance than just to serve a present turn.

[[]A] Viz. A Christian man is master of every thing. See Bayle's Dictionary, art. Anabaptists, rem. [A].

They were folemnly subscribed by the leading men of the feveral communions on whose behalf they were exhibited, as doctrines by which they would live and die; and were consequently to be defended at all events. And therefore, to secure the reputation of their uniformity to all succeeding times, an unfeigned affent to the public confession, confirmed either by subscription or a solemn oath, became, in most of the Protestant churches, an indispensable condition of qualifying their paftors for the ministry, and in some of admitting their lay-members to church-communion.

But this expedient, intended to prevent divifion in particular focieties, unhappily proved the means of imbroiling different churches one with another, to a very unedifying degree. Some of these confessions, in their zeal to stigmatize the herefies of the most obnoxious sectaries, had made use of terms which no less reprobated the doctrines of their orthodox brethren: the immediate confequence of which was, that feveral controversies which had arisen among the respective leaders of the Reformation at the beginning, and had been partly composed, and partly sufpended, in regard to their common interest, were now revived, not without much heat and bitterness.

On this incident, the Papists changed their method of attack, and readily took this occasion not only to infult the Reformed on their want of unity, but to turn many doctrines to their own account,

account, which particular men had advanced in conformity to their own confessions [B].

Against these objections the Protestants had a variety of defences, some of which, it must be owned, had more strength as they were applied

[B] "The Lutherans and Calvinifis," says a very competent judge, " by cherishing some errors of their respective princi-" pals, were altogether hindered from rightly answering the " Papists." See Phanix. vol. II p. 315. At length arose the immortal Chillingworth, who disclaimed the defence of the Protestant religion, as it lay in fystems and confessions, and appealed to the Bible only. By this means many cavils were cut off at once, and many confessions of systematical doctors rendered of no use to the Papists at all; who, being well aware of the advantages the popish cause would lose by this expedient, were accordingly extremely provoked at it. They called it a novelty which the Protestants in general would not approve. And it appeared, in the event, that they were not totally miftaken. For the application of this rule by a liberal-spirited English Prelate on a certain occasion, put another English Prelate [Bishop Hare] extremely out of humour: a Prelate who, when the force of episcopal prejudice was out of the way, had ridiculed fystematical attachments in a much admired irony, which however owed all its beauty and all its force to this very principle of Chilling-worth. Mr. Defmaizeaux (Chilling-worth's biographer) thought it necessary to exculpate Chilling worth from this popish charge of novelty, and, as it feems to me, has fucceeded very ill. He fays, " All Protestants had declared " in their confessions, or articles of religion, that the scriptures " are the only rule of faith by which those confessions them-" felves are to be tried." But the question was not, what all Protestants had declared, but whether any Protestant church had acted conformably to that declaration, and ventured to defend the protestant religion on scripture-principles, even at the expence (if so it should fall out) of its own established confession? His answer to Bishop Hare's peevishness is much better. Life of Mr. Chilling worth, p. 169, and 198.

to the Papists, than merit in themselves. They faid, that "a want of unity was no greater re-" proach to them from the Papists, than it was "to the primitive church from the Jews and "Heathens, and that the fame apologies would " ferve in both cases." They might have added, that divisions in the Christian church had been for the most part occasioned and fomented by the peremptory decisions and intolerant spirit of those particular doctors, who happened to have the lead for the time being. But this, being too much the case of the Protestants themselves, was not to be infifted on. Some advantage indeed they had in the way of recrimination: but here the Papifts found the means to parry the blow; alledging (what indeed was very true) that the most confiderable of the points in difpute among them had never been decided e cathedra, and fo were left open to amicable debate without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted among Protestants were solemnly established in their several confessions, and the confessions themselves ratified by oaths, subscriptions, &c. and the belief of them thereby made an indispensable condition of communion $\lceil C \rceil$.

[C] Thus, with respect to the samous five points concerning which the synod of Dort was so untractable, the disputes in the church of Rome were bitter enough; but then, "the council of Trent had drawn up her decrees, on these heads, with a "neutrality, which pleased all, and disobliged none." Heylin's Quinquarticular Hist. p. 25. Grotius made use of this circumstance in pleading with the magistrates of Amslerdam for a toleration of the Remonstrants. "The doctrines disputed in After

After much mortifying litigation concerning this want of unity among Protestants, it so happened that the *Belgic* and *Gallican* churches, in the name of themselves and their orthodox sister-churches, thought fit to deny the fact; and, in the year 1581, exhibited what they called *An Harmony of the Confessions* of no less than eleven Protestant churches, which they intended as an ample testimony of the unanimity of Protestants in their principal doctrines, and a full and satisfactory constuation of the Popish calumnies on this head.

This work, however, was not equally approved of by all the churches whose confessions it harmonized. It was even affronted by the church of England [D]: For, being translated into English in the year 1586, Archbishop Whitgist (who at that time had the controul of the press) would not allow it to be printed in London, and imployed his authority likewise to have it suppressed in other places [E].

"Holland," faid he, "have not been decided by the church of Rome, though the is extremely fond of decisions." Abridgment of Brandt's History of the Reformation, &c. by La Roche, p. 344.

[D] The English consession, exhibited in this Harmony, confisted of extracts from Bishop Jewel's Apology; a book, in those days, of equal authority with our Thirty-nine Articles. Strype's Annals, vol. I. chap. xxv—xxvii. and Life of Parker, p. 179.

[E] The Harmony was, however, printed at Cambridge that year, notwithstanding Whitgift's express prohibition. Strype, u. f. vol. III. b. ii. ch. 8.——Mr. Strype has not informed us why the Archbishop disallowed the Harmony: but the Bel-

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There were indeed some considerations naturally suggested by the manner in which this work was executed, that would greatly obstruct the good effects expected from it, whether with respect to composing differences among Protestants, or obviating the reproaches of the common adversary.

I. In the first place, the compilers made no mention of the confessions or doctrines of any Protestants, who differed from the public forms, in those countries where the reformed religion had gained an establishment. They were indeed hardly charitable to such differents; censuring with particular severity the authors of the book of *Concord*, which had appeared about this time [F].

gic and Gallican churches having expressed notions of church-government, ceremonies, &c. in some short observations at the end of the book, not very savourable to Whitgift's principles, his Grace's distance for the work is not wholly unaccountable.

[F] And indeed not without reason, if these censures could have been passed consistently with their design of exemplifying the Harmony subsisting among Protestants. By this book of Concord (the work of some rigid Lutherans) all those churches were excluded from Christian communion, who would not subscribe it. For which schissmatical presumption, the reformed divines of the Low-Countries exposulated sharply with these authors, alleging the scandal and mischief of such peremptory decisions, steing that the Lutherans and Calvinists differed only about two articles, the Lord's supper, and the two natures of Christ. Blondel indeed observes, "that they differed about two articles more, viz. " predestination and grace; yet, be- lieving these to be of no importance, they [the Low-Country divines] made no mention of them." La Roche, u. s. p. 197. Would these divines have believed a prophet who should have

- 2. All the world knew very well, that not one of these eleven churches would allow any man to minister in it, and hardly perhaps to communicate with it, who should refuse to subscribe the confession of that church, even though he should offer to subscribe or swear to every other system in the collection.
- 3. The flort observations at the end of the Harmony, the defign of which appears to have been to accommodate the aukward expressions in some of these confessions to the orthodox sense of the Belgic and Gallican churches (a liberty which the Harmonizers seem to have taken without any sort of commission) plainly shew, that some of these churches were at too great a distance from each other, to be reconciled by any such equivocal expedients.

If the reader would know what was the reputation of these public confessions in other respects, he may be referred to a Lamentation which appeared about thirty years after the publication of this *Harmony*; setting forth, "That these "confessions were read by few: that they were

foretold, that their successors, in the space of forty years, would certainly treat all who differed from them in these two articles of no importance, just as the authors of the Concord had treated themselves for differing with them on the other two? Mr. La Roche has given a pretty long extract of this Remonstrance of the Low-Country divines, and says, he inserts it with pleasure, because it is very glorious to those divines. But to have perfectly atchieved this glory for them, he should have suppressed his account of their perfecuting Hubert Duiskuis, because he and his party resuled to subscribe their book of Concord. See p. 194. 203. 207.

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"hardly to be found in bookfellers shops; that men rather chose to provide themselves with the writings of private doctors, and to determine religious matters by any other testimomies, rather than these public forms."

This complaint is taken from the Preface to the Corpus Confesionum, printed at Geneva, 1612; the defign of which work was to revive the credit of these established formularies, and to recommend them as "authentic tables and stance" dards of the old and primitive faith." For this purpose the confessions of sixteen different churches are here exhibited (not in detached and selected portions, as in the Harmony, but) whole and entire, as they were published and acknowledged by the churches to which they respectively belonged [G].

But, though the professed design of this Body of Confessions was to accommodate divines and students in theology with a commodious and comprehensive view of the whole doctrine of the reformed churches, yet was not the expedient of barmonizing their several confessions quite over-

[G] This, however, the famous Peter Heylin, disputing for his doctor's degree at Oxford 1633, denied to be true; alleging on the part of the church of England, that the first clause of her xxth article, concerning Church Authority, was, in this collection, seloniously secreted; appealing to another edition of the Articles, which was on that occasion fetched from a neighbouring bookseller's, and in which the aforesaid clause stood fair and legible. Vernon's Life of Heylin, p. 58—61.——See the editors of the Corpus Consossimum well vindicated, in an An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles, &c. printed for Francklin, 1724, Introduction, p. 22.

looked.

looked. But finding, 'tis likely, that the method taken in the old *Harmony* was justly exceptionable, these Editors contented themselves with referring their readers to a kind of *Synopsis*, where the agreement or harmony of particular churches on different articles is exhibited, without attempting to reconcile them on those articles, concerning which they did not appear to be unanimous.

In this Synopsis two things are more especially remarkable.

I. On the article of Justification and Faith, which is the 5th in this Index, the editors observe, that "All the confessions of the [Protestant] "churches teach this primary article of the Chriftian religion with a most holy consent [H]." Does not this note (with which this article alone is honoured) seem to imply a consciousness in the editors, that this was the single article in which all these confessions did agree?

[H] This fact, however, has been lately denied by a vehement advocate for confessions and subscriptions. "The doctrine of justification," says he, "is explained with much greater incety in the French Confession (Article 18th) than it is in ours (Art. 11th); and with such nicety, as occasioned a long dispute between the French and some German divines, of whom Piscator was one." Church of England vindicated in requiring Subscription, &c. p. 52. But in truth these disputes were of much longer standing. "Ofwander, in his Constitution of the book which Melancibon wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning Justification, all drawn from the scriptures, by the men only of the Augustan Confession." Bp. Taylor, Lib. Proph. p. 80.

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2. According to this Synopsis, there is a dead filence in many (sometimes in the majority) of these confessions, concerning some of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion. Thus only six of them are referred to as speaking of the providence of God, in which number (I am loath to observe it) the English confession is not reckoned for one; though both Jewel's Apology and the thirty-nine Articles are inserted in this collection *.

Again, eleven of these sixteen confessions take no notice of the Resurrection of the Dead. I mention these omissions for the sake of those gentlemen, who would have it believed, that churches cannot be sure of the orthodoxy of their ministers in the most important points of the Christian religion, without obliging them to subscribe to their established confessions [I]. How many excellent ministers have there been in different Protestant churches, who never gave those churches any security by way of subscription, that they believed either a resurrection of the dead, or the providence of God?

^{*} So that a certain right reverend prelate, when he faid "that the political system has nothing but the Providence of "Government to sustain it against its own madness, from fall—"ing into anarchy," did not contradict any article or confession of the church of England. Whether he contradicted any thing else, is another question. See the Bishop of Gloucester's Sermon before the House of Lords, Jan. 30, 1760. Editor's Remark.

^[1] See Dr. Stebbing's Rational Enquiry into the proper Methods of supporting Christianity.

It is not at all necessary to carry this disquisition any farther. How particular churches in fubsequent times have been imbroiled on account of their established confessions, is well known. In some of these churches the inconveniences of infifting on these tests of orthodoxy have been so great, that they have found it the wifest way either intirely to drop them, or to content themfelves with some general declaration, or promise from the minister, that he will not openly oppose them. In some churches a formal subscription is still required, even where the inconveniences of it have been no less, and where the most serious, conscientious, and useful ministers, are still groaning under the burden of fuch fubfcriptions. It is chiefly for the fake of fuch as thefe, that this disquisition is undertaken, if by any means our prefent governors (who, if they had had the original work of reformation in their hands, together with the light and experience which the prefent and past ages have afforded, would, it may be prefumed, not have imposed it) may be prevailed with to remove a yoke, which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear [K].

But to proceed. Upon this short view of the tendency and effects of established confessions in Protestant churches, the following reflexions feem to be very natural.

1. It was a great misfortune to the Protestants, that their confessions should abound with explications of so many minute points of scholastic

[[]K] This was written in the year 1755.

theology, which, without stopping one popish mouth, with respect to the general accusation of *Herefy*, tended so manifestly to narrow their original foundation, and to give their common adversaries so great an advantage, by rendering their breaches among themselves, occasioned by these explications, utterly irreconcileable.

2. It was a greater misfortune still, that they fhould think of establishing these explications as tests of orthodoxy, by requiring their ministers to fwear to them, or subscribe them, as an indispensable condition of admitting them to the pastoral office. Had they been contented with a solemn declaration on the part of teachers and pastors, "that they received the scriptures as the "word of God, and would instruct the people "out of those only," leaving them at liberty to difown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconfistent with them; in all human probability the interests of popery would have declined more vifibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more speedily, as well as more effectually, promoted.

But, after all, they who are extremely out of temper with the first Reformers, for their mistaken and unseasonable zeal in thus prescribing religious opinions to their fellow-christians, without sufficient warrant of scripture, would do well to consider in what situation they were.

Many abutes in popery lay open to the obfervation of men of all forts. But it could hardly be credited of a fudden, by men of any fort, that the greatest part of that astonishing structure called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation the Apostles and Prophets, and Christ himself for its corner stone, should be a mere heap of antichriftian rubbish. It is, therefore, no wonder the most enlightened of our first Protestant Fathers should be afraid of demolishing too much. It was visible, with what props and supports the most eminent saints and doctors of former ages had accommodated the edifice. And these, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by fuch venerable hands, without fome good reason, and apparent necessity. In those days, nothing was thought to be fufficiently confirmed by scripturetestimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church: and accordingly Tertullian, Chrysostom, Austin, and Jerome, regularly took their places on the fame bench of judgment with Paul, Peter, James, and John [K].

In process of time some particular persons began to see into this mistake. In our own country the learned Cartwright, in his dispute with Archbishop Whitgist, about the year 1573, took the courage to appeal from the authority of the Fathers, and to prescribe them narrower limits in the province of determining religious controversies. How this would be received in those days, might easily be conjectured without parti-

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[[]K] See the Catholicus Veterum Confenfus, at the end of the Corpus Confessionum.

cular information. The terms in which Cartwright had characterized these venerable doctors, were collected together in a book of Bancrost's, and set off with tragical exclamations, as if they had been little less than so much blasphemy [L].

Some few years after this, Erasmus Johannes, a schoolmaster at Antwerp, took still greater liberties with antiquity. "He affirmed that all the " councils which had met, and all the books of " the Fathers which had been written fince the " death of the Apostles, were infected with anti-"christian errors, not excepting the famous "Council of Nice" He proposed therefore, that, in order to a perfect reformation, the new phrases, and new ways of speaking, invented by the Fathers, should be wholly suppressed and laid aside, and all religious propositions expressed; according to the simplicity of Christ and his A-" If any man," fays he, "finds him-" felf obliged to use new terms to express the " articles of his faith, fo that the words of the "Prophets and Apostles are not sufficient for "him, that man's doctrines and religion are cer-"tainly new, as well as his terms; for otherwise " he would eafily find, in the scripture, language "proper enough to express his notions [M]." But the times were not yet ripe for the toleration of these sentiments; and the poor man, who was hardy enough to venture them with the public, was obliged to fly his country.

[[]L] Strype's Life of Whitgift, p. 51. [M] La Rocke, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 218.

From these days, the authority of the Fathers hath continued gradually to decline among ail reasonable and confistent Protestants, and more particularly fince the publication of Mr. Daille's famous book, De Usu Patrum, in 1631. But none, that I know of, ventured to far as the schoolmaster of Antwerp, till about thirty years ago, an eminent prelate of our own church, still living *, advanced pretty much the same doctrine, concerning the explication of points of faith, by new and unscriptural phrases; for which his Lordship underwent the discipline of several orthodox pens [N]; but without any loss of reputation among those who confidered things with less prejudice. For, when it was seen that his Lordship had reduced his antagonists to the difagreeable necessity of holding, that "new and " unscriptural words would better fix the sense of 66 scripture-doctrine, than the words of Christ " and his Apostles," the clamour subsided. Reafonable men began to fee the inconvenience of adopting a principle, which would go near to justify the worst impositions of popery; and the practice of requiring subscription to human explications of Christian doctrine, is now considered and treated, by many different forts of fenfible writers, as an unwarrantable incroachment on Christian liberty; from which, there is reason to believe, all who are capable and willing to examine the fubject without partiality and without hypocrify, heartily defire an happy deliverance.

^{*} September 1, 1755. He died April 17, 1761.
[N] See Dr. Stebbing's Rational Enquiry, p. 25.

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Upon this state of the case, it appears, that the matter of complaint does not affect the Fathers of our Reformation by far so much as their Sons and Succeffors. Our first Reformers were beset with their own and other men's prejudices, to a degree that rendered them, in a great meafure, incapable of conviction. It was next to impossible to convince them, that their established confessions of faith were unchristian impositions, for which there was no just authority, when they had the early practice of the Christian church to appeal to, long before the tyrannical spirit of Rome prevailed. Their veneration for antiquity prevented their feeing that these very precedents were some of the steps by which the papal power ascended to its height, and arrived at the plenitude of its usurpation.

But, fince it has been made appear, that fome of the Fathers who lived nearest to the times of the Apostles, were greatly mistaken in the fense they put upon some scriptures, with respect to points of no small importance, we have reason to hope, that our superiors will no longer bind either themselves or us to an implicit acquiescence in an authority, which may occasionally be extremely inconfiftent with our original obligations as Christians, as well as with the distinguishing principles of our profession as Protestants. Whatever expedients of peace and order their own fort of prudence, or the exigencies of the times they lived in, might fuggest to these venerable Fathers, they certainly had no right to prescribe articles of faith to us. And should either they themselves. themselves, or any others in their name, pretend to it, we beg leave to remind them of a capital maxim, to the truth of which the Fathers themselves have occasionally born their testimony, namely, The scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the sole ground of the faith of a Christian [0].

Upon this principle, all imposed subscriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unscriptural terms, and inforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable, and not to be defended but by arguments and pretences, highly dishonourable to the facred writings, and, in many cases, contradictory to the express contents of them.

But, forasmuch as there never yet was any instance of a prosperous usurpation destitute of advocates to lay in for it a claim of right and justice, it would be strange if this matter of subfcription, wherein such large and opulent bodies of men are interested, should be left to shift for itself. What the orators of the church have offered on this behalf we shall now briefly consider.

[[]O] For a compendious view of the testimony of the Fathers to the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as a rule of religion, the reader may consult a book intitled The Divine Oracles, written by the learned and candid Mr. John Brekell, printed for Waugh &c. 1749.

CHAP. II.

The Claim of a Right to establish Confessions as Tests of Orthodoxy in Protestant Churches, briesly considered.

HE fundamental position, on which the authority of established confessions in Protestant communions depends, is this. "Every particular church, considered as a society, has a right, as other societies have, to secure its own peace and welfare, by all lawful means; and consequently, to prescribe such terms of communion as appear to be most expedient for the purpose; provided that nothing be required, under this pretence, which is contrary to the word of God, or inconsistent with the liberty of other churches."

To this it has been answered in short, "That, by admitting the principle of self-defence and self-preservation in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the Heathens against the Christians, and even the Popish Inquisition, may be justified [A]." If the church of England, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in consequence of that, to secure the obedience of her members by temporal re-

[A] See Bishop Hoadley's Speech for the Repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, in Tindal's Continuation of Rapin Theorem, 8vo. vol. xxvii. p. 237.

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wards and penalties; the church of *Portugal* must, upon the same principles, have an equal right to secure herself by the discipline of an *boly office*,

or how otherwise she thinks proper.

The provifo, that " church-ordinances be a-" greeable to the word of God," will not in the present case help the Protestant churches at all. Established confessions, being human compositions, must either be subject to examination by the private judgment of those who profess (as all Protestants do) to make the written word their only rule of religion; or elfe the church must claim a right of interpreting the scriptures for all her members, exclusive of the right of private judgment [B]. The former of these principles manifeltly precludes the right of the church to establish any thing as a condition of Christian communion, without the previous confent of all her members; that is to fay, of all who, without that condition, would have a right to Christian communion [C]. The latter, indeed, vefts the

[B] The late Bishop Conybeare, in his famous Subscription-Sermon, argues from the consent required by the Apostles to their doctrines, to the consent required by succeeding church-governors to human articles. This fallacy has been too apt to pass without examination: but the supposition upon which it is supported, is indeed neither more nor less than this, "Scri"pture truths and the church's explications stand upon the fame authority."

[C] Honest old Rogers, by the church which hath authority in controversies of faith, understands not only the aggregate body, but every member of sound judgment in the same. Cath. Dock. Art. xx. Propes. 3. well knowing that every intelligent Christian, with the scriptures before him, is, upon Protestant prin-

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church with a full measure of authority to establish what she pleases; but then it is an authority which every Protestant church most expressly disclaims, and condemns in the church of Rome as an impudent and groundless usurpation.

There is indeed nothing more evident, than that every Christian of capacity hath a right to fearch the scriptures; a right which he cannot transfer, either to any church, or to any single person, because it is his indispensable duty to exercite it personally for himself. And, if it is his duty to search, it must also be his duty to determine for himself; and, if he finds just cause, to dissent from any or all the human establishments upon earth.

Some writers on this subject discover an inclination to deny the right of private judgment in every case where it is opposed to church-authority. These we leave to reconcile their principles with their separation from Rome. Others attempt by various arguments (some of which will occur hereafter) to prove, that the authority of the church to frame and settle confessions of faith and doctrine for all her members, is perfectly

ciples, and in decrees of this nature, a church to bimfelf. This leaves no room for Bilhop Burnet's diffinction between an infallible authority, and an authority of order, which last, he taintly infinuates, might be safely intrusted with the body of the clergy. But his Lordship, to do him justice, qualifies this with a provise, that this body is properly disposed for the province.—Perhaps it might be as difficult to find such a body of men, as to find single persons without mistakes. See Bishop Burnet's Exposition, fol. p. 195.

consistent with the rights of private judgment. But, to discover the fallacy of all arguments to this purpose, it is only necessary to consider, that, if this supposed authority was vigorously exerted, and applied in all cases (as it ought to be, if the authority is real) and if, on the other hand, the people were diligent and careful in fearthing the scriptures every one for himself (as all Protestants agree they ought to do) the confequence would most probably be, that the far greater part of honest and sensible Christians would be excluded from the communion of every church which has an established confession. For where is there one of these confessions which does not contain some very material decisions, from which an intelligent Christian, who hath duly examined the scriptures, may not reasonably diffent? I had almost said, where is there one of them to which a knowing and thinking Christian can assent in all points, without proftituting his understanding and conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men? - I fay, a knowing and thinking Christian; for he must have considered the case before us very fuperficially, who does not perceive, that the adherence of fuch numbers to the peculiar doctrines of the church from which they receive their denomination, and even to fome doctrines common to the creeds and confessions of all churches, which call themselves orthodox, is owing to their ignorance, their indolence, their fecularity, or the early prejudices of education, which are known to be the unhappy circumstan26

ces of the common people, all over the Christian world.

Some zealous men have, indeed, inferred a necessity for confessions, and consequently an authority in the church to establish them, from these very indispositions and incapacities of the people to examine and judge for chemselves. But, tho' this is perhaps the best plea of right which the church has to alledge, yet wifer and cooler advocates for confessions choose not to abide by an argument, which would equally vindicate the church of Rome with respect to many of her impositions. Not to mention, that these indispositions and incapacities in the clergy would be but an aukward reason for making their affent and subscription to confessions an indispensable condition of being admitted into the church as teachers.

These prudent gentlemen, therefore, seem inclined to acquit the laity of all concern with established consessions, and to confine their authority to the clergy; insomuch that (if I understand some of our modern casuists on this subject) a layman, if he can get over his own scruples, may pray, hear the word, and even communicate with what Protestant church he pleases [D]. If

[D] The opinions, indeed, of these modern divines on this article are not uniform. Many worthy ministers of several denominations, whose catholic principles would incline them to reject no man who should attend their communions with decency and reverence, may still think themselves obliged (and very reasonably) to have respect to the sense of the congregation where they constantly officiate. Others, I know, think differently, and this occasions a variety in practice. See Whish of the in

this be really true, we have reason to be thankful for better times; for undoubtedly some of us have remembered worse.

But, however this matter might turn out upon the experiment, certain it is, that, in fo far as the laity are allowed not to be bound by these church confessions, the point of *right* to establish them as tests of orthodoxy is fairly given up, as well

Memoirs, vol. II. p. 485. and Killingworth's Examination of Dr. Foster's Sermon on Catholic Communion. -- " It seems to " me," fays Mr. La Roche, "that Protestants and Catholics "fhould not discourage those heterodox men who come to "their altars." Abridgment, vol. II. p 613. And so it seems to me too, provided fuch heterodox men come there of choice. folely for a religious end, and behave reverendly and decently when they are there. But, when Mr. La Roche adds, " The "church of England is the wifelt national church in the world " upon this head," he refers to a very different case, wherein indeed the wisdom of the church had no share. Most of the bishops, and among them the two archbishops Wake and Dawes, opposed the repeal of the act against occasional conformity with all their ffrength: An act which, all the world knows, difcouraged heterodox men from coming to our altars. Tindal's Contin. 8vo. vol. XXVII. p. 231-241. And to admit these heterodox men to our altars, without previously revoking their wicked errors, is against our cannon-law to this In the mean time, the Test Ast brings many men to our altars (and it is well if not fome infidels among them) who would never come there of choice, or on a religious account. In the late altercations concerning the bill for naturalizing the Jews, mention was made of fome Jews in K. William's reign. who actually came to our Christian altars to qualify themselves for naturalization. Lond. Mag. for July 1753. p. 306. We are apt to value ourselves mightily on the respect which foreign Protestants express for our church: but there are cases where this respect does us no honour. Such a compliment as this of Mr. La Roche is enough to put a fenfible Church of Englandfor the clergy as the laity; since whatever rule is sufficient to direct the faith and practice of the layman, must likewise be sufficient to direct the teaching of the clergyman, unless the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or to practise.

"But," fay fome men, "if there be really an "expedience and utility in these public formularies, called Confessions of Faith, we may well infer a right to establish them, although concerning fuch right the scripture should be silent. Many things relating to public worship, and public edification, must be left to the predence and discretion of church-governors for the time being; and if confessions are manifestly useful and expedient for the church, there must be an authority lodged somewhere to prepare and inforce them."

The expedience and utility of confessions will be very particularly considered in the next chapter; for which reason I shall forbear to say any thing farther to this plea at present, save only a word or two concerning this method of arguing from

man, who knows the true state of the case, out of countenance. A law inducing men to proses, by a solemn act, that their religious opinions are what they really are not, is no mark either of wisdom or Christian charity in any church. But this point has been so thoroughly discussed and cleared up by the late Bishop of Winchester, that there is no danger it should ever be thrown into confusion again; though, more lately, some ingenious pains have been taken that way, viz. in the Book of Alliance between Church and State, written by another Bishop.

the probable expedience or utility of any thing in religion to a right or authority to imploy or introduce it.

No wife man, who hath duly confidered the genius and defign of the Christian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church or church-governors go beyond their plain commission. And, whatever may be left to the prudence and discretion of church-governors. there is so much more left to the conscience of every Christian in his personal capacity, that it greatly behoves fuch governors to beware they incroach not on a province which is without their limits. This consideration has always disposed me to reason in a manner just contrary to these gentlemen, namely, from the authority to the utility of religious measures. My opinion is, that where the methods of promoting christianity are matter of scripture precept, or plainly recommended by scripture-precedents, there such methods should be strictly followed and adhered to, even though the expedience of them should not be very evident a priori. We can have no pretence of right or authority to alter fuch methods for others feemingly more expedient, while fo very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of its utility, is made by our bleffed Mafter to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which ordinary church-governors can have no farther difcernment than other men. On this account, those means of edification, public or private, will always, in my effeem, bid the fairest fuccess, which are the truest copies of apostolic originals. Notions of expedience in any thing more than these, when there is nothing to judge by but superficial appearances, have frequently led men to interfere very unseasonably with the dictates of other mens consciences; and no greater mischief has ever been occasioned by any thing in the Christian church, than by those very expedients of human prudence, from which the best effects have been expected.

Among other inftances which might be given to verify this observation, we have one at home. in which all those who are called to the ministry are too nearly concerned not to be capable judges. After some progress had been made in the reformation of the church of England, it was thought to be a great defect, that a public confession of faith and doctrine should still be wanting [E]. To supply this defect, the Articles of Religion were compiled, published, and enjoined to be subfcribed. These Articles (with some alterations which passed in those days for improvements) are (lill fubicribed by, at least, one hundred of our ministers every year. That above one fifth of this number do not subscribe or affent to these Articles, in one uniform fense, we have great reafon to believe; and yet the avowed purpose of this general fubicription is to prevent diversity of opinions. And indeed, confidering to what forts of men this test is made indispensable, it is, I

[[]E] Burzei's Hill. Referm. vol. II. p. 166. and vol. III. p. 2 0.

think, as much as can be expected, if another fifth subscribe them in any sense, but the sense they have of wanting preferment in the church, if they should not.

It is true, all these persons minister in their several congregations by one common form, framed, for the general, on the model of the confession they have subscribed; and so far all has a fair and honest appearance, and, while they keep their thoughts to themselves, is consistent enough. But no sooner are many of them at liberty to deliver their own or other men's sentiments from the pulpit, but the established system is laid aside, or perhaps, if it comes in their way, quite overset [F], and many things written and uttered with all freedom, by different persons, equally irreconcileable to each other, as well as to the orthodox confession.

What now is the utility or expedience in this affair of subscription, which will attone for the scandal brought upon the cause of christianity by this unscriptural article of church discipline? To say nothing of the distress of many a conscientious minister under the unhappy dilemma of, subscribe or starve; is it possible that the ignorance, the indolence, or the insincerity of the

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[[]F] "All those who write and preach in this nation are not her [the church of England's] sons, any more than they of Geneva, or Scotland, or New England, are," says Bishop Rust, Defence of Origen, &c. Phanix, vol. I. p. 83. So that this is no new complaint. See likewise Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man, vol. II. p. 354. and a remarkable instance in A Defence of the Essay on Spicit, p. 24.

rest should not make considerable impressions, both upon the friends and enemies of revelation? Suppose the herd of mankind were too much employed in other business to turn their attention of themselves to remarks of this nature, yet the zeal and eagerness of the litigants to expose this prevaricatation on either side, by casting their subscriptions in each others teeth, will not suffer the most incurious mortal to be long uninformed of it, if he should only look into some of the commonest books of controversy for his mere amusement.

The fum of the whole matter then is this. Lodge your church-authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever reftrictions you think proper, you cannot affert to it a right of deciding in controversies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require assent to a certain sense of scripture, exclusive of other senses, without an unwarrantable interference with those rights of private judgment which are manifestly secured to every individual by the scriptural terms of Christian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the Protestant reformation.

This point being settled, the squabbles among particular churches concerning their supposed liberty within their respective departments (in so far as these confessions come in question) is about a thing of nought. For none of them having the liberty to establish or to prescribe such doctrinal confessions for the whole body, it is matter

of great indifference (fetting afide the fcandal of it) in what degree they exclude or make room for one another.

But, to give this matter a little confideration with respect to the present effects of it upon Christian societies, let us suppose that Protestant churches bave fuch a right each within its own confines: The question is, how shall one church exercife this right, without encroaching on the right of another? Upon the genuine grounds of separation from the church of Rome, all particular churches are co-ordinate $\lceil G \rceil$; they have all the fame right in an equal degree; and the decisions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very fame level with those of another. This being fo, I do not fee how it is possible for any church to exercise this right in those instances where the establishes doctrines peculiar to herself. and inconfistent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging those churches of their right to establish their own doctrines. No

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[[]G] The Protestant churches every where set up on this principle; what regard they have paid to it since, is another affair. One remarkable instance may be worth mentioning. "The refugees," says Mr. La Roche, "who were driven out of the Low-Countries by the Duke of Alva in the year 1571, held a synod at Emden, and their first canon was, that no church should have dominion over another church." And, to testify their sincerity herein, they put the French and Dutch consessions upon the same tooting, by subscribing them both. Abridgment, vol. I. p. 141. But N. E. The Dutch Consession was not then established, and these were poor friendless resugees. Tis pity but some of them had lived to see how facredly this canon of Embden was observed in the synod of Dort.

church can have a right to establish any doctrines but upon the supposition that they are true. If the doctrines established in one church are true, the contrary doctrines established in another church must be false; and, I presume, no church will contend for a right to establish false doctrines. And indeed, whatever may be pretended, this is the very footing upon which all Protestant churches have, occasionally, treated the churches that differed from them, and from whence the conclusion to a disinterested bystander is obvious; namely, that, in consequence of these co-ordinate powers, none of them had a right to establish any doctrines, but with the unanimous consent of all the rest.

It is true, Protestants of one state or country have been tender of condemning the confession of those of another, by any public sentence; and reason good; their powers are limited by their fituation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their censures be regarded elsewhere. But what instance is there upon record, where this liberty has been allowed (as the co-ordinate principle manifestly requires it should be) to more than one church in the same Protestant state? Every party, in every Protestant state, has, by turns, made fome attempts to have their religious tenets established by public authority. In every ftate, some one party has succeeded; and having fucceeded, imposes its own confession upon all the rest; excluding all dissenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of citizens, in proportion tion as the civil magistrate is more or less in the mood to vindicate, or distinguish, the system he thinks fit to espouse.

This has been the case, at different periods, with different churches in the same country. And (what is chiefly remarkable to our present purpose) the party deseated has constantly exclaimed against the practice, as an unreasonable, unchristian, and wicked tyranny; — the very practice which they themselves, in their prosperity, endeavoured to support by every claim of right, and to defend by every argument of utility and experience [H].

Of this many remarkable examples might be given, in the complaints of church-men of different denominations in adversity; who, in the day of their exaltation, had carried church-power as far as it could well stretch; and who, when the severities of the adverse party forced these lamentations from them, were obliged to plead their cause upon principles, which made no

[H] "It belongeth to fynods and councils ministerially to "determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience." Assembly's Confession, ch. xxxi. art. 3. This hath given occasion to apply some words of Isaiah, viz. Look unto the rock from whence ye are beaun, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged, to certain differences, who have scrupled to subscribe the first clause of the 20th article of our church. At present this wit would be misapplied. In the year 1718, some of the wisest and most eminent among the difference ministers made a noble stand against some imposers of tests in their own fraternity. And in the year 1727 more of them resuled to subscribe this very Westminster Confession.

ferve of authority with respect to one fort of religious society more than another $\lceil l \rceil$.

Among others to whom established confessions had been particularly grievous, were the remonstrants in *Holland*, after the synod of *Dort*. Their assemblies were prohibited, and their ministers silenced and banished, for no other offence but contradicting certain doctrines, which, as we have seen above, the forefathers of their persecutors held to be of no importance; and which had gained no new merit, but that of being established by law.

One would have imagined that this usage would have cured the Remonstrants of all good liking to confessions for ever. And so perhaps it

[1] Thus the ingenious Bishop Taylor, pleading for the liberty of prophelying, at a time when, to use his own expression, the wessel of the church was dashed in pieces, found it necessary to affert against the task masters of those days, that, " If we have " found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay; "that is, what body and fystem of articles simply necessary they " taught and required of us to believe; we need not, we can-" not go any further for foundation, WE CANNOT ENLARGE "THAT SYSTEM OR COLLECTION." p. 17. - But, when the shattered vessel came to be resitted, the skilful pilots found she neither had been, nor ever could be, steered to the port they aimed at, by these directions. And accordingly, when they got posfession of the helm, they adopted the old enlarged system, adding as much more of their own to the collection, as they perceived might be necessary to conduct the vessel in safety to the golden coast; without paying the least regard to the remonstrances of those, who claimed an equal property in the bottom, and who inceffantly clamoured, that neither the freight nor the steerage were proper for the port to which they were bound, and which, as all fides outwardly agreed, lay in a kingdom that was not of this world.

did, of their good-liking to all confessions — but one of their own framing, which Episcopius and his fellows actually composed, subscribed, and published, in this state of exile.

This step was so very extraordinary for men in their condition, whose distresses had been occafioned by enforcing a fystem drawn up in the fame form, that they rightly judged the world would expect some satisfactory account of it, which therefore they attempt to give, in a long Apology prefixed to their Confession; wherein, not contented with alledging fuch inducements as might well be supposed to oblige men in their fituation to explain and avow their principles to the public, they enter into a particular detail of arguments in favour of confessions in general; dropping indeed the point of right to establish them as tests of truth, but infisting largely on their utility and expedience in a variety of cases; and, as they feem to me to have brought together the whole merits of the cause on that head of defence, I shall attend them in the next chapter, with some particular considerations on the several articles of their plea.

CHAP. III.

The Apology of the Remonstrants for Confessions, in consideration of their Expedience and Utility, examined.

Thad been objected to confessions in general, that "they derogated from the authority and "fusficiency of the scriptures; that they en-"croached upon the liberty of private conscience, and the independency of Protestant churches, and that they tended to nothing better than feparation and schism."

The Remonstrants reply, that "these objec-"tions did not affect confessions themselves, but "only the abuse of them." But however, as the objectors had so many instances to appeal to where confessions had been, and still were thus abused, and the Remonstrants so few, if any, where they were not, the latter were obliged to set out with very ample concessions.

"Undoubtedly," fay they, "those phrases and forms of speaking, in which God and Christ delivered themselves at first, for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men, must needs be fusficient for the instruction of Christians in all fucceeding ages; — consequently it is possible that the church of Christ may not only be, but also that it may well be, without those human forms and explications, called Consessions [A]."

[A] Preface to the Remonstrants Consession, published in English at London, 1676. p. 12, 13.

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One would wonder now, what the Remonstrants could find to say for the support of their fide of the question. For, if the phrases and forms of speaking, made use of in the written word, are fufficient for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men in all things which concern the worship of God, and their own and others everlasting falvation; and if, as the Objectors infifted, and the Remonstrants could not deny, many and great evils were, for the most part, occasioned by such phrases and forms of speaking in confessions, as are not to be found in scripture, the Objectors were fairly authorized to conclude, not barely for the possibility that the church of Christ might well be, but for the certainty that it might better be, without fuch human forms, than with them.

The Remonstrants, however, attempt to recover their ground as follows. "If prophefyings, " or interpretations of scripture, sav these Apo-"logists, are not unprofitable, yearather, if they " be fometimes in certain respects necessary, when " proposed by teachers and pastors in universities " and churches, or other Christian assemblies, for " the information of the ignorant, &c. in familiar, " clear, and usual expressions, though not in the " very words of scripture; it cannot seem unpro-"fitable, much less unlawful or hurtful, if more " ministers of Jesus Christ do, by mutual con-" fent, joint studies and endeavours, for the great-" er illustration of divine truth, removing of " flanders, edifying the Christian community, or " other holy and pious purpofes, publicly open D4

"and declare their judgments upon the meanings of scripture, and that in certain composed
forms [B]."

It is no easy matter to discover the drist of this argument. Do the Remonstrants mean to insist on the superior influence and authority of more ministers, in the business of expounding the scriptures, in comparison with single pastors or professors? By no means. Upon any supposition of this nature, the Belgic Confession had an authority which rendered their revolt from it inexcuseable [C]. Would they be understood to say, that Confessions composed by the joint studies of several ministers, are as useful as ordinary sermons and lectures in churches and universities? No,

[B] Ibid. p. 13, 14. Having not the original Latin at hand, I am obliged to make use of the very mean English translation above referred to, picking out the strength and merit of the argument as well as one can from a confused arrangement of obsolete words.

[C] Dr. Stebbing, indeed, would have every one to own, that "Those explications of scripture, which, after the maturest de-" liberation, and the use of ail proper helps, are agreed upon "by a whole body of men, are less liable to be faulty and de-"fective, than those which particular persons may frame to "themselves." Rat. Enq. p. 29. In plain English, You will always be safest with the majority. For where is the body of men who will not pretend to the maturest deliberation, and the use of the propered helps? But the Remonstrants were men of fense, and faw, what Dr. Stebbing's cause required him to conceal, namely, that confiderations of this kind must, in the event, drive every man headlong into the established religion, whatever it happens to be, or by whom foever devifed; whether by a fynagoge of Pharinees, a Turkish divan, a council of Trent, or, what the Remonstrants liked as little as any of them, a fynod of Dort.

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they make no fuch comparison; they only infer, with much ambiguity, from the premises, that Confessions, with the circumstances mentioned, cannot seem unprositable.

But, be their meaning what you will, the cases of interpreting scripture in occasional prophesyings, and in stated confessions, are dissimilar in so many respects, that nothing can be inferred from the *utility* of the former, in favour of the latter: but rather the contrary.

If prophefyings, or interpretations of scripture in Christian assemblies, are not delivered in familiar, clear, and usual forms of speech, they are neither necessary nor profitable; nor can any thing be inferred from the utility of such prophesyings at all. On the other hand, if the scriptures are opened and explained to the people in easy and familiar expressions, by their ordinary pastors, what possible use can you find for a systematical confession? unless you think sit to establish it as a necessary supplement to the holy scripture, and then you once more return the question to the point of right.

Again. What the preacher delivers from the pulpit, or the professor from his chair, they deliver as the sentiments and conclusions of single men, who have no authority to enforce their explications, any farther than their own good sense, integrity, accuracy, and judgment, make way for them. For the rest, their doctrines may be questioned, the men themselves called upon to review them, and, if they see reason, correct, and even

retract them, not only without offence, but, in fome cases, with advantage to the common faith. But doctrines, opinions, and explications of scripture, reduced to a fixed form, and avowed by the public act of many subscribing ministers, (who by the way are full as likely to be fallible in a body, as in their personal capacity) put on quite another aspect. In that case all examination is precluded. No one subscriber is impowered to explain or correct for the rest. Nor can any of them retract, without standing in the light of a schismatic and a revolter from his brethren.

It is to little purpose that the remonstrants would limit the stress to be laid upon confessions, to their agreement with truth, and reason, and scripture. The matter of complaint is, that this agreement should be predetermined by the decision of these leading subscribers, in such fort, as to discourage all free examination, and constrain the people to acquiesce in a precarious system, by the mere influence of great names and respectable authorities, which, without any additional weight, are too apt to overawe the judgment of all forts of men, even in cases of the greatest importance.

The expedience of Confessions in no wise appearing from these general considerations, let us now see what particular uses the Remonstrants have for them.

And here they tell us "of times when groß and noxious errors prevail in the world; when "necessary heads of belief are neglected, and "many

"many points of faith urged and infifted on, "which are not necessary; when no distinction " is made between doctrines that are barely pro-"fitable, and those which are absolutely neces-" fary; when human inventions are bound upon "men's consciences; and lastly, when many "false and groundless doctrines are palliated "and cloathed in scripture-language. In these "times, they think it not barely expedient, but " in a good measure necessary, that pastors of "churches should advise and consult together, " and, if they perceive that blind miserable mortals " may be affisted in their searches after Truth, " in fuch days of danger, by a clear elucidation " of divine meanings, then may they profitably " fet forth the same, &c." $\lceil D \rceil$

But in the first place, How does it appear that Confessions have more of this elucidating property than other forts of Rescripts? It is a common complaint, that these formularies of doctrine, abounding in artificial and scholastic terms, are rather upt to perplex and consound things that are otherwise clear and plain, than to illustrate any thing with a superior degree of perspicuity. And I am really asraid there is no room to except the very confession to which this apology is prefixed.

But to let this alone; there occurs another difficulty, with respect to this *elucidation*, not so easily got over. It is well known, that some opinions have been formally condemned by the framers of Creeds and Confessions, as gross and

noxious errors, which, however, have been maintained by very folid reasoning, not to say considerable authorities, from the scriptures themfelves.

"There are few herefies," fays Dr. Stebbing, "which great learning and good fense have not "been called in to countenance: he therefore, "that would effectually crush them, must take "away these supports [E]." That is to say, he must, if he can; and that has not always proved an eafy task, even when attempted by the accumulated skill and learning of Councils or Convocations. These are difficulties, out of which blind miserable mortals are rarely extricated by confessions, which are rather of the dogmatical, than the didactic strain; and oftentimes leave the reader to guess at the reasons, why the compilers are so positive in some of their affertions, for which they do not condescend to offer any proof. These noxious errors too, have sometimes procured themselves to be established by another party of Confessionists and Creedmakers; in which case, these authorized formularies are so far from being of any real utility to an unprejudiced inquirer, that they only ferve to destroy the force and virtue of each other.

Again, if confessions are really profitable towards suppressing these gross and noxious errors, it must be profitable, and in the same proportion, needful, to inlarge and amplify them as often as such errors arise, and the birth of every

new herefy, should always be attended with a new article in the confession [F].

Perhaps there is scarce a year passes over, in any country where the presses are open, and men's tongues at liberty, without bringing forth fome new opinion, or reviving fome old one with new circumstances, contrary to, or at least different from the approved and orthodox fystem; and consequently within the description of a groß and noxious error. Suppose the requisite strictures on these heterodoxies had been added to the confessions of the several churches where they have appeared for the last two hundred years; to what a comfortable bulk would an Harmony of these confessions have amounted by this time? what plenty of elucidation might fuch an Harmony have afforded to blind miserable mortals? and what a field is here opened for declaiming against the indolence and drowfiness of our appointed watchmen, who, during this long and perilous interval, have been filent upon fo many important subjects; suffering this multitude of herefies to pass uncorrected

[[]F] One article of difference between K. Charles I. and the Scotch Protestors, anno 1638, turned upon the necessity of renewing and applying confessions of faith to every present emergency of the church. This the Scots compared to the riding of Merches, or boundaries, upon every new "Incroachment." And indeed, supposing the utility of confessions to be what the Remonstrants say it is, King Charles's whole convocation could not have furnished him with an answer to this argument of the North Britons, in behalf of their new formulary. See Rushworth's Collections, vol. 11. pag. 774.

by any public censure, even while their partizans have been incessantly preaching up to us the great *utility* of confessions, as the only sovereign antidotes against them?

But, instead of inveighing against our superiors for any omiffions of this kind, let us make use of this very circumstance to point out to them the inutility (perhaps fomething worse) of our present established formularies of faith and doctrine. - What is become of all those heresies against which none of these public provisions have been made? Why, many of them are dead and funk down into utter oblivion, as if they had never been; others being left open to free debate, have had no worse effect in religion, than other harmless and innocent, and even edifying problems, are allowed to have in literature and philosophy: -- Whence the conclusion feems to be inevitable, that the malignity of other herefies (and perhaps the very existence of some of them) has been perpetuated, only by the respectable notice that fome church or other has thought fit to take of them in an established confession.

I will presume to support the justice of this remark, by an instance or two in our own establishment.

In the 42d of K. Edward's Articles, a formal censure was passed upon the restorers of Origen's opinion concerning the temporary duration of suture punishments. But in the Articles of 1562, this censure is not to be found. Undoubtedly

the question is of great importance with respect to the influences and fanctions of the Christian religion; nor is there any point of theology upon which churches may be supposed to decide more reasonably, than this. And yet, had the negative of this problem, Whether future punishments shall be eternal? still been stigmatized with this heretical brand, we should probably have wanted feveral learned and accurate disquisitions on the subject, from some of our most eminent writers, such as Rust, Tillotson, Hartly, &c. By whose researches we have gained at least a clearer state of the case, and a more accurate insight into the language of the scriptures relative to it, than the compilers of the article had before them; without laying any invidious prejudice on the judgment or conscience of any man living, or precluding the right that every Christian has to determine for himfelf, in a case where his interest is so great and important.

Again, the 40th of these original articles, "affirmed it to be contrary to the orthodox faith, to maintain that the souls of men de"ceased, do sleep, without any manner of sense, to the day of judgment, &c." This was likewise dismissed in 1562: since when, the doctrine condemned, and (some sew faint efforts excepted) all controversy concerning it have lain dormant, till very lately, that something very like a demonstration that our first reformers were mistaken on this head, has been offered to the world;

world [G]; which probably had never feen the light, if an affent to this 40th article had ftill remained a part of our ministerial subscription.

As to what the remonstrants say of the neglect, of necessary heads of belief, urging and insisting on points of faith, which are not necessary; binding human inventions on men's consciences; misapplications of scripture-expressions and authorities, and the like, if these are not to be prevented or corrected by the current labours of able and honest pastors, joined to the justice which every man owes to himself, in searching the scriptures for satisfaction in all doubtful cases; it is in vain to expect any relief from consessions; many of which, if not all, are accused on some side, of these very abuses which the remonstrants propose by their means to reform.

2. Another use which the remonstrants have for confessions is, "to obviate foul and dishonest "flanders, calumnies, and suspicions, with which "those honest and upright divines, who under-"take to set blind miserable mortals right, may be "foiled by their adversaries. In which case, say "they, who is there that will not think them

[[]G] In a fermon on the Nature and End of Death, and a curious appendix subjoined to the third edition of Considerations on the Theory of Religion, &c. By Dr. Edmund Law, the reverend, learned, and worthy Master of St. Peter's College, Camb. How many doctrines are defended, how many are not opposed, not because they are to be found in the New Testament, but because they are established in a Liturgy, or decided in an Article?

constrained to inform the Christian world, what " manner of persons they are in religion, by an " ingenuous confession of their judgment: espe-"cially if they fee that, unless they do it, all " good men will be estranged from them, their " profelytes return to their vomit, and, confe-" quently, the truth of God be wounded through "the fides of their wronged reputation [H]."

The remonstrants had here an eye to their own particular case, and therefore we shall do no wrong to their argument, if we determine the value of it by their particular success. One of the calumnies complained of in this preface, is that, "the remonstrants concealed some things, " of which they were ashamed to give their judg-"ment in public." How do they obviate this calumny by their confession? How does their publicly confessing some of their doctrines prove that they had concealed none? They do not venture to fay, that in this formulary they had declared their judgment on every point of theology. On the contrary, they admit, that they had purposely waved certain thorny and subtile questions, leaving them to the idle and curious. Might not the doctrines relative to these questions, be the very things they were ashamed to confess? and if so, what is their apology for waving them, but mere subterfuge and evasion?

But, indeed, it was worse with the poor remonstrants than all this came to. No sooner was their confession made public, than their ad-

[[]H] Pag. 16, &c.

versaries fell upon them with a fresh load of calumnies, taking occasion from the confession itfelf; accusing it of "swarming with dreadful" heresies from the beginning to the end, not ex-"cepting even the very title page [I]".

What is now to be done? Shall the remonflrants go to work again, and publish a fecond confession to confute these new calumnies? and after that, if suture occasion should be given, (as they might be sure it would) a third, and a fourth? No, common sense would tell them, it was all labour in vain, and that there is but one way of resuting these endless calumnies effectually, namely, by confronting the accusation with the matter of fact, and appealing from time to time, to a fort of evidence, which formularies of confession will not admit of.

The remonstrants seem to have been aware, that it might be thought sufficient to obviate all charges of heresy, if the accused parties were only to express themselves in scripture-language. "But, they tell us, that this very thing is charg-"ed upon them as a crime, that, under the words "of scripture, they cherish in their bosoms the "worst meanings, and most prejudicial to the

" glory

[[]I] Bayle's Dict. Art. Episcopius Rem. F. See likewise la Roche Abridg. p. 685. who mentions indeed only the consures of two private ministers on the remonstrants confession, an effect, I am asraid, of his extreme and too visible partiality for their cause. They who will take the trouble to turn to Bayle, loc. cit. will see, that the words transcribed above, are part of a censure of this confession, published by the professions of Leyden.

"glory of God, and the falvation of man, which reduces them to a necessity, whether they will or no—by some public declaration of their judgment, to purge themselves, and to maintain and defend the sincerity of their besides [K]."

Well then, let us consider how this case stands. The Calvinists charge it upon the Remonstrants as a crime, that, under scripture words, they cherish the worst meanings. The remonstrants say it is a calumny, and appeal to their confession. The same remonstrants bring the same accusation against another set of men, as we have seen above. May not these men say too, it is a calumny? May not they too defend themselves in a confession? and at what does all this sutile reasoning aim, but at proving, that whatever is once got into a confession, must of necessity be infallibly true?

Where indeed any particular church can procure an establishment for its confession, in such fort as to make it a rule of teaching, and a test of orthodoxy for all her pastors and and professors, a bridle upon the tongue, and a shackle upon the pen-hand of every man who is disposed to speak or write against it, formularies of this kind may have their use and expedience, in securing the priveleges, interests, and emoluments of that particular church; and, being armed with coercive penalties, may likewise operate in the several cases abovementioned. But according to our apologists, these are the circumstances in which the abuses of confessions do chiesly consist. "They are not

[K] Pag. 17, 18.

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"for allowing confessions to be the limits and bounds within which religion is to be shut up; the *indices* of straight and crooked, or the anwill to which all controversies of faith are to be brought; nor would they have any man tyed to them, but just so far, and so long, as he is convinced in his conscience, that the doctrine of the confession accords with the scripture [L]."

This is just and reasonable: and it would be both unjust and unreasonable, to deny the remonstrants their due praise for their moderation, tenderness, and honest regard to the rights of private judgment. But however, nothing is more certain, than that by these limitations and concessions, they give up all the peculiar utility and expedience of these systematical forms, for which they profess themselves advocates in other parts of this presace; leaving them no more virtue or esseator in instructing the ignorant, confuting errors and herefies, or silencing calumnies, than may be reasonably claimed by, and ascribed to, the writings and discourses of any particular divine of judgment and learning.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but that in bringing down confessions so very low, particularly in their three-fold caution concerning the use of them, the remonstrants took a particular aim at the synod of Dort, by whose proud cruelty they had suffered so much. In their situation, to have put any high value upon public

[[]L] Pag. 20, 21.

confessions, had been to preclude themselves from all reasonable apology for their conduct. And yet who knows, in what all this moderation and lenity would have ended, had the remonstrants been fortunate enough to have engaged the civil powers, and, with them, the majority on their fide? For my part, I should have entertained no worse opinion of their integrity, if, instead of this trimming apology, (wherein they dextrously enough fetch back with one hand, what they had appeared to give with the other) they had fairly and honestly told the world (what was certainly the truth of the case) that their circumstances required they should have a religious test as a cement of their party, and to put them upon the respectable footing of a church. In the midst of all their moderation, we have feen them above expressing their concern, lest their proselytes should return to their vomit. In other passages they speak of confessions, as watch-towers, enfigns, and frandards. On one occasion they have unwarily dropped this observation. "There are fome things of fo great "weight and moment, that they cannot be "gainfaid without the extreme hazard of our " falvation. Freely to contradict these, or quietly " to suffer them to be contradified by others, would " be the farthest from prudence and charity possible." What, may we suppose, would the gentle Episcopius have done with the gainfayers of these things, invested, as he might possibly have been, with a commission from the secular arm? All E 3 this

this moderation and forbearance might, after all, have amounted to no more than what all protestant churches *profes*; namely, to affert the sovereign authority of the scriptures, with a commodious saving to themselves of a concurrent privilege, of providing for the *utility* of their own well-being, by an orthodox test.

Let no man fay, that, confidering the temperate language of the Remonstrants, a surmise of this kind cannot be justified. In this verbal deference for the authority of the scriptures, no church has ever gone farther than our own, nor consequently lest greater latitude for private

judgment. "We receive and embrace" (fays the church of England by the pen of Bishop Jewel) " all the " canonical scriptures, both of the Old and New "Testament; - we own them to be the heaven-" ly voices by which God hath revealed his will "to us; - in them only can the mind of man " acquiesce; in them all that is necessary for our " falvation is abundantly and plainly contained; -"they are the very might and power of God un-" to falvation; they are the foundations of the " Apostles and Prophets upon which the church " of God is built; they are the most certain and " infallible rule, by which the church may be " reduced if she happen to stagger, slip, or err, " by which all ecclefiastical dostrines ought to be " tried; no law, no tradition, no custom, is to be reer ceived or continued, if it be contrary to scripture; 64 no, though St. Paul himself, or an angel " from

"from heaven, should come and teach other"wife [M]."

This was once the fense of the church of England, whatever authority she may have since pretended to, upon other principles. Be this as it may, such of her divines as have afferted this authority with the uttermost zeal, and in the highest terms, have yet, in the same breath, extolled her moderation, in laying no greater stress upon her Confession, than the Remonstrants themselves seem to contend for.

"Our church," fays Bishop Bull, "professeth not to deliver all her articles (all, I say, for fome of them are coincident with the fundamental points of Christianity) as essentials of faith, without the belief whereof no man can be faved, but only propounds them as a body of safe and pious principles, for the preservation of peace, to be subscribed, and not openly contradicted, by her sons [N].

Nay, even the rigidly-ecclefiattical Dr. Stebbing allows, that "when we speak of a right to deter"mine what is the true sense of any article of faith, we do not propose the explication, given in virtue of this right, as a rule for the faith or conduct of Christians; but only as a rule, according to which they shall either be admitted or not admitted to officiate as public mini"fters [O]."

[[]M] Contra eas nec legem, nec traditionem, nec consuetudinem ullam audiendam esse, says the Latin Apol. sect. 27.

[[]N] Vindication of the Church of England, p. 178.

[[]O] Rational Enquiry, p. 36.

'Tis true, the obscurity of these concessions is such, that no man can tell what is intended to be given up by them, and what reserved for the church. In my opinion, they are hardly sense. But this likewise is the misfortune of the Remonstrants, who oscillate the question backwards and forwards, till no mortal can find out what they mean to ascribe to, or what to detract from, the virtue and merit of a public Confession.

The Remonstrants, however, have had thus far the better of us; they believed their Confession at least when they made this Apology for it. We are driven to make Apologies for, and even to defend subscription to a Confession which many subscribers do not believe; and concerning which no two thinking men (according to an ingenious, and right reverend writer) ever agreed exactly in their opinion, even with regard to any one article of it [P].

Of what curious materials these extraordinary Apologies and Defences are framed, we are now proceeding to examine.

[P] Dedication to the Essay on Spirit, p. vi.

CHAP. IV.

A particular Examination of Bishop Burnet's Introduction to the Exposition of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England.

Little has been faid on the subject of established confessions, in which our own church has any greater concern than other protestant churches. We shall now be a little more particular. And as Bishop Burnet has brought together all the topics of any moment, relating to the subscriptions required of the English clergy, in a particular discourse prefixed to his Exposition of our Articles of Religion, we shall do our venerable mother no wrong, in selecting, for our prefent consideration, the apology of so masterly an advocate.

But, before we proceed to examine his Lord-fhip's folutions of the feveral difficulties which have been supposed to encumber the case of our English subscriptions, it may be necessary to give a little previous attention to the motives and reasons, which engaged his Lordship in this particular work of expounding the Articles of our church.

"Some of the Articles," fays the Bishop, "feemed to lean so entirely to an absolute prede"stination, that some, upon that account, scru"pled the subscribing them: and others re"proached

" proached our church with this, that though our articles looked one way, yet our dollors, for the most part, went the other way. It was fit such a point should be well cleared; and it was in order to that, that the late blessed Queen [Mary] did command me to explain those first; which she afterwards enlarged to the whole thirty-nine [A]."

Let us reflect a little on this remarkable circumftance.

Every one knows that, in the fenfible and pathetic Conclusion, subjoined to this excellent Prelate's History of bis own Times, his Lordship has not scrupled to declare, "that the requiring sub-" fcription to the thirty-nine Articles, is a great "imposition [B]." An opinion which was not the refult of a late experience. His Lordship had expressed himself to the same purpose to the principal men of Geneva, with respect to their Consensus Doctrinæ, many years before he could have any view to the circumstances which gave rife to his Exposition, and that with so much zeal and eloquence, that, according to the writer of his life, (a witness worthy of all belief) "it was "through his (the Bishop's) credit, and the " weight of his character, that the clergy at Ge-" neva were released from these subscriptions, " and only left subject to punishment or censure,

[[]A] Bishop Eurnel's Remarks on the Examination of his Exposition of the Second Article of our Church, p. 2.

[[]E] Folio edition, vol. II. p. 634.

" in case of writing or preaching against the stellar stellar

These being his Lordship's uniform sentiments, in the earlier, as well as the later part of his life, a question is naturally suggested, why he should write a book, in the mean season, with the avowed purpose of making men easy under their obligations to subscribe? An attempt which could have no other tendency, than to perpetuate the imposition in all succeeding times. For the point the Bishop was to clear being this, "that the articles were capable of "the feveral fenses of different doctors," the consequence would be, that all might safely subfcribe them: which would of course supersede the necessity of abolishing subscriptions on the part of the church, let the imposition be ever so grievous to those who could not come into the Bishop's expedients; and this, as his Lordship had good reason to know, was no uncommon cafe

Whether Bishop Burnet considered, or indeed whether he saw his enterprize in this point of light, cannot be determined. That there were fome considerations, which, notwithstanding the weight of a royal command, made him enter upon this task with no little reluctance, appears pretty plainly from the following particulars:

1. In a paragraph just now cited from one of his Lordship's pamphlets, we are informed that he undertook his Exposition, at the command of

[[]C] Life, vol. ii. fol. edit. p. 693.

Queen Mary: by whom he likewife favs elfewhere, he was first moved to write it [D]. But in the preface to his Exposition, he fays, "he was " first moved to undertake that work, by that " great prelate, who then fat at the helm, [Abp. "Tillotson and only determined in it, by the com-"mand abovementioned afterwards."

You may, if you please, call this a contradiction; to me the truth of the case is clearly this, that the great prelate, unable to prevail with his friend Burnet, to undertake an affair of that nature at his own motion, applied to the Queen, whose influence, added to his own, left the good Bishop no room to decline the service, however difagreeable it might be to him.

2. The Queen and the Archbishop, dying foon after the Exposition was finished, and before it was put to the press, the Bishop, as he informs us himself, "being advised not to publish it, by 46 fome of his friends, who concurred with him "in opinion, that fuch a work would lay him "open to many malicious attacks, kept it by " him, in manuscript, no less than five years: at "the end of which interval, he was prevailed on "by the Archbishop [Tennison] and many of his " own order, to delay the publishing it no long-" er [E]. To which follicitations, we may suppose his Lordship to have given way with the less difficulty, as he was now at liberty to speak his mind in a preface, which, it is highly probable,

[[]D] Hift. O. T. vol. ii, pag. 228. [L] Hift. O. T. ubi fupra.

had never feen the light in the circumstances we now have it, if the Queen and Tillotson had survived the publication of the Exposition. For,

3. In this preface, the Bishop takes particular care to apprize his readers, "that his Exposi-"tion was not a work of authority; and that in " what he had done, he was, as to the far greater " part, rather an bistorian, and a collector of what "others had written, than an author himself." But what is still more, he there freely declares, the flender opinion he had of the effect of fuch expedients as he had fuggested in his introduc-"The fettling on fome equivocal formula-"ries," fays his Lordship, "will never lay the " contention that has arisen, concerning the chief " points in difference between the Lutherans and "the Calvinists *." An observation which will equally hold good, with respect to equivocal fenses put upon more positive and dogmatical formularies. In neither case are the men of different systems " left free, as the Bishop thinks "they should be, to adhere to their own opi-"nions:" and fo long as they are not, they will be for ever ftruggling to break loofe. No peace will enfue.

These sentiments, I humbly apprehend, had not appeared where we now find them, if the Exposition had been published as soon as it was finished. The right reverend author would most probably have suppressed them, in mere tender-

^{*} See Bayle's Dia. Musculus, Rem. [G]

ness to the good Archbishop, whose notions concerning these bealing measures, and middle ways, were very different from those of Bishop Burnet. His Grace's temper was mild and cautious, even to the borders of timidity. His leading object was to keep church-matters in peace. What he thought of fubscriptions is not very clear. Poffibly he might think they were unwarrantable impositions, and wish, at the bottom, to be well rid of them [F]. But the virulence of the opposition to a proposed review of the liturgy in 1680, had taught him caution with respect to fuch attempts. His Grace might, and certainly did, wish to procure more liberty for himself and all honest men, to write and speak their fentiments freely. But the articles stood in the way; an immoveable barrier to the church, - a fort of a guard-house, to which the centinels of the hierarchy were for ever dragging poor culprits, who

[F] And yet Dr. Birch, in his Life of this eminent prelate, hath preserved an anecdote, by no means favourable to this surmise. I mean that strange equivalent proposed by his Grace, in lieu of the common form of subscription. viz. We do submit to the dostrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England, as it shall be established by law, and promise to teach and practise accordingly. This would be bowing our necks to the yoke with a witness. What we subscribe to now, is before us; and in a condition to be examined before hand. What shall be established hereafter, we know not. By such a subscription, a man might oblige himself to teach and practise popery it self: "The Church of England," said Bishop Burnet once in a debate, "is an equivocal expression; and if popery should prevail, it would be called the Church of England still." See Vox Cleri, pag. 68. Birch, Life of Tillotson, 8vo. p. 183.

had strayed ever so little beyond the verge of the court. All that could be done, as the case then stood, was to expound these articles so, that men of different opinions might subscribe them; and by that means, be brought to bear with each other in controvertible points, and to debate matters freely, without incurring suspicions or reproaches of heresy or prevarication. Into this service, I presume, was the Bishop of Salisbury pressed by his Grace of Canterbury; and with whatever reluctance he might undertake it, we may be sure he would never mortify his friend by publicly declaring, as he does in this presace, the contemptible opinion he had of such expedients.

4. There is one circumstance farther to be observed on this subject, which is well worth our notice. Bishop Burnet was under a greater difficulty with respect to such an undertaking, than most men. The readiest way to have answered Tillotson's purpose, would have been to consider and expound this articular fystem so, that subfcription to it might stand for no more than a peaceable acquiescence, or, at most, an engagement not openly to contradict it. But unluckily for the present expounder, he had long before, declared in a celebrated work, "that there ap-" peared no reason for this conceit, no such "thing [as their being intended only for ar-"ticles of peace] being declared when the articles were first fet out; insomuch, that they " who subscribed them then, did either believe " them

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"them to be true, or else they did grossly pre"varicate [G]."

It is, indeed, highly probable, that his Lordship never altered his opinion in this matter. For even when his Exposition was about to be published, Bishop Williams strongly recommended, that they might be confidered only as articles of peace. Upon which the late Judge Burnet, mentioning this incident in his father's life, observes, "that there might, perhaps, be reason to wish "that they had only been imposed as such, but "there was nothing in our conftitution to war-"rant an expositor in giving that sense to "them." His father was plainly in the same fentiments when he fet out his Exposition; which makes it the more extraordinary, that some modern writers should still contend for this pacific fense of subscription, when two such able judges, the one of the original intention of the Church, the other of the point of Law, have so clearly and positively determined against them.

Whether Bishop Burnet would have given more room to subscribers in his Exposition, if that passage in his History of the Reformation had been out of the way, it would even be impertinent to guess. Had Bishop Williams been the expositor, he would, it is likely, have carried subscriptions no higher than an obligation to acquiesce in the doctrine of our articles; upon a presumption, possibly, that the present generation, if they could agree upon it, need not be bound by

[[]G] Hist. Reformat. vol, ii. p. 169.

the original intention of the church or the compilers. Sir Thomas Burnet, howevwer, we fee, carries us back to our constitution; and that implies, that what was once the intention of the church in this matter, must be still her intention: and fo, undoubtedly, thought the Bishop his father. And as his Lordship had all along feen things in this light, it is amazing to me, that the fense he expressed of the first subscriptions, in his History of the Reformation, should not fuggest to him, that he could no more give the fubscribers of the present age the privilege of availing themselves of different grammatical fenses, than he could allow them to confider the articles, as articles of peace.

His Lordship hath said in plain terms, "that "they who subscribed the articles when they " were first fet out, did either believe them to be "true, or else they did grossly prevaricate." Now, if they believed them to be true, they certainly believed them to be true in one precise uniform sense, that is to say, in a sense exclusive of all diversity of opinion, as the title of the articles plainly imports. And if fo, what is there in our constitution to warrant an expositor to allow men to subscribe in different senses? If the first fubscribers would have prevaricated in fo doing, the original intention of the compilers will fix the same reproach upon all subscribers who deviate from the church's fense to this hour.

But whether we are right in supposing the good Bishop to have undertaken this task against the grain or not, we have good reason to believe, that his fuccess did not yield him the highest sarisfaction in the latter end of his life. His difcontent will appear by and by, in a citation from a pamphlet he was obliged to write in defence of his Exposition, immediately after it was published; and in his golden legacy, at the end of his last history, he scruples not to say, "that the " greater part of the clergy subscribe the articles " without ever examining them, and others do it " because they must do it, tho' they can hardly " fatisfy their consciences about some things in "them." Is not this faying, that all his pains in expounding the articles, and all his expedients to temper the case of subscription to all tastes and complexions, had been absolutely thrown away; and that subscription, after all the colours that can be put upon it, is no better than an unwarrantable imposition?

I cannot leave this view of the connexion between these two prelates Tillotson and Burnet, without a short reslexion on these trimming methods in matters of religion. When were they ever known to succeed? And where were they ever known to conciliate the mind of any one of those unreasonable zealots, to whose humour they were accommodated? We, of this generation, have lived to see how greatly Archbishop Tillotson was mistaken, in thinking to win over the high churchmen of those days, by his healing expedients. His gentle, lenitive spirit, was to their bigotry, what oil is to the fire. Bishop Burnet's

Burnet's friendship for the Archbishop carried him into these measures, contrary to his natural bent, and in mere complaifance to the Archbishop's apprehensions of a storm, which he dreaded above all other things. And I remember to have heard some old men rejoice, that Burnet was kept down by Tillotson's influence, from pushing the reformation of the church to an extremity that might have endangered the government itself. Some of these men, however, might have remembered, that when the Archbishop was no longer at hand to temper Burnet's impetuofity, the latter had prudence sufficient to balance his courage, and to keep him from attempting, what he had fense enough to perceive was impracticable. But after all, what has been the consequence of Tillotson's gentleness, and Burnet's complaifance for the times? even this; thefe two eminent lights of the English Church, could not have been more opposed while they lived, or more abused and vilified since they died, had they firmly and vigorously promoted, at all adventures, that reformation in the church of England, which, they were both of them deeply conscious, she very much wanted [I].

[I] Besides the staler instances of the outrageous treatment these two eminent prelates have met with in and nearer their own times, how implacably the malice of some men pursues them even to the present moment, may be seen in an abusive and scandalous character given of Bishop Burnet, in a late thing called, Observations upon Tacitus; and in some jacobite Remarks on the Lite of Archbishop Tillossen, by Dr. Birch.

But after all, if what Bishop Burnet has offered under all these disadvantages, will not justify the church of England in requiring subfeription to the 29 articles, or leave room for the fincerity of those doctors, who seem to go one way, while the articles look another, we may venture to conclude, without any just imputation of temerity, that this fervice will hardly be more effectually performed by men of another flamp, who may probably engage in it with more alacrity, and less circumspection. What the good bishop has faid on this behalf, we now proceed to confider.

His Lordship begins with stating the seeming impropriety " of making fuch a collection of te-" nets, the standard of the doctrine of a Church, "that, according to his Lordship, is deservedly "valued by reason of her moderation. This, " fays the bishop, seems to be a departing from "the simplicity of the first ages, which yet we " fet up for a pattern $\lceil K \rceil$."

This objected impropriety (which, by the way, his Lordship exceedingly strengthens and illustrates, by an induction of particulars) he rather endeavours to palliate and excuse, or, as he terms it, explain, than to deny or confute. He gives us an historical recital of the practice of former times, to shew that our church acts after a precedent of long standing. To this no other anfwer is necessary, than that this was the practice of times, which were not remarkable either for their moderation or fimplicity, and of whose example the church of England cannot avail herself, consistently with her pretensions to these two amiable qualities [L].

But it feems this practice was originally the practice of the apostles: a consideration, which will not only authorize our imitation, but strongly imply the utility and edification of the thing itself.

"There was a form," fays his Lordship, "fet-"tled very early in most churches. This St. " Paul, in one place calls, The form of doctrine that " was delivered, in another place, The form of found " words, which those, who were fixed by the apo-" ftles in particular churches, had received from "them. These words of his do import a stand-" ard or fixed formulary, by which all doctrines " were to be examined [M]." The passages here referred to, are, Rom. vi. 17.-1 Tim. iv. 6. to which are added in the margin, 1 Tim. vi. 3.-2 Tim. i. 13. and the Greek words in these several passages which are supposed to signify this flandard or fixed formulary, run thus—Tumos diδαγης - Υποίυπωσις ύγιαινοιίων λογων - Λογοι ωις εως, και καλης διδασκαλιας - Υγιαινούες λογοι, δι τε Κυριε ήμων Ιησε Χριςε, και ή καθ' έυσεθειαν διδασκαλια.

[[]L] To illustrate this truth, Dr. Moskeim's Compendious View of Ecclesiastical History, may be consulted, from the times of Constantine downwards: and with greater advantage, in Dr. Maclaine's English translation, lately published.

[[]M] Introd. p. 2.

Now, when a capable and unprejudiced reader confiders the variety of expression in these several paffages, he will probably be inclined to think, that a fixed formulary of doctrine is the last thing a plain man would look for in them. A fixed formulary, one would think, should have a fixed title. Nor is it at all probable, that one and the same form of words, should be described in terms, which may denote an hundred different forms.

To enter into a just criticism on these expresfions, would be tedious and unnecessary. fice it to observe, after very competent judges, that τυπος διδαχης, and υποτυπωσις εύγιαινονίων λογων, appear to refer rather to the exemplification of the Christian doctrine in the practice of pious believers, than to any form of words. The dostrine is one thing, and the type of the doctrine, another. The doctrine is, and must be expressed by, and consequently contained in, some form of words. But the type of that form, must be something different from the form it felf; and the general acceptation of the word TUTOS, points out the practical exemplification of the doctrine, to be the thing here intended. The text, Rom. vi. 17. is, it must be owned, obscure and difficult, but without giving this fense to the words TUTTOS SI- $\delta \alpha \chi ns$, it is absolutely unintelligible [N]. And

[[]N] See Grotius and Bengelius's Gnomon upon the place. Ttmos. Typus, vestigium, figura, exemplar, forma. Stephens. Acts xxiii. 25. Tumos is the literal copy of Lysias's epistle to Felix, not the sum or abridgment of it. whatever

whatever is the fignification of τυπος here, must be the meaning of υποτυπωσις, 2 Tim. i. 13 [O].

Again, the literal Englith of bytationles hopen, is healing or falutary words; that is, the words of falvation or eternal life. Our translators have rendered the Greek participle by the equivocal words, found and wholesome, which signified, I suppose, in their ideas, the same with orthodox.

If you ask where these bealing words are to be found? I answer, in the scriptures, sometimes, perhaps, abridged and comprehended in some short summaries, which occur in Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. But these are evidently not the fixed formularies his Lordship means. As the certain consequence of that must have been, that no man, or body of men whatsoever, could have had the least authority to add to them, or inlarge them in any future time.

And if any other ftandard or formulary is meant, it then comes to our turn to ask the que-

[O] The word is but once more to be found in the New Testament, viz. 1 Tim. i. 16. Where the apostle says, he found mercy—προς ὑπόλυπωσιν των μελλοίλων πισευν, &c. for a pattern; which is the same thing as an example of the doctrine of pardon and mercy, thro' Christ. In what sense the word τυπος was afterwards used, may be seen in Mills's translation of Bruys's Hist. of the Popes, vol. i. p. 428. Where an instrument, or edict of the Emperor Constant, for the pacification of the disputes concerning the two Wills of Christ, is called the Type. Which instrument contained no formulary of doctrine, but only enjoined that the parties at variance should abide by the scriptures, the five œcumenical councils, and the plain and simple passages of the fathers.

stion. Where is it to be found? What is become of it? For that it should be lost, or drop into utter oblivion, if it once had a real existence, is wholly incredible.

In answer to this demand, the Bishop gives us to understand, "that, by a fixed formulary, he "does not mean one precise and invariable form of words, which he thinks it improbable the apostles should leave behind them. For his "Lordship observes, that the first apologists for Christianity, when they deliver a short abstract of the Christian faith, do all vary from one another, both as to the order, and as to the words themselves. Whence he thinks it more probable, that they received these short abstracts from the apostles themselves, with some "variation."

But furely, the moment you admit of variations, not only the idea of a fixed formulary, but even the use of any formulary, as a standard or test of all dostrines, immediately vanishes away. There must be left, in such varying formularies, room for doubtful and precarious judgments: and the scriptures alone, in all such cases, must be the dernier resort. And if so, why might they not as well have been admitted to decide in the first instance?

But to come nearer the case in hand. Do any of these apologists pretend to have received any of these short abstracts from the apostles themselves? or does it appear among all the variety of creeds which these primitive fathers have exhibited, exhibited, that any one of them came immediately from the apostles? Mr. Whiston, who, perhaps, had made as exact a scrutiny into matters of this nature as any man living or dead, and who was as likely to adopt any thing for apostolic, which had the least pretence to so honourable an origin, frankly confesses, in one of his books, that "he finds no trace of an apostolical" baptismal creed in the writings of the fathers, "for above three centuries, though he makes no doubt, but there was all along such a creed among them, notwithstanding [P]."

I cite Mr. Whiston as a witness to a fact, but lay no stress upon his opinion; nor, indeed, does it deserve the least regard, after he has told us, "that in the fourth century, many doubtful and exceptionable creeds were publicly used in the church, and did then exceedingly disturb and confound christianity." That is to say, at, or immediately after, the very time, when he makes no doubt but they had such an authentic baptismal creed among them.

But till some of these apostolic formularies are brought to light, what his Lordship says of a depositum, lodged in the hands of a bishop, &c. must pass only for an inference from a postulatum, which, for many good reasons, and such, particularly, as rise from our scripture-accounts of the manner in which the apostles preached and propagated the gospel, cannot be granted. And indeed, upon his Lordship's supposition, that the

apostles, or their companions, delivered these formularies of faith as deposits, with such variations as the cases and situations of particular churches demanded, it is next to impossible they should all have perished so absolutely, that no remains of them are to be discovered to this hour.

But it feems, there is a way of accounting for this state of utter oblivion, into which these primitive formularies are fallen, very consistent with the supposition of their real existence for several centuries. We are told that these formularies contained a upuquor dogua, a secret dostrine, seldom, if ever, committed to writing; the use of which was, to secure the christian brotherhood (by way of a test or tessera of true discipleship) from being imposed upon by the insidious and dissembled pretences of pagans and heretics. And to this secret dostrine, St. John is supposed to allude, where he says, 2 Epist. v. 10. If there come any unto you, and bring not this dostrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.

Some divines are extremely ingenious in discovering what the sacred writers allude to, when they allude to nothing but what is plainly expressed in the context. Look back to verse the 7th, and carry the connection of the Apostle's discourse along with you to this 10th verse, and you will plainly perceive the dostrine mentioned in that verse to be this proposition, Jesus Christ is come in the sless: which some persons, and those perhaps pretending to be Christians, then denied.

denied *. If you refer the words, this doctrine, no farther back than to the foregoing verse, and suppose the doctrine of Christ, there mentioned, to be a secret formulary of doctrine, concealed among the sincere and faithful Christians for the purposes above mentioned, the consequence will be, that though a brother should confess that Jesus Christ is come in the steps, and profess his belief of every gospel-truth, which is implied in, or depends upon, that confession, you were not to receive him into your house, nor hid him God speed, unless he brought this secret symbolical doctrine, which perhaps he might never have heard of. And how opposite that would be to the spirit of the gospel, needs no particular proof.

What other arguments or evidences there may be to support this fancy, I have not examined. I freely own it would mortify me greatly to find such a practice fixed upon the primitive church, by any fort of evidence, which should fairly derive it from the Apostles [P]. Nothing could

^{*} See Chillingworth's Letter to Lewgar. Life by Defmaizeaux, p. 32. His words are these: "If you think me one of those to whom St. John forbids you to say God save you, then you are to think and prove me one of those deceivers which deny Jesus Christ to be come in the flesh."

[[]P] I have been informed, that the late learned Dr. John Colbatch, professor of casuistical divinity in the university of Cambridge, hath lest behind him a manuscript wherein the reality of a zeropior dogue among the ancient Christians, is clearly proved. I wish such manuscript were printed. For, though I think it impossible that a secret of this kind, if ever it had any substantial soundation, should not transpire before the eighteenth century; yet such an attempt from so learned a

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be more inconfiftent with the nature and circumstances of their commission, or the tenour, spirit, and defign of the gospel in general. Our Saviour told his Apostles, that what had been whispered in the ear (the truths that had been communicated to them only) should by them be proclaimed upon the house-tops [2]. St. Paul puts his being pure from the blood of all men, upon this, that be had not shunned to declare to the churches where he preached, the whole counsel of God[R]: and appeals to his openness, simplicity, and sincerity on many other occasions. In the same sense of their duty, the whole college join in prayer to God, that they may be enabled to speak the word with all boldness: µsla wasns wappnsias, with all freedom; fine involucris, says Grotius [S]. And yet, it feems, they had among them a fecret do-Etrine, reserved to be communicated only to adepts, to the initiated, and fuch as might be confided in: which indeed would have been reducing christianity to a paltry sect, and bringing in di-

person as Dr. Colbatch, would certainly furnish curiosities enow to recompence the pains of reading his book, however short and unsatisfied it might leave us with respect to the main point. A casuistical divine is, by his profession, a dealer in cryptics. The plain open truths of the New Testament will not agree with certain squeamish consciences. Few people, I apprehend, carry their scruples to casuists, without having a suspicion that the gospel is against them. The doctor, to oblige, or to satisfy such patients, must fetch his drugs from the hidden wishom of the Fathers and Schoolmen.

^[2] Luke xii. 3. compare Matth. x. 27.

[[]R] Acts xx. 26, 27.

[[]S] A&s iv. 29.

flinctions, which could not but have difgusted new converts, many of whom, no doubt, had taken offence at the exclusive rites and mysteries in the religions they had professed, and would, on that very account, be rather inclined to embrace an institution where every thing was openly declared, and freely communicated.

What indeed might happen in some Christian societies, and perhaps in no long time after the demise of the Apostles, I would not undertake to say. As little as we know of those early times, we have sufficient evidence of their widely deviating from the simplicity of the gospel; and all I am concerned for is to shew, that the Apostles set them no such examples.

Bishop Burnet indeed makes no express mention of this fecret dottrine; and whether he meant any thing of that sort, by the depositum lodged in the hands of the Bishop, is uncertain. But it is plain, without some such supposition, the loss of an apostolical formulary of faith, must be utterly unaccountable; as a depositum, in any other circumstances, must have been preserved and perpetuated, with the same care and respect as the scriptures themselves.

But, admitting that there had been such a formulary of apostolical authority, and that some of those creeds, which the earlier Fathers have lest us, were framed after the model of it; we should certainly expect a good account, by what authority those large additions were made, which appear in creeds and confessions of a later date;

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the rather as we have good reason to believe, that the shortest of the ancient creeds now remaining came the nearest to the apostolic model, in course of time, as well as in their contents.

To this the good Bishop answers no otherwise, than by giving us a detail of those growing heresies, which occasioned such enlargements. He does not venture to fay, that fuch enlargements were properly grounded upon, or duly authorized by fuch occasions. He had too honest a heart. and too discerning a head, to justify such practices at all events, as some others, both before him and after him, have done. On the contrary, he favs, " it had been an invaluable bleffing, if the "Christian religion had been kept in its first "fimplicity." It is not clear, to me at least, that he thought even the imputation of idolatry, occasioned by the worship of the Son, a sufficient reason for adding the words, of the same substance with the Father, to the creeds of the Christian churches. He once more, however, fays, "it " had been a great bleffing to the church, if a " ftop had been put here." After which, it could hardly be expected, that his Lordship should enter upon a formal defence of creeds and confessions, such as they have appeared in modern churches. Decently, therefore, and tenderly does the good man close this part of his subject, by faying, "In stating the doctrines of this church " so copiously, our Reformers followed a method "that had been used in a course of many ages."

And now, the vindication of the church of England being put upon this footing, it became necessary to specify the substituting or the growing heresies, which would account for the copious form of doctrine established in our own church.

For this purpose, his Lordship mentions two particular circumstances in those times, to which it became necessary our Reformers should pay a particular regard.

The first of these circumstances was, "that "when the scriptures were first put into men's " hands at the Reformation, as a rule of faith. "many strange conceits were pretended to be "derived from them, which gave rife to feveral "impious and extravagant fects. Whence the " Papifts took occasion to calumniate the Refor-" mation, as if these sectaries spoke out, what all " Protestants thought, - and that all sects were "the natural confequences of the Reformation. "and of shaking off the doctrine of the infallibi-"lity of the church. So that, to stop these ca-"lumnies, it became necessary for particular " churches, and for our own among the rest, to " publish confessions of their faith, both for the "instruction of their own members, and for co-" vering them from the flanders of their adver-" faries."

Concerning this method of obviating calumnies by confessions, something has been said already in a foregoing chapter. But however, as the case of the church of England was somewhat different from that of the Remonstrants, it

may not be improper to confider this plea, in reference to our English Reformers.

And here it must be owned, Bishop Burnet has, with great justice and propriety, drawn a parallel between the flanders cast upon the Protestants by the Papists, and the calumnies thrown at the first Christians by the Jews and Pagans. Popery, at the time of the Reformation, was a mixture of Judaical rites and traditions, and of Pagan idolatry and superstition. The Reformation may be called the refurrection of the Christian religion, and would naturally be attended with all the confequences of the first preaching and spreading of the gospel. Here then the Reformers had a precedent before them; and should have done what the Apostles did in the fame fituation. The Apostles were slandered as having taught, that men might do evil, that good might come. The doctrine of free grace was the immediate occasion of this calumny, which, for the honour and credit of Christianity, demanded the most speedy and effectual refutation. What course did the Apostles take in this exigency? Did they frame a new creed or confession, or infert into an old one a new article, importing, "that no man should do evil, for the sake of "procuring the greatest imaginable good?" No, they left the calumny to be confronted by the gospel-history, and the tenor of their own writings and conversation, and gave themselves no farther trouble about it.

In like manner, had the Reformers held up the Bible, and faid, "Here is our rule of " faith and manners, and by this only we defire "to have our doctrine and practice examined;" and had they, as the Apostles did, asted in conformity to that declaration, they must for ever have filenced every cavil, and every flander, which the wit of man could have devised against them.

But they were governed by other precedents, and had, no doubt, as much liberty, and equal right to publish apologies and declarations of their faith, as other churches. This was done on the behalf of the church of England by Bishop Yewel, and that so much to the satisfaction of the church, that his book passed a long time for the authentic standard of its doctrine. But, whom did it satisfy or convince, except the English Protestants? and what peace did it procure for them? Let the bulky volume of controversy testify (which is yet to be found in many of our churches) fpun out of the bowels of this petty Apology, no bigger, at its first appearance, than a three penny pamphlet.

I hope, however, I shall not be thought to derogate from our thirty-nine articles, if I fav that this Apology did its work, whatever it was, as well as that more authentic fystem; and, what is more, did it without being fubscribed, or adopted as a test, either of ministerial or lay-communion. And, had the Reformers contented themselves with this method of defence, they might have purfued it without any complaint, and

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without any ill consequence to their own friends. The fault we find with them is not for declaring their faith, or confuting the calumnies of the adversary; but setting up these declarations and defences, as tests of orthodoxy; and binding them upon the consciences of those, who had as much right to dissent from them, as they had to dissent from popery: and from this charge, what Bishop Burnet hath pleaded on their behalf, will not acquit them.

That a variety of fects arose out of the Reformation, was a matter of fast, which can hardly be confidered in the light of a calumny. It neither could nor ought to have been denied. was the natural effect of great numbers emancipated from the fetters of Rome, and restored to the exercise of their private judgment. of these sects were impious or extravagant in their tenets, might not some of this be owing to the intolerant spirit of some of the Reformers themfelves? who, by narrowing the bottom of Christian communion, and establishing exclusive creeds and confessions, very probably provoked some warm spirits to those excesses, who disdained to have a new yoke laid upon them, by those very men who had fo lately shaken off that of popery. To fay that these impious sectaries spoke out what all Protestants thought, was so ridiculous and abfurd, that it deferved no other answer, but an appeal to the actual separation of one fort from another [2].

[2] Seckendorf indeed speaks of "a seet of fanatics which "spread in the Lovo Countries, before Luther began to attack

On the other hand, such sects as differed from each other, and kept within the bounds of fobriety and order, as they manifestly arose out of the Reformation, so were they all upon an equal footing of authority. They might, if they pleased, reprobate each other in their feveral confessions, but they could not fay in those confessions, that a variety of fects did not exist, or that such a variety ever would have existed, if the whole Christian world had continued to acknowledge the infallibility of the Roman church. The proper defence against such calumnies, was to fay, as fome of the cooler and more fensible Reformers did fay, that, after so long a night of ignorance, and dearth of literature, it was no wonder that men should fall upon different explanations of scriptures, which had been so little studied, and fo carefully fecreted from those who were inclined

" popery, and was therefore the offspring of popery, not of "Lutheranism. They kept themselves," he tells us, " from "inquiry and punishment, in that they conformed, by a wic-"ked diffimulation, to the external rites of the established " worship, with an equal, and sometimes a greater, affectation " of fanctity, than others. Some of these had a propensity to "atheifm, or libertinism; and the people afterwards aspiring " to evangelical liberty, these fanatics began, under this pre-"tence, to infinuate their profane opinions to them, with more "affurance." Hist. Luth. b. ii. p. 30. After which, he cites a passage, wherein Luther takes notice of them, and accounts for their being fo still and quiet under popery, and so troublefome after the reformation began, from the case in the parable of the strong man armed, &c. Luke xi. 21. - But, without doubt, there was a variety of fects, which owed their rife to the progress of the reformation, without having any connexiom with these papistical fanatics.

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to fludy them; and had even been degraded to the level of the decretal epiftles in point of importance and authority [R].

[R] It is a question of some difficulty, when the church of Rome began to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to raise their traditions to an equality with them? It is generally supposed that Pope Nicholas ordained, that the decretal epiftles of the Popes should be of the same authority as the fcriptures, about the year 855. But the true case was this: Nicholas had faid that the decretals of his predecessors ought to conclude some French Bithops, who refused to appeal to the Roman see, upon a point controverted and decided among themselves. The Bishops alledged, that those decretals were no part of the canon law. Nicholas replied, that if this was a good reason for rejecting the decretals, it would assord a pretence for rejecting the Old and New Testament; for that these were not to be found in the code of the canon. Du Plessis. Myst. Iniq. Progress. 31. Doubtless the argument is a miserable one; but, however, is far from implying, much more from afferting, that the decretals were of equal authority with the scriptures. Du Plessis indeed says, that Pope Agatho had, 170 years before, pronounced openly, "that all decrees made by "the fee apollolic, ought to be received as if they had proceeded "from St. Peter's own mouth." But, as this doctrine had gained no canonical authority in the pontificate of Nicholas, it ought not so early to be put to the account of the church. Nor do I indeed find any formal decree to fuch effect till the year 1415, when the council of Constance, in the condemnation of the 33th article of Wycliffe's herefy, ordained, "that fuch " of the decretal epiffles, as should be found, upon examination, " to be rightly ascribed to the Popes whose names they bore, " should be of equal authority with the epittles of the Apo-" ftles." L'Enfant's Hift, Counc. of Constance, vol. I. p. 229. The qualifying clause of examination shews that they were not even then without just suspicions that the collections of Ivo of Chartres, Gratian, and others, were not wholly authentic. From this period, the sufficiency of the scriptures alone to salvation, became a formal herefy, as appears by the twelfth of the interrogatories exhibited to Lambert in Fox's Martyrology in the year The

Thee other circumstance which, according to Bishop Burnet, made a copious confession more

1518. Hitherto, however, the scriptures stood upon even ground with papal conflitutions; and the inconfistencies between them were kept fufficiently out of fight by depriving the people of the ordinary means of itudying the facred oracles, and entertaining them only with the ignorant and mystical comments of the monks upon them. When this would no longer pass upon mankind, it then became necessary to degrade the scriptures to an inferior class. Erasmus, in that colloquy which is intituled 1x000 payer, canvasses the point, thus. LA-NIO: Petrus igitur habuit autoritatem condendi novas leges? SALSAMENTARIUS: Habuit. LAN. Habuit et Paulus, cum cateris apostolis? SALS. Habuerunt in suis quisque ecclessis, a Petro, seu Christo commissis. LAN. Et Petri successoribus par est potestas cum ipso Petro? SALS. Quidni? LAN. Tantundem igitur honoris debetur rescripto Romani pontificis, quantum epistolis Petri: et tantundem constitutionibus episcoporum, quantum epistolis Pauli? SALS, Equidem arbitror etiam amplius deberi, fi præcipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate. LAN. Sed fasne est dubitare, an Petrus et Paulus scripserint afflatu divini Spiritus? SALS. Imo bæreticus sit qui dubitet. LAN. Idem censes de rescriptis et constitutionibus pontissicum et episcoporum? SALS. De pontifice censeo, de episcopis ambigo, nist quod pium est, de nullo perperam suspicari, ni res ipsa palam clamitet. That Erasmus would be understood to give his own sense in the person of the filmonger, is undeniable. With what fincerity, is another matter. This we may depend upon, that he speaks the orthodox fentiments of the church, and gives us to understand, at least, upon what confiderations the precedence was given to the papal rescripts above the epistles of Peter and Paul. Probably the condition, si pracipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate, might be his own. But who fees not how idle it is to apply any fuch limitation to those decrees, which are confessedly written by divine inspiration, as Erasmus pretends here to think the pontifical decrees were? This colloquy is perhaps one of the feverest satires extant against the superstitions of popery. But whence had these superstitions their rise or their authority? Even from these inspired rescripts pf the Popes. Could not Eralmus fee this as well as any man?

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necessary for the reformed church of England, was, that concealed Papists being brought to this test, might not creep into the church unawares, and fecretly undermine it. (favs his Lordship) " had complied with "every alteration, both in King Henry's and "King Edward's reign, who not only declared "themselves to have been all the while Papists, " but became bloody perfecutors in Queen Ma-" ry's days.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but one main view of K. Edward's reformers in compiling the articles of religion, and requiring subscription to them, was to exclude all from the ministry who had any tincture of popery. How ineffectual this measure was for the purpose, the good Bifhop here confesses. And therefore, though this may go far towards excusing Cranmer and Ridley for contriving such a test, yet it will by no means justify Queen Elizabeth's Bishops, who had feen what had happened in Queen Mary's days, for continuing fuch a test any longer. Much less will any such consideration avail to excuse the imposers of subscription in all succeeding times.

Flizabeth, indeed, had very different notions from those of King Edward and his bishops, concerning reformation. She thought it right to humour the Papifts, and for that purpose, made very confiderable abatements in those terms of Protestant communion, which were infifted on in Edward's system.

Among other things, the compilers, or the reviewers of Edward's articles, struck out a long passage against the real presence. "The secret of "which, fays Bishop Burnet himself, was this. "The Queen and her council studied to unite " all into the communion of the church. And it " was alledged, that fuch an express definition "against a real presence, might drive from the "church many who were still of that persuasion: " and therefore, it was thought to be enough to " condemn transubstantiation, and to fay, that "Christ was present after a spiritual manner, and "received by faith. To fay more, as it was "judged superfluous, so it might occasion divi-" fion. Upon this, these words were by com-"mon confent left out [S]."

Would one believe, that the fame hand which wrote this passage, could raise an apology for our *present* articles, from the necessity of excluding concealed papists out of the church, by a test

[S] Hist. Reform. vol. ii. p. 406. This mutilation of the article concerning the real presence, was one of those things which drove the ancient Puritans out of the established church. Hist. Reform. vol. iii. Collection, p. 334. And, in these latter times, had given occasion to compliment the church of England, as holding the real presence, as well as her sister of Rome. See Appendix to Dr. Parr's life of Archbishop Usher, p. 11. e. q. s. This is likewise one principal circumstance, which both Popish and Protestant writers have brought to shew the very little difference there is between the churches of Rome and England. Vid. Francisci a Sta. Clara (alias Davenport) Exposit. paraphrasticam, in articulos consessionis Anglicæ: In Art. 28. and Heylin's Introduct. to the Life of Archbishop Laud.

with which none of them would comply? I fay the present articles, for nothing can be more abfurd, than to suppose that, the compilers of any other articles, should profit by their experience of what had happened in the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Mary. These inconsistencies, however, are unavoidable, even by the greatest and best of of men, when they find themselves under a necessity of defending ecclesiastical institutions, only because they are established.

Hitherto we meet with nothing in this introduction, to justify our reformers in establishing these articles of faith and doctrine, save only the bare excuse of following the fashion of other churches. The bishop himself has as good as confessed, that there is no scriptural authority for any such practice. It has likewise been shewn, that with respect to the particular occasions of the church of England, the publication of these articles had no essect, either in silencing the calumnies of Papists, or keeping such of them out of the church as were inclined, either wholly to temporize, or to meet the church of England half way.

We might then fave ourselves the trouble of entering into any debate, concerning the extent of that authority by which our articles were established, and subscription to them enjoined. I will, however, make no scruple to affirm, that no such authority is vested in the church. Farther than this I shall not enquire, otherwise than as the good bishop leads me the way.

His Lordship observes, "that whatever may " be the fanctions of a law, it does not alter the " nature of things, nor oblige the consciences of "the subjects, unless they come under the same " perfuation." This is particularly true of any fuch law, as infringes upon the privileges to which Christians are intitled under the profession of the Gospel; and this, we say, is the case of all laws enjoining affent and confent to human creeds and confessions, which appear not to those, of whom such affent and confent are required, to be in perfect agreement with the word of God. It is therefore of no fort of consequence, whether fuch creeds and confessions are established by civil authority, or by fynods and convocations of professed theologues. Upon Protestant principles, neither the one nor the other can encroach, fo much as a straw-breadth, upon the rights of private judgment, in matters of faith or doctrine.

His Lordship indeed would seem to say something in vindication of our Princes, for interposing at the Reformation in a point so extremely tender and delicate; infinuating, that they did not pretend to judge in points of faith, or to decide controversies. "The part," says he, "they had in the Reformation was only this,—"being satisfied with the grounds on which it went, they received it themselves, and enacted it for the people; and this, in his Lordship's "judgment, they had as much right to do, as "every private man had to choose for himself, and believe according to his reason and conficience."

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I presume, his Lordship might mean, that our Princes were fatisfied with the grounds of Reformation, by those churchmen whose province it was to examine them. But here, I apprehend, his Lordship, by an ambiguity of expression, hath put the change upon his readers, and perhaps upon himself. The true ground of Reformation was, the necessity of being relieved from the incroachments, impositions, and oppressions of popery. The abolition of these grievances, our Princes (including the legislature) had not only a right, but were in duty bound, to enact for the people. When popery was out of the way, the scriptures became the rule of religion; and to fay that these sacred oracles did not contain a sufficient formulary of faith and doctrine (to let alone forms of worship) without explanations of artificial theology, is degrading them once more to that unworthy state of fubserviency to human rescripts and decrees, from which the Reformers pretended at least to rescue them. Had our Princes therefore purfued the true grounds of Reformation with uniformity, they should have discountenanced the introduction of scholastic doctrines and articles of faith of man's device, in their own doctors, as well as in those of the popish persuasion. They could not be ignorant, that an English convocation had no more right to prescribe to the people directories of faith, distinct from the scriptures, than an Italian council: or that a fincere English Protestant could no more make his Bishop his Proxy in matters

matters of Faith and Conscience, than he could transfer his civil allegiance, which he had sworn to the King or Queen of England, to the Pope of *Rome*.

Both the civil and ecclefiastical authority were on this, as on all other like occasions, under the controul of the word of God. The word of God had given a liberty to the disciples of Jesus, which no earthly power had any right either to take away or abridge. It was indeed the business and the duty, both of the civil and ecclesiastical power, to promote Christian edification among the people, for which the word of God had made sufficient room, without breaking in upon Christian liberty.

It is true, this Christian liberty might be abused by absurd and licentious men, so as to endanger the peace, and subvert the order, of civil fociety. Here the civil magistrate has his right of interposing reserved to him by the Gospel itfelf. A confideration, which, as it fully justifies Christian Princes in their demolition of Popery, fo likewise does it reserve to them an authority to restrain all religious corruptions and extravagances which have a like effect, and break out into overt acts of opposition to the righteous regulations of civil fociety: which however never can be affected, where any man or any body of men demand or attempt no more than to be permitted to believe and worship God, peaceably and firtcerely, in their own way.

The good Bishop would have us believe, as hath been observed, that the system which took place at the Reformation, was only barely enacted by our Princes, who, according to him, left it to the church to judge in points of faith, and to decide controversies. How the fact flood in some periods, I will not ftay to inquire. This I know, that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the orthodox Law was, that " Religion being variable according to the " pleasure of succeeding Princes, that which at one "time is held for orthodox, may at another be "accounted superstitious, &c." [X] A maxim which was exemplified fo often, in the reigns of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, and in fo many instances, where the church, as such, had not the least concern, that it may very well counterbalance the few cases the Bishop may be supposed to have had in his eye, when he ventured this affertion with the public.

But these are points, which we are now no longer permitted to debate with the powers in being. The state and the church are cordially agreed to continue these articles as standards of orthodoxy, and the subscription to them, as an indispensable condition of holding any preferment in the church of England. Still they are points very proper to be debated with an honest man's own heart: and from this fort of self-controversy no honest man is precluded; I had almost said can well be excused. For, if the Christian religion is of divine authority, and our future happiness depends, in any degree, upon having its

[X] Duke's Law of Charitable Uses, p. 131, 132.

documents

documents pure, and unmixed with human commandments and traditions, the man, who is in a capacity to examine into the truth, must be inexcusably rash, should he receive and embrace doctrines unsupported by these sacred oracles, merely because they are established by the powers of this world.

To help us out of the doubts and difficulties which may arise in the course of such an examination, Bishop Burnet's next endeavours are laid out in explaining, 1. The use of the Articles; and, 2. The importance of the Clergy's subscribing to them.

By the *use* of the articles, one would suppose, at first fight, his Lordship meant their *utility* to the church. But, however, without entering farther into this matter than we have already seen, and after a short digression, importing that they are not merely articles of union and peace, he proceeds to tell us, that, "with respect to the laity, they are only articles of church commusion."

But I would defire to know in what inftance our articles ever had any operation this way? What layman is or ever was required either to fubscribe, or folemnly declare his affent to them, as a qualification for communion with the church of England? *Physicians* and *Civilians* indeed subscribe them, to entitle themselves to academical degrees, and the latter sometimes to qualify themselves for ecclesiastical offices. But, suppose any of these men should choose to forego the degree,

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or the office for which he is a candidate, rather than comply with this condition (and some such I have known) would this be a sufficient reason for excluding him from church-communion? or was ever any one excluded upon any such account?

The Bishop indeed says, that the 5th canon, which declares "those to be excommunicated " ipso facto who shall affirm any of these articles es to be erroneous, or fuch as he may not with a "good conscience subscribe to, extends to the "whole body of the people, laity as well as cler-"gy." I apprehend, that a refusal to subscribe the articles in the cases abovementioned, amounts to fomething equivalent to the affirmation cenfured in the canon; not to mention laymen of great name and note, who, both in word and writing, have affirmed as much in plain terms. And yet who ever heard that any of these were prohibited from communicating with the church on this account; or were ever asked a single queflion upon the subject? Either therefore his Lordship must have been mistaken in his interpretation of this canon; or here is a relaxation of discipline in the church, extremely dishonourable to her governours, and highly fcandalous to her members. Be this as it may, this is a matter of fact, which proves to a demonstration, that our thirty-nine Articles, confidered as articles of church-communion, are of no manner of use to the church, or fignificance to the laity. Some of our divines, indeed, have attempted to bring

the laity under this obligation of affenting to article-doctrine, by way of *implication*. Others, however, have frankly exonerated them from any fuch bond, and have left church-communion upon a more righteous and reasonable foundation, by a way of reasoning, which, to me at least, looks like condemning the church for insisting on clerical subscriptions, as well as laical affent, to human doctrines and articles of faith $[\Upsilon]$.

[Y] Dr. Stebbing is among the former fort, who blushes not to fay, "there is the same need of human explications of " fcripture-words, with respect to lay-communion, that there " is with respect to ministerial communion. For the holding "the faith of the Gospel, necessary in both cases, and a gene-" ral belief that the scriptures are the word of God, is no evi-"dence of this, in either." Rational Enquiry, p. 77. No evidence of what? I suppose he means, no evidence of communion with any particular church which espouses these human explications. More shame for the church which requires more and other terms of communion, than Christ himself required. But, if we may believe Bishop Bull, this church is not the church of England: which, according to his Lordship, "does " not require the laity to subscribe the articles, though they are " as much obliged to acknowledge the fundamental articles of "the Christian faith, as the most learned doctors." That is to fay, as much obliged as Christians, and in foro conscientia, to acknowledge those fundamentals (not as they are contained in the thirty-nine articles, for then they would be obliged to fubscribe, or give their public assent to those articles, but) as they lye in the scriptures. Which plainly implies, that the church of England thinks this general acknowledgment sufficient evidence of the communion of her lay-members with her. Dr. Stebbing may wish it were otherwise, and, when he wrote his Rational Enquiry, might hope the laity, at some time, would be bound to affent to these human explications. But, I trust, he will not live to be gratified.

But, however that may be, the subscription of the clergy stands, it seems, upon a different footing, and, as a matter of more confequence, will demand a more particular examination.

The Bishop begins this part of the case with observing, that "the title of the articles bears, "that they were agreed upon in convocation, for "the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and the sta-" blishing consent touching true religion. Where," fays his Lordship, " it is evident that a consent "in opinion is defigned." Namely (if common language is the vehicle of common fense) such a consent, as is absolutely exclusive of all diversities of opinions. Now the case standing thus, and the title of the articles, as well as the canonical form of subscription, remaining the same to this very hour, what possible pretence can there be for construing the act of subscription into a fimple declaration of the fubscribers pofitive opinion, in a certain literal and grammatical fense, different from the literal grammatical sense of another fubicriber? The cafuiltry that allows different men to subscribe the same set of articles, which, as they all agree, were intended to prevent diversities of opinions, not only in different, but even in contrary fenses, must be weak and contemptible, beyond any thing of the kind that ever came from the Jesuits. These pious fathers, in all fuch cases, bring their matters to bear at a pinch, by the help of equivocation and mental referves. We despise and disown this practice as infamous; and yet, it feems, we can condefcend

to arrive at the same fort of ends, by quibbling upon the ambiguous signification of words.

Alas for pity! that, to explain and defend this mean, unmanly expedient, should fall to the share of this illustrious Prelate, contrary to his own generous sentiments; as too plainly appears from the following passage, cited from a piece he was obliged to publish in his own vindication, while the sheets of his Exposition were hardly dry from the press.

"I do not deny but men of the Calvinist per"fuation may think they have cause given them
"to complain of my leaving the articles open to
"those of another persuasion. But those of the
"Arminian side" [who, by the way, were the men
who bore the most tyrannous hate against him]
"must be men of a peculiar tincture, who except
"to it" [his Exposition] "on that account:
"though, without such enlargement of sense,
"their subscribing them does not appear to agree
"fo well with THEIR OPINIONS, and with com"MON INCENUITY [Z]."

But what cause could the good Bishop give the Calvinists to complain, if there really was any good foundation for this enlargement of sense, either in the original design of the articles, or in any subsequent decision of competent authority? The Arminian sense is certainly not the original sense of the articles: nor is it a sense they will naturally receive. It is a sense which was never

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[[]Z] Bishop Burnet's Remarks on the Examination of his Exposition of the Second Article of our Charch, p. 3.

once in the heads of those who compiled them, nor of those who gave them the fanction of that act of parliament, under which they are subscribed to this present hour.

But, it feems, there is a royal declaration at the head of our articles, which makes a confiderable abatement in the strictness of our subscriptions, and leaves room, in express terms, for these different literal grammatical fenses.

It remains then that we examine the validity of this declaration, upon which so great a stress is laid; wherein we shall endeavour to be as accurate, and at the fame time as candid, as possible.

Bishop Burnet tells us, that this declaration was fet forth by King Charles I. " and little doubt " can be made," fays his Lordship, "but it was " prepared by Archbishop Land [A]."

That King Charles I. published a declaration along with the articles in the year 1630, we have the testimony of Dr. Nicholls [B], who however cites a passage from it which is not to be found in the declaration referred to by Bishop Burnet; that is to fay, in the declaration which in his time was, and still is, prefixed to our thirty-nine articles. The consequence is, that King Charles's declaration is dropped long ago, and has no authority to decide any thing in the present queftion.

The declaration which flands before the 39 articles in our present books, is more generally

[[]A] Ibid. p. 3.

[[]B] Dr. Nicholls's Commentary on the Articles, p. 3.

believed to have been first published by King James I. and is the same from which, Dr. Nicholls says, Bishop Burnet drew his inference, "that an "article being conceived in such general words, that it can admit of different literal and grammatical senses, even when the senses are plainly contrary to each other, both sides may subscribe the article with a good conscience, and without any equivocation."

But Dr. Nicholls believed that the force of this declaration did not, nor was defigned to exend beyond his [King James's] time. If this be true, this declaration has no right to the place it occupies. It is of no use or fignificance to us of the present times; nor could any rule of interpretation be either inferred from it, or authorised by it.

Dr. Nicholls, indeed, gives no particular reason for his judgment. There was no occasion. The very face of the declaration shews that he had very good grounds for what he said.

The King set forth this declaration by virtue of his being supreme head of the church. But acts of supremacy, when unconfirmed by the legislature, are merely personal, and die with the particular Prince whose acts they are, unless they are revived by his successors, with the same formalities which were observed at their first appearance.

The declaration before us is destitute of all these formalities, even with respect to the Prince (whoever he was) by whom it was at first set H2 forth.

forth. There is no royal fignature at the head of it; no attestation of his Majesty's command, by any of the great officers of the crown; no mention of the time when, or the place whence, it issued. And that it has never been acknowledged by any succeeding Prince, is evident from the following circumstance, namely, that, during the reign of Queen Anne, the title of it stood invariably as it had done from the first, viz. His Majesty's Declaration, which would not have been the case, had HER Majesty adopted this rescript as her own act, authenticated by the specific ratisfication of her royal predecessors.

On another hand, the language of this declaration is such, as is absolutely inconsistent with the fundamental principles of our present happy constitution.

"We will not endure," fays the declaration, "any varying, or departing, in the least degree, from the doctrine and discipline of the church of England Now established." This might tally well enough with the politics of a James or a Charles; but if our princes and people, in aftertimes, had persisted in not enduring the least departure from the dostrine of the church of England, particularly as it is exhibited in the homily against wilful rebellion, what must have become of us at the Revolution? Where had been our acts of settlement and limitation of the crown to King William, and the present royal family [C]? If

[[]C] See these questions answered, and the point they relate to handled by a masterly writer, in a pamphlet intitled, A plain

the discipline of the church had continued invariable, not only the act tolerating protestant disfenters had never seen the light, but the churches censure, in his Majesty's commission ecclesiastical, had been in full force, not to mention many other wholesome correctives, provided for puritans and beretics by the pious care of Archbishop Laud.

The declaration, indeed, remits the offenders against it for their punishment, to the said commission ecclesiastical, as if it was still in full force. But this only serves to betray its weakness and impotence, and to shew, that it has no more au; thority to licence any one practice, or to prescribe any one duty to British subjects, than an edict of the French King.

Bishop Burnet, in the pamphlet above cited, gives the following account of the occasion of publishing this declaration. "The Arminian" party (as they were called) was then favoured. "To these it was objected, that they departed from the true sense of the articles. But it was answered by them, that, since they took the articles in their literal and grammatical sense, "they did not prevaricate. And to support this, that declaration was set forth."

Here it is not denied, that the *literal* and *gram-matical* fense of the *Arminians* was different from the *true* sense of the articles. But how could men subscribe to articles as *true*, when they could not

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and proper answer to this question, Why does not the Bishop of Clogher relign his preservants? Printed for Shuckburgh, 1753.

deny that they subscribed to them in a sense that was not the true sense of them, without prevarication? If therefore the declaration was not set forth to support prevarication, what was it intended to support?

His Lordship, I suppose, may have given a true, tho' no very honourable account of the occasion of this declaration; but it was an occasion that was given, and might be taken, in the latter part of King James's reign, as likely as in any part of King Charles's. There is indeed no evidence that James ever turned Arminian in principle. This, however, was the party that fluck to him in his meafures and his projects, and which it became neceffary for him, on that account, to humour, and to accommodate, by every expedient that might fet them in a respectable light with the people, without bringing any reflexion upon his own confishency. Whoever considers the quibbling and equivocal terms, in which this instrument is drawn, will, I am persuaded, observe the distress of a man divided between his principles and his interests; that is, of a man exactly in the situation of King James I. in the three last years of his reign.

Charles I. was an avowed Arminian, upon the supposition that all Calvinists were enemies to bis kind of policy, both in church and state. His sather's declaration had not wrought the end proposed by the Arminians, and therefore to make them easy, in the year 1626, he issued a proclamation,

mation, enjoining filence to all parties with respect to the points then in dispute. "The effects of which proclamation, says Rushworth, how equally soever intended, became the stop-"ping of the Puritans mouths, and an unconstrouted liberty to the tongues and pens of the "Arminian party [E]." Which is easily accounted for, when it is remembered, that the restless and factious Laud had the execution of this proclamation in his hands.

This partiality brought on so much oppression and ill-treatment of the party obnoxious to the court, that the House of Commons complained of it in their remonstrance against the Duke of Buckingham, June 1628 [F]; and not long after, namely, January 28th, 1628-9, upon the motion of Sir John Elliot, entered into this remarkable vow.

We the Commons in Parliament affembled, do claim, protest, and avow for truth, the sense of the articles of religion, which were established by parliament in the thirteenth year of our late Queen Elizabeth, which, by the public ast of the church of England, and by the general and current expositions of the writers of our church, have been delivered unto us. And we reject the sense of the Jesuits and Arminians, and all others wherein they differ from us [G].

Whether either the King or the house of commons, in a separate capacity, have a power to in-

[[]E] Hist. Collections, vol. I. p. 412, 413. [F] Rushrvorth, vol. I. p. 621. [G] Ibid. p. 649. H 4 terpret

terpret the articles of religion for the people, will admit of a dispute; but that this vow, or protestation, considered as an act of state, hath greatly the advantage of the declaration in question, in point of authority, will admit of none. It is equivalent at least to any other resolution of the house of commons. It is found among the most authentic records of parliament. And whatever force or operation it had the moment it was published, the same it has to this hour; being never revoked or repealed in any succeeding parliament, nor containing any one particular, which is not in perfect agreement with every part of our present constitution, civil and religingious.

On the other hand, here is a nameless, and for ought that any one knows, a spurious declaration. It is a problem to this day in what reign it was set forth; which is a circumstance hardly possible, if any original record of it were forth-coming, with those solemn attestations necessary to give it the weight and authority of a royal mandate [G]. Not to mention those particulars in it,

[G] It is not easy to suppose but there must be some printed copy of this Declaration still extant, of sufficient antiquity to ascertain, whether it was originally set out by King James I. or King Charles I. And it were to be wished, that if any gentleman hath such ancient copy in his custody, he would savour the public with an account of it. On the other hand, it is next to incredible, that if any such copy had been casily to be found, two such men as Bishop Burnet and Dr. Nicholls should differ so widely in their accounts of it. The former ascribes this Declaration

which are plainly repugnant to the present establishment both in church and state.

It is indeed furprizing, that Bishop Burnet,

ration to Charles, the latter to James. And that Declaration which Dr. Nicholls ascribes to King Charles I. cites the Bishop of Chefter's judgment concerning the wisdom and moderation of the church of England, of which Bishop, or his judgment, there is not the least mention in the Declaration now prefixed to our articles, which Dr. Nicholls, and I think rightly, ascribes to K. The inducement I have to agree with Dr. Nicholls, is as follows: In July 1628, King Charles, in a proclamation, calling in all the copies of Montague's Apello Cæfarem, declares that, "out of his care to maintain the church in the " unity of true religion, and the bond of peace, to prevent un-" necessary disputes, he had lately caused the articles of religion "to be reprinted, as a rule for avoiding diversities of opinions." Rusparoth, vol. I. p. 634. Now it is abfurd to suppose, that the bare reprinting the 30 articles only, would answer any such end, or, indeed, that copies of the articles should be so very scarce, as to require a new edition for the purposes mentioned. Hence I conjecture, that King Charles reprinted his father's Declaration (the fame we now have) along with the articles, as more copies of the articles then extant undoubtedly wanted it. than had it. That this Declaration was published along with these reprinted articles, appears from Sir John Elliot's speech in parliament, the January following, who cites it thus: "It " is faid," (namely in a Declaration he had just mentioned) " if "there be any difference of opinion, concerning the feafonable [perhaps reasonable] "interpretation of the 39 articles, the " bishops and clergy in the convocation have power to dispute "it, and to order which way they please." Rufhworth, vol. I. p. 649. Now this particular is actually to be found in his Majesty's Declaration, as we now have it. You will say, perhaps, " And why might not this originally be King Charles's own " Declaration?" I answer, it might be so: but if it was, it is unaccountable his Majesty should not say, in the passage abovecited, he had caused a Declaration, made and published by himself, for the purposes mentioned in the Proclamation, to be

who well knew from what court-intrigues this declaration took its rife; how grievously it was complained of by the Calvinists, and how effectually it was opposed and disannulled by the abovementioned vow, should lay the least stress upon it. But not more furprizing, than that he should ascribe the pacifying the disputes of those times, to "men's general acquiescence, in being " left to fubscribe the articles according to their " literal and grammatical fense." History gives us little reason to believe, that those disputes were pacified in any degree worth mentioning. And if the disputants went off from their sterceness, it was only because of the tyrannical restraint put upon one side. But of what nature and extent the acquiescence has been in other respects, is sufficiently evident, in almost every controverfial book that has been written in. or fince those days, where the least occasion or colour has been given to the disputant, to reproach the adverse party with the infincerity of his fubscription.

The Declaration standing upon this infirm ground, it would be doing it too much honour to

printed and published along with a new edition of the 39 articles. Whereas, if you suppose, that the Declaration had been published, and prefixed to the articles in his father's reign, there would be no occasion for a particular specification of that rescript, distinct from the articles. It would be reprinted along with the articles of course, and be considered as a part of the book of articles, as I suppose it is by some people, at this very day.

examine

examine the contents of it, and to shew what is really the truth, that if there is in it either consistency, or common sense, it binds men to the avoidance of diversities of opinion, and allows of as little latitude of senses, as the title of the articles itself: unless there may be two, or two hundred different senses of an article, each of which may be the TRUE and USUAL, as well as the LITERAL sense of it.

There was a time indeed, when Bishop Burnet accounted for the laxity of the articles upon a different footing, which, however, he has not ventured to mention in this Introduction. In the fecond volume of his History of the Reformation, p. 169, he informs his readers, "that upon "the progress of the Reformation, the German " writers, particularly Ofiander, Illyricus, and Am-"forfius, grew too peremptory, and not only " condemned the Helvetian churches for differing " from them in the manner of Christ's presence "in the facrament, but were fevere to one ano-"ther for lesser punctilios, and were at this time " exercifing the patience of the great and learned " Melanathon, because he thought, that in things " in their own nature indifferent, they ought to " have complied with the Emperor. This made " those in England resolve on composing these articles " with great temper in many such points."

The good Bishop, I am afraid, says a good deal of this at random, or at least upon plausible conjecture. A few pages before, he is evidently under great uncertainty, who compiled these ar-

ticles. "He had often found it faid, that they "were framed by Cramer and Ridley; which he "thinks more probable, than that they were giv"en out to feveral bithops and divines, to deli"ver their opinions concerning them." But, however, it might be the other way. And, under this uncertainty, who can pretend to fay with what temper they were composed, or by what views or confiderations the composers were influenced? However, that they learned any moderation from these inedifying contests in Germany, or had respect to the sufferings of Melantthon in tempering these articles, is rendered utterly incredible by the following sacts.

- 1. At the time referred to, viz. 1551, Melancthon was employed by Maurice Elector of Saxony, to draw up a confession of faith, to be exhibited at the council of Trent, on the behalf of the Saxon churches. In consequence of which, the principal divines, and presidents of those churches, being assembled at Leipsic, this confession, which was no other than that of Augsburgh somewhat inlarged, was read to them, and subscribed by them, with great unanimity, and with very little opposition [H]. So that this season, with respect to Melansthon's dispute with Illyricus, &c. was a season of great tranquillity, the troubles with which his parience, and that of his brethren, was then exercised, being chiefly from the Papists.
- 2. In the year 1548, the second of King Ed-ward's reign, "Archbishop Cranner was driving

[[]H] Hoffinlag. Hift. Sacrament. vol. ii. p. 373.

on a delign, for the better uniting the Prote-" ftant churches, viz. by having one common " confession and harmony of faith and doctrine, "drawn up out of the pure word of God, which "they might all own and agree in." MelanEthon, among others, was confulted by Cranmer on this occasion; and encouraged by the Archbishop to go on with his defign, advising him, however, " to avoid all ambiguities of expression; saying, "that in the church, it was best to call a spade " a spade, and not to cast ambiguous words be-"fore posterity, as an apple of contention." This advice he inculcates in a fecond letter, propoling, "that nothing might be left under ge-" neral terms, but expressed with all the perspi-"cuity and distinctness imaginable." Some, it feems, thought it might be more conducive to peace, to suffer some difficult and controverted points to pass under dubious expressions, or in the very words of scripture, without any particular decifive fense or explanation imposed upon "This MelanEthon was against, saying, "that for his part, he loved not labyrinths; and "that therefore, all his study was, that whatso-"ever matters he undertook to treat of, they " might appear plain and unfolded. That this "was, indeed, the practice of the council of "Trent, which therefore made fuch crafty de-" crees, that they might defend their errors by " things ambiguously spoken. But that this so-" phiftry ought to be far from the church. That " there

"there is no abfurdity in truth rightly propoundded: and that this goodness and perspicuity of things, is greatly inviting, wheresoever there be good minds [I]."

Undoubtedly Melantihon was highly to be commended for his openness and fincerity. But affuredly the method proposed by him, was not the way to compose differences of opinions, or to bring disagreeing parties to any temper upon difficult and controvertible points.

Mr. Strype thinks it probable, that Cranmer had confulted Melantihon on this very point, and judges that Cranmer was the certain good man, mentioned by Bucer to Peter Martyr, as of opinion, "that ambiguous forms of speech, which "might be taken in a larger acceptation, was the best means of ending the great controversy concerning the real presence, and of restoring peace to the church." Now, whoever had not, Cranmer certainly had a principal hand in framing K. Edward's articles; and now likely it was that he should compose them with any temper, in view either of the sentiments or the situation of Melantihon, the foregoing particulars may serve to shew.

3. At the very time that *Melantihon* wrote these letters to *Cranmer*, he was in the heat of the dispute he had with *Illyricus*, concerning the concessions he thought should be made to the Emperor, in reference to the scheme of pacification

called

^[1] Strype's Memorials of Archbishop Cranner, page 407, 403.

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called the *Interim*. These concessions, however, concerned only some rites and ceremonies, which he thought were void of superstition and idolatry; but which, in the opinion of *Illyricus*, ought to be opposed to the death. But, for matters of dottrine, Melantthon was as stiff and peremptory as *Illyricus* himself. He was the person who managed the conferences on the subject of the *Interim* with the Emperor's Commissioners; and particularly wrote the Censure upon it; and indeed, from the year 1544 to the end of his life, constantly maintained that all matters of faith and doctrine, and particularly upon the sacrament, should be clearly expressed, and without any sophistry or ambiguity whatsoever [K].

4. Bishop Burnet would have done well, to have specified what those points were, upon which these articles were composed with so great temper. Nothing of this appears upon the face of the articles themselves. As the Bishop has stated the case, it would be most natural to look for this temper, where the doctrine of the real presence is set forth. But, in this point, K. Edward's article was so rigid, that the reviewers of our system under Queen Elizabeth thought it proper to mollify it, by leaving out a long passage, where the decision of this matter was thought too peremptory, at least for her Majesty's political purposes. And Hospinian has quoted this very article,

[[]K] Bayle's Dift. Melancthon, Rem. [L], and in the text. See likewife Hospinian, Hist. Sacrament, under the year 1548, and downwards.

to shew, that it was in perfect agreement with MelanEthon's doctrine on the same subject. Nor indeed can it be proved by any circumstance in those articles, that the compilers of them did not clearly and decisively express themselves, upon every subject they meddled with, in the aptest and precisest terms the language of those times afforded.

And thus I take my leave of Bishop Burnet's Introduction; leaving the reader to reflect upon the disagreeable situation, in which a man of this worthy Bishop's learning and disposition must be placed, when it is required of him to maintain, what, in his own private judgment, he is conscious cannot be maintained, without such chicane and subtersuge, as it must be most grievous to an ingenuous mind to employ. I shall now proceed to shew the ill effects of such mistaken endeavours in some still more remarkable instances.

CHAP. V.

A View of the embarassed and sluttuating Casuistry of those Divines, who do not approve of, or differ from, Bishop Burner's Method of justifying Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

B Ishop Burnet was never a large and part of the clergy who style themselves or-Ishop Burnet was never a favourite with that thodox. He was apt to speak his mind freely concerning fuch men and fuch things in the church, as he thought wanted reformation. His Pastoral Care, wherein he censured the manners, as well as the spirit and qualifications of his contemporary churchmen with little reserve, and laid down rules which very few were inclined to follow, created a fort of offence which was never to be forgiven. And fuch was their refentment, that they disdained to be obliged to him, even for his friendly endeavours to fave their credit, by pointing out the only method of subscribing the articles, which would not expose a large majority of them to the reproach of prevarication.

Accordingly, some short time after his Lord-ship's Exposition was made public, the Lower House of Convocation fell upon it with the utmost fury, as a performance full of scandal to the church, and danger to religion. But, being happily restrained from proceeding to extremities in their corporate capacity, the charge was delivered

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over to a fingle hand, who, as they had good reason to believe, would make the most of it with the public, and who, in the name of his brethren, pursued the Exposition with sufficient spleen, in a book intituled, A Presatory Discourse to an Examination of a late Book, intituled, An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, by Gilbert Bishop of Sarum, 1702.

This writer's defign being to shew, that the thirty-nine Articles were framed to prevent diversities of opinions, and, at the same time, to prove the wisdom and righteousness of such a measure, it became necessary for him to appeal to the matter of fact, which he very undauntedly does in the following words.

"To the honour of the compilers of our Ar"ticles, it must be acknowledged, that for the
"fevenscore years last past [i.e. from 1562 to
"1702] fince the publication of them, they have
"prevented diversity of opinion in the church,
"to that degree, that LITTLE or no dispute
"hath hitherto been, about the different senses
"the words may, in common and unforced con"ftruction, be made to bear [A]."

Here we have a short, but at the same time a full and effectual defence of those who compiled the Articles, and of the church for enjoining subfcription to them, as well as a proof of the fruitless and superfluous pains taken by Bishop Burnet to reconcile men of different principles and opi-

nions, by a peaceable and confcientious acquiefcence in literal and grammatical fenses. It is, indeed, the only way in which such systems, considered as tests of faith and doctrine, can be defended. For, if diversities of opinions and disputes have not in fact been prevented by them, it is much to be suspected, that such forms may have been accessary to some disputes and divisions, which did not exist before such forms were established [B].

When a candid and charitable reader, who has made any inquiry into the true state of the case, meets with affertions, which, like this, bids desiance to all history, coming from the pen of a grave writer, who does not appear to have been out of his senses, he would be willing to understand him with any favourable allowance, rather than suspect him of advancing a palpable untruth, for the sake of serving a present turn.

[B] "It is the misery of Christendom that we should build "too much upon articles of doctrine, upon opinions, tenets, " and fystems; and they must be subscribed to, sworn to, and " believed; which causeth almost all the division of the "Christian world. We are so earnest in afferting the ortho-"doxy of our own espoused doctrines, that we most lamenta-"bly fall out, break peace, lose charity, and wretchedly neglect " the weightier matters, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the " practice of fincere truth and righteoufness." Strype's Sermon at Hackney, September 21, 1707, p. 12. Besides what this venerable man had feen with his own eyes, his particular studies had opened to him a melancholy view of the woful effects of these systematical tests, from the very time of their commencement in Protestant churches, which he, as a true friend to his own church, has communicated for her use, but hitherto to very little purpole.

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And therefore, when my astonishment (occafioned by the sudden recollection of many things I had read in the authors referred to in the margin [C]) had a little subsided, I began to cast about how this writer's affertion might be made consistent with the real truth of the case?

The first expedient for this purpose which occurred to me, was, that this avoidance of diversity must be understood of a simple silence and acquiescence on either side, in some common and unforced construction, which, as he has expressed it, the words of the article might be made to bear. But, besides that I could see no difference between this plan of peace and Bishop Burnet's literal and grammatical senses, I sound it afterwards to be this author's aim to prove, that none of the articles had, or was ever understood to have, a double meaning. Nor indeed, admitting such double meaning, could the articles be faid to have prevented diversity of opinions, in any degree.

After many fruitless trials, methought I discerned the healing quibble lurking under the words in the church: the author, I suppose, being of opinion, that whoever disputed the single orthodox sense of an article, was really not in, but

out

[[]C] Rogers's Preface to his Exposition.—Fuller's Church-History.—Heylin's Quinquarticular History.—Hickman's Antwer.—Prynne's Anti-arminianism.—Dr. Ward's Letters Archbishop Usher, apud Parr's Life.—Bishop Barlow's Remains.—Edwards's Veritas Redux.—Bishop Davenant's Pieces.—Montague's and Carlton's Controversy, and an hungdred more.

out of the church, in consequence of the ipso-fasto-excommunication mentioned in the 5th of our canons; which would leave none in the church, but such as were all of a mind.

And indeed I very much incline still to adhere to this solution of the difficulty, the rather as there is no other way of securing the veracity of another orthodox brother, and respectable contemporary of our own, the late reverend Mr. fobn White, B. D. who hath laboured with great zeal and earnestness in the same occupation of defending subscriptions; and to this sevenscore years of peace and rest, hath, without the least hesitation, added forty-seven more.

The cafe with Mr. White was this: Mr. Samuel Chandler, at the end of his pamphlet entituled, The Case of Subscription, &c. calmly and impartially reviewed, published 1748, had printed the Speech of the famous Mr. Turretine, spoken to the Lesser Council of Geneva, June 29, 1706, touching subscription to the Formula Consensus: the effect of which oration was, that all subscriptions to human formularies were thenceforward abolished by public authority; a promise only being required instead thereof, that the person to be admitted to the function either of minister or professor, would teach nothing, either in the church or academy, contrary to the faid Confenifus, or the Confession of the Gallican church, for the fake of peace [D]. This precedent Mr. Chandler

[[]D] In a pamphlet published 1719, intituled A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Tong, &c. occasioned by the late differences among I 2

failed not to recommend, as a very proper one for the church of *England* to follow; which provoked the abovementioned Mr. White to make the following reply.

"Because they [the Divines of Geneva] or most of them, had swerved from the doctrines

the Diffenters, an account is given of this abolition of fubscriptions, different from this of Mr. Chandler, but not less honourable to the magistrates of Geneva, to the following effect. " In the year 1706, a Divine of Neufchâtel, Mr. Facques " Vial de Beaumont, a very worthy Minister of the Gospel, be-"ing called to Geneva to exercise his ministry there, was re-"quired to subscribe that numerous set of articles [the Con-" fenfus]. Mr. Beaumont, instead of subscribing as required, " wrote to the following purpose: These I assent to, as far as " they agree with the holy scriptures, which I believe to be the " word of God. I will always teach what God shall teach me " from thence; and will never, knowingly, maintain or teach " any thing contrary thereunto." After some debates and apof peals from one affembly to another, a form was agreed upon, " much to the same purpose as that of Mr. Beaumont. To which " was added indeed an exhortation not to teach any thing contrary to the decisions of the Synod of Dort, the forty Articles of the French churches, or the Catechism of Geneva, for the " fake of keeping peace and union in the church." pag. 77. The material difference between this account of the abolition of subscriptions at Geneva, and that of Mr. Chandler, is, that what the latter fays was a promise required of the candidate, the other makes to be only to be an exhortation from the ministry. A difference indeed far from inconfiderable: and, as I remember, Mr. Chandler was reminded, in a printed letter addressed to him about that time, "That, while this promife was infifted "upon, he [Chandler] had no great room to boast as he does " of the moderation of the church of Geneva, such a promise, " in foro conscientiae, amounting to little less than a formal sub-" scription." This objection does not affect a simple exhortation, against which a teacher, who should think differently which I

" which they were called to affent and fubscribe

- "to, and were therefore uneafy till their fub-
- " fcriptions were removed, are we to be called
- " upon to remove ours? we, who have no fuch
- "trouble and division among st us, upon the points to be assented and subscribed to [E]?"

This is an home push indeed, and wants only the single circumstance of TRUTH, to intitle it to the honour of deciding all future controversy concerning subscriptions, in the church of England.

But in good earnest; could Mr. White be ignorant of the trouble which Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston met with, for their deviations from the sense of the eighth, and some others of our articles? Had he never heard of the controversy concerning Arian subscription? Could he, could

from his exhorters, would always have an unanswerable remonstrance from Ass iv. 19. With respect to the matter of sact, its disticult, if not impossible, to decide whether Mr. Chandler or Mr. Tong's correspondent were better informed. The latter, indeed, acknowledges, he had not received an exact account how the matter was transacted at Geneva. Mr. Chandler, as coming so long after him, should know more of the matter; and that throws the probability on the side of the promise. But then can any one imagine, that Mr. Beaumont, who undertakes to teach what God should teach him from the scriptures, would bind himself by a promise, which might very possibly oblige him to suppress what God should teach him? Perhaps there may be a mystery in this, which our Dissenters choose not to reveal. All religious societies have their amosperia.

[E] A Letter to the reverend Mr. Samuel Chandler, occafioned by his late Discourse intituled, The Case of Subscription, &c. pag. 71.

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any man, who has read a twentieth part of our controversies since the commencement of the current century, be ignorant, that this reproach of going against their subscriptions, has been cast in the teeth of our most eminent writers, and that too in the most opprobrious terms [F]? And is there, all this while, no trouble or division among us, upon the points to be affented and subscribed to?

Why, no. The words we and us, in the above-cited passage, relate to no body but the orthodox, who have all along been unanimous in

[F] "The unchristian art of confessing the faith without "believing it. An art which, I am forry to fay, has of late " been brought to its utmost perfection." Archdeacon Brydges's Charge, 1721, p. 9. See likewise a book intituled Ophiomaches, vol. ii. from p. 202, to 300, where great freedoms of this kind are taken with some of the greatest names then in our country. The late controversies occasioned by Dr Middleton's Free Inquiry; Free and candid Disquisitions; Essay on Spirit, &c. furnish more instances still. Nor hath Mr. White himself withheld his mite from this collection. "It is commonly supposed." fays he, "that the Creeds and Articles of the church of Eng-" land are subscribed only by the clergy of the church of Eng-" land, But be it known to all the people of Great Britain, "that there is not in the kingdom one diffenting minister, who " has complied with the terms of the Toleration, but has fo-" lemnly subscribed the Articles, bating three or four, --- and " has also subscribed the three Creeds (yes, the Athanasian, as "well as the other) that they ought thoroughly to be received and " believel, &c." Good-natured foul! But, happily for the Diffenters, the civil powers (and not the church) being appointed to take such subscription, are not so immediately interested in the glory of Orthodoxy. White's Appendix to his third Letter, p. Sc.

their opinions. While they who have occasioned these troubles and divisions, and raised these doubts concerning points of doctrine in the Articles, are not allowed to belong to this select number, although they continue to minister in the church of England, and some of them, perhaps, to minister in the highest stations in it.

That this is Mr. White's meaning (whatever that of the Convocation-man might be) is pretty clear from the tenor of his expostulation with his diffenting adversary. "Did the church," says he, " persecute its own members, at any time? Were " you or your fathers ever perfecuted, while they " continued in the church? And were they driven " out of it by those persecutions?" The pertinence of which questions plainly consists in this, that, according to Mr. White's notions, all these old persecuted Puritans ceased to be members of the church, the moment they offended against canonical conformity, in virtue of the ipso facto excommunication, whatever external marks of church-membership they might otherwise bear about them.

But the misfortune of this fystem of Mr. White's is, that it would contract the conditions of church-membership into a less compass than is convenient for the orthodox themselves, who have by no means been uniform in their opinions concerning the sense of particular Articles

"There is not any fort of agreement." There is not any fort of agreement. There is a fensible writer, "in the notions of theter is a remarkable writer, "in the notions of the Trinity, Dr. 20 and and a remarkable writer."

"and Dr. Bennet; and yet both of them plead

" very strenuously for subscription to the Articles in the fenfe of the church; and both contend, "that their respective notions are exactly what "the church, and what the holy fcriptures teach. 66 Both of them have the reputation of being or-66 thodox. Both of them are afraid of collusion. 46 difingenuity, fraud, and evalive arts in those " who differ from each of them. - And yet, if "the meaning of the Articles be in such a sense " one meaning, that they can be subscribed honestly "only by fuch as agree in that one meaning, all;

" or all but one, of those great men, Bishop Bull, " Doctors Wallis, South, Sherlock, Bennet, &c.

"must have been guilty of these enormous

" crimes $\lceil G \rceil$."

It behoved these Doctors then to contrive plans of fubscription to the Articles upon a larger bottom, such at least as might serve their own turn. But, as they were all irreproachably orthodox, it was an indispensable part of their scheme to cramp and confine the heretics, in the same degree that they made room for themselves. A circumstance which reduced them to fuch quibbles and diffinctions, as have rendered their meaning extremely obscure and disputable.

Let us take two or three of the most staunch and orthodox among them in their order, beginning with that celebrated champion of our church, the learned Dr. William Nicholls.

[[]G] Case of Subscription to the thirty nine Articles consifidered, occasioned by Dr. Waterland's Case of Arian Subscription, p. 4. · Thefe

"These Articles," fays the Doctor, "could on not be defigned to oblige all perfons who are "to fubscribe them, that they should agree in " every point of theology which is controverted

" among divines [H]."

Probably not; because many points of theology have been controverted among divines, which are not mentioned in the thirty-nine Articles. But, with respect to every point of theology proposed in these Articles, I apprehend such agreement was designed.

"No," fays the Doctor, "because the thing "is impossible." But what then? The impossibility of the thing is no proof that the compilers of our Articles did not design it. How did the Doctor know, but these fathers of our church might think the thing very possible? Or how shall we know what they did or did not design, but by their words and declarations? The compilers themselves tell us, that the design of the Articles was to avoid diversities of opinions. Dr. Nicholls comes 150 years after them, and affirms this could not be the design of them. of them is the credible evidence?

The Doctor is of opinion, "that some of these " Articles were purposely drawn up in general " terms, [i. c. in terms admitting feveral fenses] " because they who compiled and first subscribed

" them, were of different opinions."

"Some of these Articles."—We desire to know which of them? and how the Articles which were

[[]H] Commentary on the Articles, &c. p. 3. col. 1. " purpofely

purposely so drawn up, may be distinguished from those which were not? For the different fentiments of those who compiled and first subfcribed these Articles, if it prove any thing relative to the defign of the Articles, will prove, that no less than the whole set were purposely drawn up in general terms, at least if the Doctor has given us a true account of the men, to whose sentiments they were to be accommodated. " Some of "them," fays he, "learned their divinity from " the Fathers, without any relation had to the doctrines of modern Divines. Some went up-" on the foot of Luther's and MelanEthon's doc-" trine. Others were perfectly wedded to Cal-" vin's divinity, and perhaps not a little to his " form of church-discipline. Some were for a " real, though undeterminable presence in the Eu-"charift; whilft others thought Christ's body " was only there by figure and reprefentation." After which he goes on to ask, "Can any one et fay that these several persons held no diversity " of opinions?"

Rather, can any one fay, that all these several persons were agreed upon any one point, delivered in any one Article of the whole thirty-nine? And if none of them would agree to the passing such Article or Articles, as excluded his or their own opinion; the probability is, that all and every of the Articles were purposely drawn up in general terms, as nothing less would make room for the heterogeneous opinions of such a number of men, educated in so many different systems.

-But

But mark how plain a tale will destroy this specious hypothesis. The articles were compiled by Cranmer, and at the most with the help of one or two of his particular friends. And these, out of all doubt; were all of a mind. They were then laid before the council, and by them approved, and ratified by the King. They were, finally, introduced into the convocation, not to receive any synodical authority there, but to be agreed to by subscription. And let men's private opinions be what they would, when they were given to understand, that court-favour, and church-preferment would depend upon their compliance, we may judge in part, from what happens in our own times, that the diffenters would not be the majority: which yet might possibly be the case, as it by no means appears, that the first subscribers were all, or most of them, members of the convocation [I]. Dr. Nicholls suffered himself to be imposed upon in this matter, by the fabulous account of Peter Heylin, a man lost to all fense of truth and modesty, whenever the interests or claims of the church came in question.

Well, but if the compilers made the matter so easy to men of all sorts of opinions, subscription would not give the church sufficient hold of those who are put to this test. This the doctor fore-saw, and therefore puts in his cautions in time.

^[1] See the proofs of this collected together, in An historical and critical Essay on the thirty-nine Articles, &c. printed for Francklyn, 1724. Introduction, p. 2, 3.

"Men must not indulge fanciful glosses, or wire-draw the words in the articles to unreason"able senses."

But if the case really is what the doctor hath represented it to be, I do not see how this is to be helped. Would not every Calvinist among the first subscribers, think the sense of the Arminian, or (as they then were called) the Freewiller, an unreasonable sense? And if the article expressed the fense of the Calvinist naturally and plainly, would he not call the different fense put upon it by the other party, a fanciful gloss? The compilers, it is plain, have left us no criterion in this matter. And if the articles were left fo open and indeterminate, as the doctor's scheme supposes, no man can pretend to fay what fenses are unreafonable; unless the doctor would have faid, that all fenses but his own, are unreasonable, and then there is an end of all latitude.

"He thinks the force of King James's Declaration, did not, nor was defigned to extend farther than his own time — and that, perhaps,
Bishop Burnet might extend the rule of subferibing (in any literal grammatical sense) he
drew from it, too far."

Bishop Burnet might be to blame, for drawing a rule of acting, from a rescript of no authority; but undoubtedly, if the articles were purposely drawn up in general terms, that is, so as to admit of a conscientious subscription by the men of all those different opinions, the doctor has mentioned, the rule itself cannot possibly be extend-

ed too far. Observe, however, that Bishop Burnet knew of no authority, or foundation for this rule, but the King's Declaration. This our doctor, indeed, hath reprobated; but, however, we have no reason to complain of his abridging our liberty, as will appear by the following instance.

Bishop Burnet had observed, that according to the form of subscription prescribed in the 36th canon, namely, "I subscribe willingly, and ex "animo, the party subscribing declared his own opinion, or, in Dr. Bennet's language, declared "that he believed the articles to be true in some fense."

"But," fays Dr. Nicholls, "tho' I am not al"together different from his Lordship's judg"ment in this matter, I am not so well fatisfied
"with the reason he grounds it upon. For ex
"animo in that place, does not signifie, according
"to my opinion, or, as I firmly believe, but readily
"and heartily. For this form of subscription is
"not a form of subscription to the thirty-nine
"articles, but to the three articles contained in
"that canon, which are not so much articles of
"opinion, as of consent, and the subscription to
"them declares, not what the subscriber believes,
"but what he consents to."

Nicely distinguished indeed! so, according to this casuistry, a man may, by his subscription, consent to what he does not believe. For this being the only form of subscribing the articles now in wie, and the verbal declaration, professing no

more than affent and confent to the articles, we are no more bound, by our subscription, to believe the thirty nine articles to be true, than if they were so many propositions taken out of the Koran.

And yet, immediately afterwards, Dr. Nicholls fays, "The subscriber ought to affent to each ar"ticle, taken in the literal and grammatical "fense."—But why ought he? or what business has he with the fense of the articles, who may give such an affent and consent to them as does not imply belief?

But it is quite necessary to take these gentlemen, every one in his own way. Bishop Burnet had faid, that men might conscientiously subscribe to any literal or grammatical sense, the words of an article would fairly bear; but he had not said, what was meant by literal and grammatical senses?

This fell to the share of Dr. Nicholls, by whom we are informed from Grotius, "that the gram-"matical sense is twofold, sensus grammaticalis ab origine, and sensus grammaticalis popularis, the latter of which only, is to be allowed in the interpretation of any law, or writing; for, continues the doctor, to take words in their first original signification, which, by length of time they have much varied from; may carry them off to a sense very different from what they were first intended; therefore the expres-

" fions must be taken in the plain common sense

" they

"they are generally used in, or were used in, at " the time of making fuch law or writing."

The former part of this observation we readily allow. If the framers of a law, or a writing, make use of words in a sense, different from the original grammatical fense of such words, it must be presumed, that it is because such words have deviated, in popular use, to a sense different from the original fense. In which case, the fense of the framers, or composers of such law or writing, is to be adopted. But it will not therefore follow, that such words or expressions are to be taken in the sense they ARE NOW generally used in. Because the popular grammatical sense, in which fuch words ARE GENERALLY USED now, may not be the fame popular grammatical fense, in which those words were used, when the law or writing was made. In all fuch cases, we must recur to the sense of the author or the lawgiver; or else the law or the writing cannot be understood; and the modern sense of words may, in some cases, carry us as far beside the intention of the author or the lawgiver, as the original sense would do.

For example; whatever the original grammatical fense of the word consent might have been, it is certain that the compilers of our articles meant by it, a confent of belief, or a perfect agreement of opinions: and when subscribers were afterwards required to give their confent to the articles, there

can be no doubt but fuch a consent was intended, as is specified in the title, namely, such a consent as was necessary for the avoiding diversities of opinions.

Dr. Nicholls, on the other hand, finds, that consent may now fignifie a consent of acquiescence only, with which opinions and belief have little to do; and for this fense he accordingly contends. But with the worst luck in the world; for the thing, with respect to which this consent is to be established, happens to be TRUE RELIGION; and we may be pretty consident that the compilers never intended that a consent in true religion, which did not imply belief and conviction, should be accepted as sufficient to answer the end of subscribing the articles.

By the doctor's diffinguishing grammatical fenses into original and popular, and forming his rule of interpretation upon that distinction, one would think, that the grammatical sense of words, in any law or writing, could be but one. And yet he agrees with the Bishop of Sarum, "that seve-"ral grammatical senses may sometimes very fairly be put upon expressions in the articles." But if you may put both the original and popular sense upon the same words, of what use is the distinction? or what sense is there in his rule of interpretation?

If, indeed, as the doctor supposes, the compilers purposely drew up some of the articles in general terms, they undoubtedly left room to put several grammatical senses upon the same words;

but

but then, how shall we know, which of these is the popular grammatical fense, in which only the law (or, in this case, the article) is to be interpreted?

To folve this difficulty, the learned Doctor informs us, that " a Law is to be interpreted ac-" cording to the mind of the legislator; fo that, " if the compilers of the Articles have expressed "themselves obscurely in any place, that is to "be explained, by what we find to have been "their avowed opinion, or by some other place " of their writings, or authentic books, where "they have expressed themselves clearly."

But here it is evidently supposed, that the obfcurity in the article does not arise from the general terms in which it is purpofely worded, but from some accidental inaccuracy of the compilers, whose avowed opinions, in their authentic books, are likewife supposed to be uniform, and confiftent with each other. Otherwise, nothing can be more perplexing to the party who wants to have the difficulty cleared up, than the expedient here recommended.

For example: According to the Doctor, some of the Articles are drawn up in general terms, on purpose to receive the different senses which the compilers, who were of different opinions, might think fit respectively to put upon them. Hence arises an obscurity of expression, which the fubscriber to such Articles wants to have cleared up. He confults the authentic books of a Lu-

theran.

theran compiler, and there he finds the obscurity cleared up, according to the system that compiler had espoused. But the Calvinist compiler hath likewise written authentic books, of equal authority with those of the Lutheran, and he unfolds the mystery in a sense just contrary to that given by the Lutheran. What shall the scrupulous and distracted subscriber do in such a case? or what expedient of elucidation shall he fall upon next?

But indeed what the good Doctor means, is only this, that, if you will allow him to point out the avowed opinions of the compilers, and to direct you to the authentic books you are to confult, he will lead you out of all obscurity, to a clear, consistent sense of an article, even though it should be drawn up in terms sufficiently general, to admit of an hundred different grammatical senses.

This is plain from the instance he brings to illustrate his general doctrine above recited, which is too curious to be passed by. It is taken from the twenty-third Article, which says, That we ought to judge those lawfully called and sent, which be called and chosen to this work [of the ministry] by men who have public authority given them in the congregation, to call and send ministers.

The plain, and, if you will, the grammatical meaning of which words is, that there is a public authority in every Christian church, to appoint the particular persons who are to minister in that church, exclusive of all others; and that they, and they only, who are so appointed, are lawfully called and sent.

And

And yet, fays Dr. Nicholls, "There can be no doubt made, but that by public authority the compilers meant the authority of Bishops."

But, if no doubt can be made of this, what shall we say of those compilers who perhaps, and of those first subscribers who certainly, were wedded to Cabrin's form of church-discipline? "Can" any one say that they held no opinion diverse from this interpretation? or can any one think that they would agree to the passing this Article, but that they thought it was conceived in such general terms, that they might subscribe it with a good conscience, and without equivocation?"

These are Dr. Nicholls's own questions, and any one has just as much right to ask them as he had.

Let us ask another question. Have any of the Compilers interpreted this Article as Dr. Nicholls has done? No. Cranmer, and his fellowcompilers of the Articles, (be they more or fewer) are well known to have held a friendly correfpondence with the great founders and fupporters of other Protestant churches abroad; who had the misfortune (if it is one) to think there might be a lawful call to the ministry, without a Prelacy. It is even notorious, that the opinion of these foreign Divines was asked by our English Reformers, concerning the methods they should take in settling both matters of doctrine and discipline in their own church. And can it be supposed that Cranmer meant to say, K 3 rhat

that the ministers in these foreign churches had no lawful calling?

Dr. Nicholls himself well knew, they neither said it, nor meant it. And therefore, instead of referring us to their avowed opinions, or their authentic books, as his position required he should do, he appeals to a matter of fact, namely, "that neither by the laws of the church, or by the laws of the realm, any public authority is "granted to any other than Bishops, to call or send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." As if the compilers considered only what was lawful in this respect by the civil constitution and buman laws of England; or as if the Lord had no vineyard but in Britain.

But indeed, if we go back to the times of the compilers, the fact itself is not true. For, even fo late as the 13th of Eliz. " every person under " the degree of a bishop, which did or should pre-" tend to be a priest or minister of God's holy word and facraments, by reason of any other " form of institution, consecration, or ordering, than "the form fet forth by Parliament, in the time " of the late King of most worthy memory, King " Edward VI. or [by any other form, than the " form I now used in the reign of our most gra-"cious fovereign Lady,-" if he took care, before the Christmas next ensuing the passing this Act, to qualify himfelf by subscription, &c. as is therein directed, was deemed, by the ecclefiaftical as well as the civil laws of the realm, to be fufficiently

ciently called and fent, to enjoy a benefice, and exercise the function of a minister of God's word and facraments, in the church of England itself. And there is no doubt but that hundreds, both in King Edward's and in Queen Elizabeth's reign, ministered in the church of England as legal Paftors, who had no episcopal ordination; which would never have been suffered, if the doctrine either of the church or state was what Dr. Nicholls's interpretation of this Article supposes it to have been.

If indeed you take the fact as Dr. Nicholls has flated it, and confider the grounds and principles upon which it stands, it might perhaps turn out, that the Article cannot be conscientiously subfcribed by any one, but a downright Eraftian; which however I would leave to the determination of the judicious reader, after he has duly and ferioufly weighed the following honest remark of Bishop Burnet upon this twenty-third Article.

"They who drew this Article," fays his Lordship, " had the state of the several churches be-" fore their eyes that had been differently reform-"ed; and although they had been less forced to "go out of the beaten path than any other, yet "they knew that all things among themselves had " not gone according to those rules, that ought "to be facred in regular times." And fo, wanting grains of allowance themselves, it was their business and their wisdom to give them to others.

K 4

Turn we now to another church-champion of casuistical memory, the samous Dr. Bennet, whose doublings and refinements upon the Articles are so various and intricate, that it would be an endless task to follow him through them all. A few of them may serve for a sample of the spirit which possesses those, who undertake to defend human establishments at all adventures.

It appears in Dr. Bennet's Directions for studying the thirty-nine Articles, &c. published in 1714, that the said Doctor was perfectly acquainted with the sense of the church upon them all: which he accordingly opens to his young student, sometimes contrary to the most obvious and natural import of the words. In one place, where he gives an interpretation of this sort, he adds, "This was infallibly the meaning of the compilers of our Articles, and they must be "understood in this sense [A]."

Upon the third Article he fays, "The church excludes that fense of the word Hell, which fays that by Hell is meant The Grave;" contrary to Bishop Burnet, Dr. Nicholls, Dr. Clarke, and many more.

Upon the ninth he fays, "The church does not "mean, that original fin deserves God's wrath and damnation in infants which die before the rational faculties exert themselves;" and he says, "that they who believe and subscribe the "Article in this sense, believe and subscribe more than the church teaches or requires."

^[4] Page 62. upon the fixth Article.

Nota bene; The Article fays in express words, "Original (the title adds, or birth) sin, deserveth "God's wrath and damnation, in every person born into the world."

Upon the eleventh Article he observes, "that "our church's intention and doctrine about Justification by Faith, are abundantly manifest, "though they are unhappily worded." Which he explains by telling us, "that the church extra pressed the real truth in St. Paul's own phrase, but in a sense somewhat different from what he [the Apostle] did most certainly intend "thereby."

Qu. How far may a man fafely subscribe this Article, as being agreeable to the word of God?

Upon the thirteenth Article, he fays, "That though the church makes use of the softening comparative words yea rather, and we doubt not but, yet, the Latin word for rather being immo, the church directly affirms, that works done before the grace of Christ have the nature of sin."

The Doctor inquires, in another work, to what edition of the Articles we are obliged to subscribe, by the act of the 13 Eliz. chap. 12 [B]? The Doctor determines for the new English translation, to which Queen Elizabeth's ratification is annexed, and which, out of all dispute, has the fostening comparative words. We are not obliged therefore, by the statute above-mentioned, to

[[]B] Essay on the the thirty-nine Articles, chap. xxx.

take any notice of the word immo, although it carries along with it the church's direct affirmation.—But, to accumulate no more inflances,

Upon the feventeenth Article, he fays, "He "is so clear that the church condemns the notion of absolute predestination in her Liturgy, that, if that was his notion, he could not subscribe to the use of the Liturgy. And with this the Article must be consistent." He should have said, "must be made consistent;" for which edifying purpose, the Doctor hath taken a great deal of fruitless pains, to shew that the Article is in persect agreement with Arminius upon the same subject.

From these particulars it appears, that, in the year 1714, Dr. Bennet was intimately acquainted with the sense of the church, upon the obscurest and most ambiguous of the thirty-nine Articles, and accordingly communicated his discoveries with great freedom, and sometimes so, that the literal import of the words of the Article was by no means favourable to his construction. And where was the use or the pertinence of all his labour, if his young student was not given to understand by it, that he must subscribe the Articles in these very senses, exclusive of all others?

And yet, the very next year, viz. 1715, the very fame Dr. Bennet, in the 35th chapter of his Essay on the thirty-nine Articles, in answer to Priestcraft in Persection, undertaking to enquire

(by what temptation infatuated does not appear) what liberty the church allows to the subscribers of. the Articles? answers, that "The church does not " restrain us to the belief of any one Article or " Proposition, in any particular sense, farther than " we are confined by the words themselves." As much as to fay, that, where the words do not confine us, the church has no particular fense of her own. Contrary to his repeated interpretations in his Directions, where he over and over exhibits the church's fense, against the confinement of the words themselves; and contrary to his Majesty's Declaration: for, should the Doctor have been asked, in what sense men are allowed to subscribe? must he not, to preserve his selfconfistency, have answered, " in any sense of our " own, which we believe to be true, and which "the construction of the words will admit of?"

When an Article or Proposition," says the Doctor, "is fairly capable of two different "fenses, I would fain know who has power to "determine which is the church's sense?"

When the Doctor wrote his Directions, &c. he thought he himself had this power; upon the supposition, I imagine, that the church had lest no article or proposition capable of two different senses. If indeed such articles or propositions are lest ambiguous, and, particularly, if (according to Dr. Nicholls) they are so lest of set purpose, I do not know who has any power to determine that the church, in such articles or propositions, had any sense at all.

Be it observed by the way, that Dr. Bennet perfectly ridicules Dr. Nicholls's expedient of confulting the writings of the compilers of the Articles, for the purpose of clearing up obscurities in them. "For," says he, "did they write [their books] by authority? or were all that lived in their time of the same opinion? Might not the Convocation themselves differ as much as the words [of the Articles] are capable of admitting?"

In the 33d chapter of the same Essay, the Doctor undertaking to prove, (and meaning to prove no more than) that they who subscribe the Articles, are obliged to believe them true in some sense; he hath brought arguments, which prove (if they prove any thing) that such subscribers are obliged to believe them not only true, but true in one and the same sense, exclusive of all others; or which prove, that no proposition in the Articles has more than one sense. And thus Dr. Bennet is not only against Dr. Nicholls, as to the point of a consent of acquiescence, but against himself in the tenor of his whole 35th chapter.

- 1. He argues from the title of the Articles, "which," he observes, "shews them to be designed to prevent diversities of opinions. But if two or two hundred men subscribe the same proposition in different senses, the design of the Articles is absolutely defeated.
- 2. He argues from the words of a canon made in the Convocation of 1571, viz. Ita tamen, ut prius

prius subscribant Articulis Christianæ Religionis, publice in Synodo approbatis, sidemque dent, se velle tueri et desendere DOCTRINAM EAM quæ in illis continetur, ut consentientissimam veritati verei divini.

Now, if the composers of this canon, by doarinam eam, meant more than one doctrine upon one fubiect, they expressed themselves very ill, both as to grammar and fense. If the wording of any proposition admit of two or more doctrines or senses different from each other, as Dr. Bennet allows to be fairly possible; and more especially if (as Bishop Burnet contends) those doctrines may be literally and grammatically contrary to each other; how could they both or all be defended as most agreeable to the divine word? The church declares, she herself may not, and therefore certainly would not fuffer her fons, to interpret scripture in a manner repugnant to itself. [Art. xx.] And what are subscriptions in different fenses, upon the principles of this canon, more or less than this?

3. The Doctor argues from a judgment at Common Law, reported by Lord Chief Justice Coke, the substance of which is, "that if any "subscription is allowed which admits diversity of opinions, (to avoid which was the scope of the statute 13 Eliz.) this Act touching subscriptions would be rendered of no effect."—The consequence is plain. Two subscribers to the same proposition in two different senses, are

of divers opinions. Admit this subscription to pass, and you render the Act of none effect.

In one word, whatever argument in this chapter does not prove that the Articles, and every proposition in them, are to be believed by every subscriber to be true in one and the fame uniform, invariable sense, does not prove that the subscriber is obliged to believe them to be true in any sense.

The fum then of Dr. Bennet's atchievements upon the thirty-nine Articles, is this.

He hath proved, that the church of England has a particular fense of her own upon every one of these Articles; which sense, according to the Doctor, is sometimes contrary to the natural import of the words.

He hath proved, that the church requires subfcribers to these Articles to believe them all, and every proposition in them, to be true in *one* particular sense.

And yet the same Dr. Bennet hath proved, that the same church of England hath no particular sense of her own in those Articles, where the words are capable of two different senses, or no particular sense which can be discovered; and consequently that the Articles may be subscribed in any sense the construction of the words will fairly admit of. Of which fairness, however, much may be said by the subscriber, to which the church perhaps would hardly agree.

Let us now fee what we can make of Dr. Nicholls and Dr. Bennet in company.

Dr. Bennet afferts, "that, though we subscribe the 35th Article, we don't subscribe to the Homilies. There is in reality," fays he, "no such thing required of us, as a subscription to the Homilies. We must subscribe the [35th] Article, 'tis true, but not the Homilies."

But, according to Dr. Nicholls, the very same is the case with respect to the thirty-nine Articles themselves. "The form of subscription," quoth he, "is not a form of subscription to the thirty-"nine Articles, but to the three Articles con-"tained in the thirty-sixth Canon." "Therefore," to borrow Dr. Bennet's words, "there is in reality "no such thing as a subscription to the thirty-"nine Articles required of us." For the two cases are exactly alike; and Dr. Bennet's reasons for his affertion may, with equal force and propriety, be applied to the support of Dr. Nicholls's proposition. And now, if the scrupulous subscriber is not made perfectly easy, he must be hard to please.

However, it is not adviseable for him to depend too much on these Casuists. 'Tis a slippery undertaking they have in hand; and I am assaid that Dr. Bennet's arguments on this head prove nothing but that he was in great concern to save his credit with the church, and at the same time to accommodate his young student, and perhaps himself, with certain convenient quibbles, when the occasion should call for them. However, he had great authorities on his side; no less than the eminent prelates Laud and Burnet.

The

The former fays, that, "Tho' we [have] sub"fcribed generally to the doctrine of the Homi"lies as good, yet we did not express, or mean
"thereby, to justify or maintain every particu"lar phrase or sentence contained in them."

By this latitude, his Grace got some shelter for the use of *Images* in churches; and for his dissent from the *calvinistical* explanations of *Grace*, *Justification*, &c.

Bishop Burnet holds that, "All we profess about them, [the Homilies] is only, that they contain a godly and wholesome doctrine. This, fays he, rather relates to the main importance and design of them, than to every passage in them."

It is not improbable, that his Lordship had some objection (as well he might) to some passages in the Homilies against willful rebellion.

To these Dr. Bennet hath added the opinion of a Nonjurer, who says, "The dostrine of the "Homilies is the only thing we are obliged to "maintain, and not the arguments brought to "support it."

But how, if the doctrine cannot be maintained without the arguments?——Thus we see one disclaims an unwholesome phrase or sentence, another dislikes a passage, a third an argument; and when every one has made his particular exception, what may become of the poor Homilies, who can tell?

Dr. Bennet observes, that Archbishop Laud, Bishop Burnet, the abovementioned Nonjuror, and himself,

himself, do exactly agree in the sense of what the article says, touching the Homilies.

Give me leave to add another to the groupe, even the respectable Minorite Francis Sinclair, alias Davenport, who, upon this thirty-fifth article, thus descants:

Multa quidem sunt in Homiliis laude digna. Alia nec nobis [Papistis sc.] vel doctoribus eorum arrident. Nec tenentur Protestantes ob hac verba in Articulo, in singula verba vel sententias Homiliarum jurare.

Whether Laud took the hint from Sinclair, or Sinclair from him, is a point not worth contesting: but I am greatly concerned to find Bishop Burnet in such company. However, it may be some excuse for him, that he sticks to the main importance and design of the Homilies; which, out of all dispute, was to exclude and reprobate Popery.

But what? no advocate for the good Homilies? Yes; here is one worth three dozen of Lauds, Bénuets, or Sinclairs, the learned Bishop Barlow.

"The church of England, fays this worthy biflop, has, in her Homilies (confirmed by acts

" of parliament and convocation, and subscribed

" by all the clergy) declared the Pope to be An-

"ticbrift. And then I defire to know, whether they be true and obedient fons of the

church of England, who publicly deny her

" established doctrines, which they had before publicly subscribed [D]."

[D] Genuine Remains, p. 191.

Would the reader know who the fons of the church were, whose truth and obedience are thus called in question? Even Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury; and a much honester man, the painful and pious Dr. Henry Hammond.

But there is a third fort of defenders of the church, who play fast and loose in this cause of the Homilies, and seem to have taken sees on both sides.

Peter Heylin, having his objections to the strict observance of the Lord's-day, as taught in the Irish Articles of religion, argues thus: " It is "contrary to the book of Homilies; and, if it be contrary to the book of Homilies, it must be "also contrary to the book of Articles, by which those Homilies are approved and recommended to the use of the church [E]."

And yet the same Peter, (the ********* of those times, who was never at a loss, nor ever incumbered with the least diffidence) being pressed with a question from Archbishop Usher, whether he admitted the two volumes of Homilies into his creed? replied, "That a man may so far take the two volumes of the Homilies into his creed, as to believe as much of them as is required of him in the book of Articles. For he may very warrantably and safely say, that he does verily believe that the second book of Homilies doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and

" necessary for those times; that is to fay," adds

[[]E] Heylin's Respondet Petrus, p. 130.

the Doctor, "the times in which they were first

" published [F]."

That is to fay, The second book of Homilies, confidered as a book published to serve a present turn (as Bishop Burnet has it), is a good fort of book, and may be subscribed without a qualm.

This puts me in mind of a paffage, where we are told of what use and in what repute the Homilies have been in these latter ages, after these our grandfathers were fallen asleep.

" As for the Homilies," fays my author, "they " are good or bad, of undeniable authority, or " of none, just as they themselves (churchmen " about the year 1724) please. Those against " rebellion are particularly good against all tu-"mults, and diforders, and treasons, but their "own; and are to be urged home against the " men whom they dislike. But those against your "idolatry and antichristianism, and against many " of your doctrines, I affure your Holiness, are of " no account among the fame men, but as the " warm, over-hafty efforts of ignorant zeal, in " the first Reformers; not fit to be urged against " any true churchman (any more than those of " the Calvinifical strain) since the time of Arch-" bishop Land [G]."

[[]F] Heylin's Respondet Petrus, p. 130.

[[]G] Sir Richard Steele's (or rather Bishop ******'s) Letter to Pope Clement XI, prefixed to his Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion, &c. p. xxxvi.

I shall now disinis Dr. Bennet with one parting remark upon a striking passage in the xxxvth chapter of his Essay.

"I can't but think," fays he, "that if a man doubts of the sense of his declaration, whether it is such as he may mean in the making of it, he ought, in the presence of God, to ask his conscience this question, Do I verily think, that if I were to acquaint my superiors with it, they would allow me to understand my declaration thus? I dare say the answer of his conscience would be a true resolution of the doubt."

But, I dare fay, the answer of his superior's conscience (which is one of the consciences herein concerned) would be a truer resolution of the doubt. And why should he hesitate to acquaint his fuperior with it; fince he may do it, whenever he is obliged to subscribe or declare, without going out of his way?—Perhaps the Bishop might not approve of the meaning; in which case, he must either go without his preferment, or declare in a fense he does not mean. Whereas the matter being transacted between the man and his conscience, (which will bear to be debated with more freely than a Bishop might allow) the conscience may be brought over to the side of the MAN, and the doubt commodioufly refolved to the fatisfaction of both parties.

"A man," fays Dr. Waterland, "must have a very mean opinion of the understanding or integrity of his superiors, to suppose that they ever can allow him to trifle at such a rate, in so ferious

"ferious a matter as fubscription [H]."—That is, to presume upon their consent, to put a sense of his own upon a disputable Article.

And this gives me an opportunity of introducing this learned Doctor's opinions upon this important case, who having treated the subject ex prosess, in his well-known Case of Arian Subscription, and the Supplement he wrote in defence of it, will carry us into a new field of controversy, as he exhibits much curious matter, which fell not within the notice of Drs. Nicholls and Bennet.

Dr. Waterland protesses to set out where Dr. Stebbing and Dr. Rogers end. And these Doctors end "in confirming our excellent church in her "full power of requiring subscription to ber own" sense of holy scripture [I]."

Now these interpretations, or this sense of holy scripture, to which we are required to subscribe, are the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, adopted by the church, as they were left by the compilers in 1562. The sense, therefore, put upon the holy scriptures in these Articles by the compilers of them, is the sense of the church.

"But," fays Dr. Waterland, "the fense of the compilers, barely considered, is not always to be observed, but so far only as the natural and proper signification of words, or the intention of the imposers, binds it upon us [K]."

By the impofers, I apprehend, must be meant the ministerial imposers, that is, the Bishops, they

[[]H] Case of Arian Subscription, p. 45. [I] Ibid. p. 7. [K] Ibid. p. 11.

being the persons appointed by law to take this security of subscription, on behalf of the church.

But the Doctor was told "that the Archbi"fhops and Bishops, or even the legislature itself
"(without a new declaratory law), cannot deter"mine what shall be the sense of the doctrines
"in the Articles [L]." And he was so far truly
told. For the sense of the Articles is already
determined to be the sense of the compilers, and
no other; the declaration and subscription to the
Articles being enjoined by a law, which is nearly
coæval with the compilers themselves.

In this the Doctor found himself obliged to acquiesce; and, in his reply, "would not take up"on him to determine what the Bishops or the
"Legislature might do [M]."—So that by this tergiversation, the natural and proper signification of words, and the intention of the imposers, are thrown quite out of the question; and we are once more brought back to the single sense of the compilers. For, if the Bishops may not alter the sense of the Articles, in virtue of any power given them by the church, or even by the legislature; neither may the subscriber, upon pretence of giving a natural and proper signification to the words.

"The fense of the compilers and imposers," fays the Doctor, "where certainly known, must

[[]L] Case of Subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, p. 32. [M] Supplement, p. 41.

" be religiously observed, even though the words " were capable of another sense [N]."

The fense of the imposers may be always certainly known, and consequently, according to the Doctor, must always be religiously observed. Which I mention (not that the imposers have any thing to do in the affair, but) to shew how by this proposition the Doctor abridged his own liberty, when it came to his turn to plead for it. The case is this: The Doctor says, "that diver-" sity of opinions is intended to be avoided with "respect to points determined [O]." Among points determined, the Doctor reckons the doctrine of the Trinity. But, pleading for a liberty to subscribe the seventeenth and other Articles in an Arminian sense, he considers these points as undetermined.

Whereas, by taking in the fense of the imposers, the meaning of the Articles is determinable in *all* points; because the sense of the imposers may be *always* certainly known, whatever the sense of the compilers may be.

"The Article in the Apostles Creed concerning Christ's descent into Hell, is now universally
understood in a sense probably different from
what the compilers of the Creed intended," says
the learned Dr. Clarke.

"However that be," replies Dr. Waterland, one thing is certain, that our church hath left that article at large, intending a latitude; and

[[]N] Case of Arian Subscription, p. 11.

^[0] Ibid.

" indulging a liberty to subscribers to abound in their own sense [P]."

Here, if you leave out the intention of the imposers, one thing is certain, that no latitude is left to the subscriber of the Article; the words bell and inferi never fignifying any thing in the days of the compilers, but the place of torment. If the intention of the imposers is taken into the account, another thing is certain, that no liberty is allowed to subscribers to abound in their own sense, unless, having deserted the sense of the compilers, they absolutely neglect the intention of the imposers, which may always be certainly known.

Dr. Waterland indeed tries to falve all this by faving, "that the fense of the compilers and im"posers may generally be presumed the same
(except in some very rare and particular cafes [2]."

Well then, may the imposers, in any of these rare and particular cases, go against the known, or even the presumed sense of the compilers? If they may, the Doctor should have told us how they came by their authority; and why the imposers may not, upon equally good grounds, desert the compilers in cases neither rare nor particular? Besides, one imposer may think that a rare and particular case, which to another is not so. A third imposer may have bis rare and particular cases, different from them both; and so a fourth

[[]P] Case of Ar. Subser. p. 35. [2] Ibid. p. 11.

and a fifth, till the fense of the compilers is thrown quite out of doors in every case.

Dr. Waterland, in particular, had rare and particular cases of his own, upon which he acts the part of an imposer with no ill grace.

Of the articles relating to the Trinity, the Doctor fays, "their fense is fixed, and bound upon the conscience of every subscriber, by the plain, natural fignification of the words, and by the known intent of the compilers and imposers [R]."

But of the damnatory clauses in the Athanafian creed, he says, "that the compilers sense being doubtful, and the imposers having left those clauses without any exposition, the subscriber is at liberty to understand them in such fense as the words will bear, and such as best answers the main intent and design of that

" creed; and is most agreeable to scripture and reason [S].

The fense of the articles, says the Doctor, concerning the Trinity, is fixed and certain. Who has fixed it? Not the compilers, otherwise than by expressing the propositions relating to the Trinity, in terms which accorded with their own ideas. And has the compiler of the Athapasian creed, done either more or less, with respect to the damnatory clauses? — On another hand, the imposers have lest those clauses without

[[]R] Case of Ar. Subscription, p. 36.

[[]S] 1bid. p. 37.

any exposition. And where, I pray, is their exposition of the articles relating to the Trinity, to be met with?

"This instance, continues the Doctor, is nothing parallel to the case of the Articles concerning the Trinity; whose sense is fixed and

" certain as before faid."

That is to fay, "The subscriber is not at bliberty to understand these Articles in such sense, as the words will bear; or in such sense, as best answers the main intent and design of the whole set of Articles, or in such sense as is most agreeable to scripture and reason." For in these circumstances, according to the Doctor, consists the specific difference, between the case of subscribing the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian creed, and the case of subscribing the Articles concerning the Trinity. — And thus, kind reader, "is our excellent church consistend in her full power of requiring subscription to her sums sense of Holy Scripture."

The Dr. proceeds. "Fix, in like manner, the fense of the damnatory clauses; and it fhall soon be proved that every subscriber ought to acquiesce in it."

Having so good encouragement, let us try what we can do.

Whosoever will be saved, it is necessary, before all things, that he hold the casholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this.

Then follows the doctrine of the Trinity, expressed in the articles of the creed, whose sense, the Doctor says, is *fixed* and *certain*, &c. as above. After which we have some more of these clauses:

He therefore that will be faved must thus think of the Trinity. And, at the close of all, This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, be cannot be saved.

Now what is the *plain*, *natural* fignification of these words? The common sense of the subscriber answers, "that you shall perish everlastingly," if you don't believe the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity, *conceptis verbis*.

- "No fuch thing, fays the Doctor, the words are not fixed and certain; this is an unrea"fonably rigorous fense of them."—Well, what is then be done? Will the learned Doctor help us to a more commodious sense? No, but he will tell you how you may help yourself to one.
- "Let any man show, says he, what sense it is most reasonable to understand them in:
- " and the fame reasons (if good) shall serve to
- " fhow that that was the fense of the compiler."

We thank you, good Doctor, and will now make use of your expedient.

It is reasonable then to suppose, that a warm dogmatical man, heated by controversy and opposition, who was presumptuous enough to lay

down points of artificial Theology, as articles of faith, without any support from scripture, might have the affurance to consign all men to damnation, who did not believe his doctrines; having probably no other way to procure them to be received.

- " No, says Dr. Waterland, your reasons are not
- "good. The creed was written and received in an enlightened and knowing age, and confe-
- "quently by a person of great accuracy and
- " folid judgment, who had his information from
- 4¢ fcripture; and to whom no passion or pre-
- " judice ought to be imputed."

Be it so; and let us go another way to work. The sense of this creed, and the sense of the Articles concerning the Trinity, is one and the same; and is a fixed and certain sense. May a man then dishelieve this sense? or put a sense of bis own upon the creed or the articles, and not perish everlastingly?—If, yea, I doubt this fixed sense, whatever it may be as to its catholicism, will not turn out to be the true christian faith, on the belief of which the scriptures say, everlasting life doth absolutely depend.

Dr. Waterland might rail against prevarication, as long, and as loudly as he pleased; but I am very much mistaken, if he had not as much occasion for it, as any of his opponents.

But doctors differ; and even some of the orthodox have refused this gracious liberty of subscribing the damnatory clauses, in a commodious sense.

Dr. Edmund Calamy, had said, in one of his Defences of moderate Nonconformity, "that though "the 8th Article intimates, that the Athana-

"fian creed ought thoroughly to be received,

" yet it does not necessarily follow, that it takes

" in the Appendages; and I may thoroughly re-

" ceive the substance of the creed, faid he, and

yet abhor the damnatory clauses."

"That is, replied Mr. Johnson of Cranbrook,

" by subscribing the whole creed, I meant only the

" middle, and not both ends. And, by parity of

" reason, other men may subscribe to both ends,

" and not to the middle [T]."

"Strange, fays Mr. Johnson, that fuch men as

" these, should make conscience of subscribing

" the liturgy, when, upon fuch principles, they

" may subscribe the Mass-book."

I am of opinion that this reflection concerned Dr. Waterland as much within a trifle, as Dr. Calamy.

"I know, fays Dr. Waterland, many have

" ftrained the damnatory clauses to an unreason-

" able rigour, on purpose to disparage the

"creed."—That is, many have affirmed that the fense of these clauses is as fixed, certain, and positive, as the sense of the creed itself. Mr.

[[]T] Clergyman's Vade Mecum. Vol. ii. 121, 122.

Johnson is one of these; but had it been required, I would have been Mr. Johnson's compurgator, that he had no purpose to disparage the creed.

To prove his doctrine of fixed and unfixed fenses, Dr. Waterland informs us, that "a diffinition should be made, between such Articles as being formed in general terms, leave a latitude for private opinions, and such as, being otherwise formed, leave no such latitude [U]."

Here the Doctor was called upon for his criteria, by which such different formations might be distinguished from each other; "otherwise, his opponent insisted, the liberty might be extended to every proposition in each Article, which is capable of several senses [W]."

To which the Doctor replied, "Any certain indication of the impofers meaning, is a crite-

" rion to fix the fense of a proposition. When

there are neither plain words, nor any other

" certain indication of the imposer's meaning, the Article, so far, is left at large, and the

"point left undetermined [X]."

Surely this imposer cannot be the Bishop who takes the subscription: for every man may have a certain indication of the Bishop's meaning before whom he subscribes, if the Bishop has the use of

[[]U] Case of Arian subs. p. 39. 40.

[[]W] Cafe of Subscription, p. 9.

[[]X] Supplement, p. 30.

fpeech to convey it. The Doctor too has acknowledged in this very pamphlet, that Bishops, for ought he knows, may have no power to afcertain the fense of the Articles. Who or what then is this phantom of an imposer? And whither must we go for his meaning?

When Dr. Waterland allows, that there is a latitude left for private opinion in some cases, and when he supposes, that some Articles are left at large, and fome points undetermined; he should feem to mean, so left at large, and so undetermined, as to admit of different, and even contradictory opinions and fenses.

For example, the opinions of the Arminians and Calvinifts, concerning conditional and absolute decrees, are contradictory opinions. If then both subscribe the seventeenth Article, and each in his own fense, they must give it two inconsistent and contradictory fenses.

Again; the opinions of Dr. Waterland and Dr. Bennet, the one holding the procession of the Holy Spirit (proposed in the fifth Article) to be eternal, the other, only temporal [Y], feem to be opinions flatly contradictory to each other. Would not Logicians fay, that to predicate finite and infinite of one and the same subject, is a contradiction? Moreover Dr. Waterland thought (and indeed fo think I) that the church has determined the point for bim. Whereas Dr. Bennet would not

[[]Y] Case of Arian Subs. p. 30.

allow, that the church had determined either wav.

Would any man now suspect, that the Calvinists and Arminians subscribed the seventeenth Article; and the Doctors Waterland and Bennet the fifth, in one and the same sense respectively?

Yet this is what Dr. Waterland undertook to prove. "Both, fays he, fubscribe to the same

" general proposition, and both in the same sense; " only they differ in the particulars relating to

" it; which is not differing (AT LEAST IT NEED

" NOT BE) about the fense of the Article, but

" about particulars not contained in it."

He instances in the seventeenth Article. " Ima-

" gine the Article to be left in general terms.

" Both fides may subscribe to the same general

"proposition, and both in the same sense;

"which fense reaches not to the particulars in

"dispute. And if one believes predestination

" to be absolute, and the other conditionate, this

" is not (on the present supposition) differing

46 about the fense of the Article, but in their re-

" spective additions to it."

To this I answer.

1. That in the present case these general terms, have particular ideas fixed to them by the respective subscribers, and consequently, if these are different or opposite ideas, the terms must be subscribed, in different or opposite senses: which, in this present case, reaches so materially to the particulars

ticulars in dispute, that the Calvinist has no idea of any predestination which is not absolute.

- 2. Though this ingenious neutrality of the feventeenth Article might ferve the turn of the Calvinists and Arminians, yet it cannot, upon Dr. Waterland's principles, be applied to the difference between Dr. W. and Dr. Bennet. For here, according to one side, the church hath determined. Determined what? Why concerning a particular not contained in the Article. For, according to Dr. Bennet, the church never once "adds the epithet eternal to the word procession." The church then, determines concerning terms not contained in the Article, as well as concerning those that are.
- 3. Upon this scheme of unity Dr. Waterland and the Arians, subscribed in one and the same sense. "They all subscribed the same general terms, which contain the same general sense."
- "They differed indeed about their respective ad-
- "ditions to the fense of the Articles; but not a-
- " bout the sense of the Article itself.

No fuch thing, fays Dr. W. "The propositions" concerning the H. Trinity, contained in our

- " public forms, are not general or indefinite, but
- " fpecial and determinate, in the very points in
- "difference between Catholics and Arians,
- "[viz.] consubstantiality, coequality, coeternity,
- " &c. and that in as clear and strong words as

M

" any can be devifed."

We

We shall see in the next chapter, that some of these special and determinate propositions concerning the Trinity, in our public forms, may be taken in four different fenses. In the mean time, fuffice it to observe, that the Calvinists are as positive for the special and determinate sense of the feventeenth Article, as this Doctor is for that of the Trinitarian forms. They tell you, that for the description of the state of a man, configned by a divine decree to an inevitable lot, exclusive of all conditions, no ftronger, clearer or more precife word can be devised, than Predestination: and that it is abfurd, and contradictory, to talk of divine decrees controulable by contingent conditions, which would make them to differ nothing from buman decrees. And is there, in very deed, any greater abfurdity in qualifying the words confubstantiality, eoequality, &c. with fuch epithets, as suppose they need not be applied to different Beings, so as to imply that those Beings are in all possible respects absolutely such? If such qualification may be admitted in any one respect, the propositions abovementioned are not special and determinate, any more than the propositions concerning Predestination.

Thus we fee, Dr. Waterland, by opening a door for his own Arminian subscription, unwarily let in the Arians at the same entrance, who would not be turned out, for all he could say to them. And indeed, if there is prevarication on one side, it cannot be helped; it is the same case on the

other. There must be the same latitude allowed to both, or to neither.

It is indeed furprizing that Dr. Waterland, who very well knew that subscription to the Articles, is not a term of lay-communion, but of ministerial acceptance; or, in other words, a condition upon which ministerial trusts and priviledges are conferred, should admit of the least latitude in fubscriptions. For what are these ministerial trufts? Is not one of them a trust to preach the word of God, according to the interpretation of the church of England, specified in the xxxix Articles? If these interpretations are exhibited in these Articles in terms so general, as to admit of different fenses, how shall any man be able to execute this truft, till he shall be informed which of these senses is the specific doctrine of the church of England? If the compilers of the Articles, on the other hand, intended that two men, might raise two different doctrines, from one and the fame proposition in the Articles, of what use was this test? Or where was the common sense of establishing it? The truth of the case then, is just as the Bishop of Bristol * hath stated it, in his noted fermon on subscriptions. "Every one," fays his Lordship, " who subscribes the Articles " of Religion, does thereby engage, not only " not to dispute or contradict them; but his "fubscription amounts to an appprobation of, "and an affent to the truth of the doctrines " therein contained, in the very fense [in] which

^{*} Dr. Conybeare.

"the compilers are supposed to have understood them." And accordingly his Lordship, very consistently (with what solidity is another question), defends the church of England, in the exercise of her right to obtrude her own interpretations of scripture upon her Ministers, to the exclusion of all others.

The staunch champions of the church of England know perfectly well that this is a true representation, both of the original intention of the church, and the actual intention of the law. And accordingly, foreseeing that it might be objected, that this power of fixing and obtruding her own interpretations of scripture upon her sons, is rather more than a protestant church ought to pretend to, they have prepared an answer, which, upon the supposition of such a latitude, as is contended for, would be utterly impertinent.

Here, say they, is no inquisition, no compulsion in the case. The church of England compels no man to subscribe. They may let it alone, if they please. "All the business is, says the merciful "Dr. Stebbing, we cannot admit you to the office of public teachers [Z]." And a bad business enough of all conscience, if, by this non-admission, many an honest pious and learned man is reduced to starve: which has been the case with some, and, but for this happy invention of a latitude, would have been the case with with a great many more.

But, by Dr. Stebbing's leave, this is not all the business. For, when the church hath turned the poor man adrift, it may be, some body might take him in, if he could but give a good reason why he did not comply with the church. In these cases, no reason is comparable to the true one: which would be, that he could not in conscience subscribe the xxxix Articles, as he did not believe them to be agreeable to the word of God. But here the church lays her hands on him with a vengeance. For by uttering an excuse to this effect, he incurrs excommunication ipso fasto; that is (according to Lyndwood) nullo hominis ministerio interveniente; and is not to be restored, but only by the Archbishop.

By this excommunication, the courteous reader may be pleased to know, that no more happens to the unhappy mortal, than that he is deprived of the communion; his person sequestered from the conversation and society of the faithful (meaning all who are not excommunicate); and if his conscience should not become more tractable within forty days, he may be committed to prison by the King's writt de excommunicato capiendo,—where he must lie and rot till he recants; for the Archbishop himself cannot absolve him, till after repentance and revocation of his wicked error.

All this while, the church of England compels no man to subscribe! That is to say, she does not force the pen into his hand, and oblige him to sign his name à coups de baton. But — let us bless God

for the lenity of the civil Magistrate; "who, as "the rev. Mr. Jortin observes, is of excellent use in preventing us from doing one another any bodily barm." For, that the church of England is at all out of conceit with any part, either of her doctrine or discipline, does by no means appear by some late public indications of her judgment herein [A].

Thus stands the real naked sact, and pityable enough it is to make men glad of any subterfuges and expedients of latitude, even those narrow ones of Dr. Waterland. But, alas! we see by the concessions the Doctor himself was obliged to make, that we are of course brought back to the single sense of the compilers; the only sense indeed, espoused by, or legally authenticated in the church of England. An hard necessity upon so orthodox a son of the church, either to be obliged to prevaricate with the naughty Arians, or to be disowned by his venerable mother, as none of her legitimate offspring.

"If instead of excusing a fraudulent subscritoption, says the Doctor, on the foot of human infirmity, (which yet is too soft a name for it) endeavours are used to defend it upon princitople, and to support it by rules of art; it concerns every honest man to look about him. For the what is so vile and shameful but may be set off with false colours, and have a plausible turn

" given

[[]A] See the convocation's Address, 1754, where it is hinted, that the church of England hath no equal.

"given it, by the help of quirks and and subtil"ties $\lceil B \rceil$."

I have the misfortune to think, that this wife reflection concerned Dr. Waterland, no less than those for whose more immediate use he intended it. All of them were made fore by subscription. All of them wanted, and all of them applied the plaister of quirks and subtilities, in their turn.

A man of principle will never be driven to make use of quirks and subtilties, till he finds himself bound to some unreasonable and unrighteous conditions. And they who desire such quirks and subtilties should not be made use of, should he careful, not to lay snares, or stumbling blocks in the way of honest men, that they may be under no temptation to prevaricate.

A good and conscientious Christian in matters of practice, can do little harm by his mistaken opinions. If they have no evil influence upon his own life and conversation, others cannot be far missed by them. And it is a very possible case, that such a one may be a more edifying teacher, with respect to those points which are of the utmost importance, and concerning which sew men are liable to err, than he who is warmed with the most sublimed spirit of orthodoxy.

Let fuch a one alone to follow his conscience, and he will be sincere, faithful and diligent in dispensing the word of God, according to his best information. But if you have a mind to make a knave of him, you cannot take a more effectual

[[]E] Case, &c. p. 4.

method, than to contrive tests for his disputable opinions, with which he cannot comply without quirks and subtilties; and with which, if he does not comply, you deprive him of the means of getting his bread, in the only way he is qualified to earn it.

Upon the whole; we have now feen that every fystem of latitude is, in some particular or other, exceptionable to every one, but the particular person who invents it for his own use. It is not possible this should be the case, if the compilers of the Articles had really intended any latitude, or the laws concerning fubscription had left room for it. Bishop Barnet plainly saw that fubscribers were bound to the single sense of the compilers before His Majesty's Declaration was iffued, which by the faid Bishop, was understood to admit of subscription in any literal and grammatical sense, even though it should be different from, and even contradictory to another literal and grammatical fense.

But, says Dr. Waterland, - "His [Majesty's] " order is, that every subscriber submit to the 44 Article in the plain and full meaning thereof, in "the literal and grammatical sense. What? is " the plain and full meaning, more than one mean-"ing? or is the one plain and full meaning, two " contradictory meanings? Could it be for the "Honour of the Article, or of the King to fay " this? No -."

And fo there's an end of Bishop Burnet's scheme of Latitude, as it rests upon this Declaration. But then, Dr. Waterland could work another scheme out of it for his own use, by making the plain and full meaning, to signify a general meaning, exclusive of all particular senses; - till, wanting to plague and starve the Arians, he found out, that the fense of the Articles relating to the Trinity, was not general, but special, particuler, and determinate.

If the subject were not too serious, one might find abundant matter of mirthful entertainment, in the quirks and fubtilties of these eminent Doctors. But should we laugh at them, no doubt but we should be told, that we wounded the church and religion through their sides. We shall therefore content ourselves with recommending to them to confider, how far this ridiculous felf-contradicting casuistry may have been instrumental in giving diffenters a contemptible opinion of our church and her discipline, and in making our holy religion itself (though in reality it has nothing to do, either with the casuists or the casuistry) the sport and scorn of infidels.

I do not doubt, but fome perfons will be curious know, how it was possible for men so famous in their generation, who were so learned, judicious, and penetrating in other things, and who all thought they were driving the same nail, to be so contradictory and inconsistent, not only with each other, but even with themselves? Let fuch

fuch curious inquirers know then, that all these experienced workmen were endeavouring to repair, and daub with untempered mortar, certain strongholds and partition walls, which it was the design of the Gospel to throw down and to level. An attempt of this fort could hardly be more agreeable to the Divine will, than the building at Babel. And no marvel that the Craftsmen should meet with the like success. That is to say, that their language should be consounded, and rendered unintelligible both to each other, and to all who are otherwise concerned to understand it.

It is true these particular Doctors, are all gone off the stage. But they have left plenty of difciples behind them, who affect to speak the jargon of their respective masters. And it is certain, that, while our subscriptions continue upon the present footing, there will be no end of accufing on one fide, or of recriminating on the other. Let us, at length, come to fome temper with each other, and, if a form of words cannot be agreed upon, which every Christian minister may subfcribe willingly, and with a good conscience, let us join in a petition to the legislature, that the expedient proposed, not long ago, in one of our Monthly pamphlets, may receive the fanction of law; namely that the affair of subscription should henceforth be confidered in no other light, than as An Office of insurance for our respective preferments.

CHAP. VI.

A particular Examination of the Sentiments and Reasonings of those Writers who have pleaded for a Latitude in subscribing to the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, upon the Supposition that every Protestant Church must att consistently with its professing to assert and maintain Christian Liberty.

Am now entering, not without regret, upon the most disagreeable part of my undertaking, namely, that of declaring, and giving reasons for my dissatisfaction with such arguments, as the sons of truth and liberty have offered, by way of justifying their compliance with the church in this demand of subscription to her Liturgy and Articles.

When we consider the irresistible force and perspicuity of that reasoning, by which some of these worthies (when debating the question concerning church-power in the abstract) have demonstrated the unreasonableness of that demand, as well as the inconsistency of it with the professions of every Protestant church, one cannot but lament, that, to the laurels they gained in that disputation, they did not add the glory of becoming confessors to their own principles, and of rather declining the affluence of a plentiful income,

income, or the figure of a superior station, than accept of these emoluments on conditions, which must have been imposed upon them with some violence to their inclinations.

It is true, fome of these have said, that "the reasonableness of conformity to the church of " England is perfectly confistent with the rights " of private judgment [A]." But they must only mean, of their own private judgment. For it is well known, that others who diffent from the church of England, are clearly justified in such diffent, upon those very principles which these conforming writers have laid down; and confequently, the nonconformity of the one is just as reasonable as the conformity of the other. On the other hand, it is equally well known, that the most eminent and successful defenders of our church-establishment, are they who have attacked these principles of liberty, and have proceeded upon the supposition that the private judgment of individuals ought to give way to the authority of the church; being well aware that, if these theories of Christian liberty are allowed to stand upon a firm foundation, it would be impossible to vindicate the church of England, with respect to the particulars of her constitution. And therefore I must own, I never could see how the authors and defenders of these theories could make their conformity confistent with the enjoyment

[[]A] Dr. Sykes's Answer to Rogers's Visible and Invisible Church of Christ, p. 6.

of their rights of private judgment, otherwise than by supposing that it might be *reasonable* for them to submit to conditions, which it is *unreasonable* in the church to impose.

In the mean time, their adversaries have long and loudly accused them of prevarication, in complying with the church; which, whether the accusation be just or not, has certainly taken much from the influence they might have had, both with the true friends of Christian liberty, and the partial and prejudiced retainers to church power. On which account it has been a great misfortune to the present generation, and will be a greater to the next, that these gentlemen did not stand aloof a little longer, till they had tried at least what concessions the church would have made them, rather than have wanted their services, which, under all disadvantages, have been so great an honour and an ornament to her.

What might not the firmness of an Hales and a Chillingworth formerly, or more lately of a Clarke or an Hoadley, have obtained for us by this time? Which of us all, abused and vilified as these men have been, by bigots of different classes, would have wished to have seen them in another communion? And who is he that will affirm, the church established has lost nothing by depriving these champions of the power of adding to their victories over the spiritual tyranny of Rome, a complete and solid vindication of her own doctrine, discipline, and worship?

But that day is past and gone beyond recall; with this cold comfort indeed, that these worthy men have left their principles to those among us, who are inclined to profit by them. From these principles, compared with their practice, we cannot but judge they were under some small constraint, touching the subject now in hand. And if it should be found, upon a fair examination, that, for the fake of preferving the appearance of confistency, they have set their apologies for subfcribing in a light which has thrown back the real truth into shade and obscurity; it is but justice to bring it once more forward to public view; if haply a circumstance in our discipline, which has moreor less turned to our reproach with Dissenters of all denominations, may at length be either quite discarded, or put into a condition fit to be owned by every honest man and sincere Protestant among us.

The controversy with Dr. Waterland, concerning what he thought fit to call Arian subscription, took its rise, it seems, from some passages in Dr. Clarke's Introduction to his Scripture-dostrine of the Trinity, wherein that learned and excellent person (conscious that the contents of his book would hardly be thought to agree with the established forms of the church) thought proper to apprize his readers, that the church of England did not mean more by subscription, nor require more of subscribers, than that they should conform their opinions to the true sense of scripture;

the investigation of which sense, he supposes, was by the church left to the subscriber himself; otherwise, that the church must be inconsistent with her own plain and repeated declarations.

With Dr. Clarke therefore we shall begin, the rather as Dr. Clarke's reasonings upon this subject have prevailed with some to comply with the church's subscription, who are now ready to own that they think those reasonings insufficient for their justification.

The Doctor's state of the case then is briefly this: " At the Reformation, religion began to " recover in a great measure, out of the great " Apostacy: when the doctrine of Christ and his " Apostles was again declared to be the only rule " of truth, in which were contained all things " necessary to faith and manners. And had that " declaration constantly been adhered to, and human " authority in matters of faith been disclaimed in "DEEDS, as well as in words, there had been " possibly no more schisms in the church of God, " nor divisions of any considerable moment a-" mong Protestants. - But, though contentions "and uncharitableness have prevailed in practice, "yet (thanks be to God) the root of unity hath " continued amongst us; and the scripture hath " universally been declared to be the only rule of " truth, a fufficient guide both in faith and prac-"tice; and those who differ in opinion, have "done fo only because each party has thought " their own opinion founded in scripture; and

"men are required to receive things because, and only because, they are found (and consequently in no other sense than [that] wherein they are found) in the holy scriptures. Where fore, in any question of controversy concerning an amatter of saith, Protestants are obliged (for the deciding of it) to have recourse to no other authority whatsoever, but that of scripture on ly [B]."

This is specious: And the time was, as I said, when, by this deduction of particulars, the Doctor seemed to me to be fairly entitled to his consequence, which is, that a man may honestly subscribe the thirty-nine Articles of the church of England, accommodated to the sense of scripture, as he himself understands it. And certainly words and oaths cannot disclaim human authority in matters of faith, with more vehemence and precision, whether on the part of the church, or some of her most eminent doctors, than is done in the citations that follow this representation.

But, upon having recourse to these passages upon a second occasion, a sudden question forced itself upon me, and would take no denial; viz. How stand the DEEDs in the church of England? These words indeed are plain; but is there nothing in the asts and deeds of this church, which implies that these are but words? And are there

[[]B] Introduct. to Script. Doct. of the Trinity, Ed. 2. p. viii, ix, x.

to other words, which directly unfay what is faid in these? Why yes. It will be found upon examination, that the DEEDS of the church of England are very plain and strong on the side of human authority; disclaiming in their turn these verbal declarations of the Protestant religion, by many formal acts and ordinances, and contravening them in some instances, where there seems to be some outward respect paid to them.

Men, it is true, are required to receive things for no other given cause, and upon no other declared authority, than because they are found in feripture, and in no other fense but that in which they are said to be so found. But, in fast, we are allowed to receive these things in no other fense, than that in which the church declares she hath found them herself; which is sometimes a fense, that the person obliged to receive it is not able to find, let him fearch for it with ever fo much capacity and diligence. So that though Protestants are obliged by their original principles to adhere to no other authority whatever than that of the scripture; yet, by coming under posterior engagements and stipulations with the church of England by law established, and particularly by acknowledging that this church bath authority in controversies of faith, they are obliged to take her interpretations of scripture, not only in preference to, but in exclusion of their own.

Dr. Waterland indeed fays, "that no man is " required by the church to subscribe [that is, to " receive N

"receive things] against his conscience, or in a sefense which he thinks not agreeable to scripture [C]."

That is to say, if a man cannot bring himself to subscribe in the church's sense, as thinking that sense not agreeable to scripture, he may let subscribing alone, without any censure or punishment.

But Dr. Waterland knew very well, and so did Dr. Clarke too, that such a one refusing to subscribe, or to receive things in the church's sense, would be understood, in that instance, to decline any engagements with the church, and, in so doing, to forseit all the advantages that would have accrued from his compliance; which may happen to be his whole livelihood.

Dr. Waterland could not mean, that the church censures no man for subscribing in a sense which he thinks agreeable to scripture, but contrary to the church's sense. For he himself hath shewn the contrary, especially where such subscriber avows his own sense. And, with respect to other cases, the Doctor observes very pertinently, that "The connivance and toleration of superiors at "offences does not take away the guilt of such scription plainly supposes the man who sets his name to it, to subscribe in the church's sense.

[[]C] Case, p. 16. [D] Case, p. 44.

And what occasion or what room have superiors either to exercise or declare any censures, when the subscriber signs his name quietly and peaceably to the prescribed form, without saying a syllable against it?

Dr. Clarke says, "If tradition, custom, care-"leffness, or mistake, have put a sense upon hu-"man forms, disagreeable to scripture, a man is "indispensibly bound not to understand or re-"ceive them in that sense [E]."

That is, indispensably bound in conscience. True. But if that mistaken sense is not barely put there by a private and mistaken man, but bound upon, and incorporated with the human form, by public authority, this not understanding it, or not receiving it, will just amount to not subscribing it.

"The church," faith the Doctor, "hath no legislative authority [F]." We agree to this likewise. Bishop *Hoadley*, and before him St. *Paul*, have proved it beyond the possibility of an answer. But, in this case of subscription, the question is not what power the church bath of right, but what power she exercises. It is very possible for a man to wave or to give up his rights, whether civil or religious, to an usurped authority.

"Every man," faith Dr. Clarke, "that for the fake of peace and order [let me add, or for a

[[]E] Introduct. p. xxiii.

[[]F] Apud Case of Arian Subscription, p. 21.

"maintenance] affents to, or makes use of hu"man forms, is obliged to reconcile and under"stand them in such a sense only as appears to
him to be consistent with the doctrine of scri"pture; otherwise he parts with his Christianity,
"for the sake of a civil and political religion"
[G].

The Doctor means, obliged in conscience, and as a Protestant. But, suppose he cannot reconcile and understand these human forms in such sense only, or even at all, (which is not an impossible case); what is he obliged to then? — May not such a man, as the case is here put, be obliged so to understand, reconcile, and affent to Pope Pius's creed, or a chapter in the Koran, upon the same considerations?

But the true case is really this: Protestant churches ought not to employ human powers to establish religion upon civil and political principles, nor ought conscientious Christians to receive their religion so established. But, if Protestant churches, so called, bave done this, and approved by deeds what they have disclaimed in words, they have left the consistent Christian no option, but either to comply with those churches upon civil and political principles, or to decline all dostrinal connexion with them.

To what Dr. Clarke fays (Introdust. p. xvii.) concerning the declarations of the church in the

[[]G] Cafe of Ar. Subscription, p. 23.

fixth, twentieth, and twenty-first Articles, as giving countenance to his scheme of subscription; Dr. Waterland answers, "That these declarations " amount to no more, than that nothing is to be " received, but what is agreeable to scripture. "And for this very reason the church requires "fubscription in her own sense, because she judges " no other fense to be agreeable to scripture [H]."

This is indeed giving the church but a very indifferent character, representing her as infinuating one thing, and meaning another. But, if it is a true character, who can help it? The church, perhaps, might suppose, that the scripture could never be more accurately interpreted, than she had interpreted it in her Articles. Be that how it would, her own interpretation of it in these Articles, is the only one she admits of, exclusive of all other fenses. And therefore Dr. Waterland is fairly entitled to his conclusion, " If any judge " that the church's own fense is not agreeable " to scripture, let them not subscribe."

"When in the public forms," fays Dr. Clarke, "there be (as there generally are) expressions which, at first sight, look different ways, it can-" not be but men must be allowed to interpret " what is obscure, by that which seems to them " more plain and fcriptural [I]."

[[]H] Case of Arian Subscription, p. 25. [1] Ibid. p. 26.

Another advocate on the same side expresseth this matter thus: "Unless this liberty be allowed" (i. e. the liberty of subscribing the Articles in any sense the words will bear, and in which they may be reconciled to (the subscribers own sense of) scripture, and to the other authorized forms of the church) "no body can subscribe the Articles, Creeds, and Liturgy of the church of England at all; there are several things in these forms, which, if taken in the most obvious sense, contradict one another [K]."

No matter for that, if you subscribe them they must be so taken. For who can give you the liberty you desire? Not the Bishops, nor even the Legislature without a new law; and then surely no private man has the power to take this liberty of himself. "No man, says Phileleutherus, "without this liberty can subscribe our public forms." Without what liberty? Why the liberty of reconciling contradictions. Did Phileleutherus consider to what this liberty may amount? What is there that, with this liberty, a man cannot subscribe? Might not the most crude system of Paganism be made good Christian divinity, by putting a less obvious sense upon it?

Let us fee how Dr. Waterland provides against this inconvenience. "Sometimes, says he, (in "our public forms) the Father is stilled only God; oftener all three. Sometimes two of the persons are introduced, in a subordination of order to the

" first.

[[]K] Essay on imposing, &c. by Philelentherus Cantabrigien- \hat{g} s, p. 43.

"first. At other times, their perfect equality of nature" (which, by the way, excludes all forts and degrees of subordination, for subordination of order, is nonsense) "is as fully and clearly pro"fessed [L]."

These, I suppose, are the contradictions and obscurities, or some of them, objected by Dr. Clarke, and Phileleutherus. But Dr. Waterland will have it, that all here is easy and consistent; "be-"cause what goes before or after them, and other "passages in our public forms, REQUIRE that "they should be consistent." In consequence of which, Dr. Waterland is for putting a less obvious sense upon those passages which seem, at sirst sight, to contravene a perfett equality in the Godhead.

Would this ridiculous sophistry of Waterland's, have gone down with Dr. Clarke and his party? By no means. And yet they proceed upon the same principle, when they would put a less obvious sense upon the passages which affirm a perfect equality; namely, because the plain scriptural doctrine of a subordination of nature, Requires this less obvious sense to be put upon those passages, that all may be clear and consistent.

But who fees not that all these several senses are established in our public forms? Who sees not that, in the eye of the law, and in the intention of the church, every subscriber subscribes to them all? And consequently, that in subscribing, Dr. Waterland was an Arian, and Dr. Clarke an

[[]L] Waterland's Case, &c. p. 30, 31.

Athanasian as often as they received these inconfistent forms, respectively, by subscribing them.

In one word, all Dr. Clarke's arguments that I have feen, tend only to prove, that in truth, and reason, and common justice, and common sense, fuch and fuch things ought not to have been imposed upon Christians in protestant churches: which he and others have done with all possible precision and perspicuity. But not one of them hath been able to fliew, that fuch things are not imposed. Dr. Clarke, indeed, has as good as confessed the fact, in the long passage I have cited from his Introduction. And hath more than fupposed it, in the suggestions at the end of his book, concerning the expediency of a Review of our ecclefiastical forms. For if all these liberties in affenting to and subscribing these forms are given, and may be honestly and conscientiously taken, the occasion for a Review, or, in other words, for altering these forms, cannot be so very pressing as he would represent it.

The next advocate for this liberty and latitude in our fubscriptions, is the acute writer of, The Case of Subscription, &c. in answer to Dr. Waterland's Case of Arian subscription [M]. But as this Gentleman argues chiefly from Dr. Waterland's concessions, and from that in particular which imports that some of the Articles are left indeterminate, there is not much in his pamphlet which has not already fallen under our notice.

[[]M] Commonly supposed to be Dr. Sykes.

Some things, however, deferve our farther confideration.

The first remarkable occurrence in this performance, is the great stress that is laid upon King Charles I's Declaration, which gave the latitudinarian subscribers the first hint of general. literal, and grammatical fenses. It has been proved before, that this rescript is of no manner of validity. But suppose it, for the present, to have the validity of a royal Declaration? What would be its operation? Just the same with that of King James IId's Declaration for liberty of Conscience: which went upon the pretence, that there was a power in the Crown to dispense with the Statute-Law of the land. The xxxix Articles in Charles I's time had as strong a statute on their side, as any of those which excluded Papists from offices of trust or power in the reign of James II. The title of these Articles was recognized in the A& of the 13th of Elizabeth. And that title fet forth. that they were agreed upon for the preventing diversitics of opinions, and consequently, for the preventing of all general, literal, or grammatical fenses, which admitted diversities of opinions. Charles's Declaration then, which is understood to have introduced these senses, and thereby to have allowed of diversities of opinions, was just as fubverfive of the ecclefiastical, as King James's was of the civil constitution. I have indeed said elsewhere, that I do not understand the Declaration before the Articles in this light. I offer this therefore

therefore only as an argument ad hominem, which might have put this ingenious person to some trouble to vindicate his revolution-principles, of which he was known to be a strenuous and successful affector.

What he fays from Fuller's Church-History of Britain, is something (and but very little) more considerable. It concerns Rogers's Exposition of the xxxix Articles. "Some Protestants, according to Fuller, conceived it presumption for any private minister, to make himself the mouth of the church, to render her sense in matters of so high concernment. Others were offended of, that he [Rogers] consined the charitable latitude, formerly allowed in these Articles; the composers whereof, providently foreseeing

" differences of opinions, purposely couched the Articles in general terms, &c. [N]."

Now, I would defire to know what there is in this cenfure extraordinary? or what there is in it that affects Rogers's Exposition, more than the sentiments of particular readers affect any other new book that is published? and particularly, any exposition of these Articles?

Bishop Burnet, in the History of his own times, gives us an account, of the ill reception bis Exposition met with among some church-of-England

[[]N] Case of subsers occasioned, &c. p. 14. See this fancy of Dr. Fuller's effectually overthrown in a pamphlet intituled, Remarks on the rev. Dr. Powell's sermon in defence of subscriptions, p. 46. e. q. s. printed for Millar 1758.

men, and records an attempt to censure it even in the Convocation, particularly because of his afferting, that men might subscribe the Articles in any literal or grammatical sense the words would bear.

Would the author of the Case allow these cenfures to be a good argument, that the composers of the Articles intended no latitude? Or would he allow them, without some farther circumstance of proof, to invalidate His Majesty's Declaration, under the wing of which the Bishop afferts this latitude?

If not, what proof can he draw from Fuller's historical account of a matter of fact, that Rogers was in the wrong, and that the composers of the Articles did really intend a latitude?

Probably it will be faid, that the censurers of Rogers's book, living nearer the times of the composers than Bishop Burnet's opponents, had a better opportunity to know whether they intended a latitude or not. But to this it would be sufficient to answer, that Rogers himself, living nearer those times, than either Bishop Burnet, or even Fuller himself, must be better acquainted with the minds of the composers, than either of these historians; and full as well as any of his censurers. So that from this kind of presumptive reasoning no truth arises, either on the one side or the other.

If we go farther into particulars, Rogers has greatly the advantage of all that come after him, in point of authority. His book was dedicated to Archbishop Bancroft, whose chaplain

he was; and bears in the front of it, a testimony, that it was perused, and, by the lawful authority of the church of England, allowed to be public [O].

[O] Both they who said in Fuller's days, that Rogers made himself the mouth of the Church as a private minister, and they who, in these later times, have denied that the faid Rogers had the authority he pretends to in his title-page, were mistaken. The appointed licensers of books, at that time, were the chaplains of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London, and sometimes of other Bishops. Regers was chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, and as such had (what was then effeemed a lawful) authority to give books their paffport to the prefs. But to have given a formal imprimatur in his own name, to his own book, would have had an odd appearance. He therefore cliefe to fignify the approbation of his book in the manner he has done. And as there can be no doubt but he took Bancroft's fense of the matter for his rule. he certainly had the authority of the church of England for publishing his book; and became the mouth of the church, upon the strength of that authority; and did not make himself the mouth of the church, as a private minister. On the other hand, Bishop Burnet, who had the private concurrence and encouragement of Archbishop Tennison and several others of the bench. declares that his exposition was not a work of authority; nor do any of the rest who have written upon the subject pretend to it, except Welchman, and he indeed brings an Imprimatur from a Deputy Vicechancellor of Oxford, who certainly was not the mouth of the church. This book of Rogers's then is the only authorizative exposition we have of the articles; though Welchman's is the book in vogue for the examination of candidates, and hath paffed through no less than ten editions, fix Latin, and four English, and all with considerable variations from Rogers, particularly in the article of scripture proofs, scme of which in Welchman, are something worse than nothing to the purpose. And as to the other explanations and authorities that Welchman brings, it is remarkable that he is ten times more refrictive, with respect to a particular determinate sense,

"That in our Articles, fays this writer, a la"titude was defigned to be given to, and there"fore may be taken by the subscriber, is no new
"opinion, or of nine or ten years standing only,
"is evident [O]."

That the opinion is not new, is indeed evident from Fuller. But opinion is one thing, and fast is another. That such latitude was really designed, never has been, nor ever can be proved. It was Dr. Waterland's opinion, with respect to the calvinistical Articles. But this very Author of the Case, hath, in answer to Waterland's Supplement, made it sufficiently evident, that the Doctor's opinion was groundless. And if so, the Doctor might effectually have turned the tables upon him, with respect to the Articles concerning the Trinity, in some of which the compilers of 1562, have taken away the little appearance of latitude there was in the Articles of K. Edward [2].

This opinion of a latitude intended to be given to subscribers of the Articles is indeed only matter of oral tradition, bred out of the distress of some particular persons, who desired to keep a good conscience, and not to part with a good benefice. One would think, by Fuller's manner of representing the censures upon Rogers, that there

than Rogers himself. And therefore though the fathers of our church do not chuse to own Welchman, otherwise than by their practice; the very use they make of him shews, that they are by no means in love with a lixity of interpretation.

[[]P] Case occasioned, &c. p. 14.

^[2] See Remarks on Powell's fermon, p. 51.

had been a cloud of witnesses for this intended satitude. But when he had occasion to defend his position, he could name only King James, who had no better proof of it than another man; viz. the occasion he had for this hypothesis when he was veering about to the Arminians.

Nothing is more evident, in the ecclefiaftical histories of those times, than that Queen Elizabeth's Bishops, either had no notion that latitude and toleration were Gospel-privileges, or an utter aversion to such notion, as schismatical and puritanical. Their own hardships under Queen Mary had taught them very little compassion for disfenters, when the rod of correction came into their own hands, though honest Fuller would have had it believed, that it was a confideration of this fort, that brought forth this discrete laxity in wording the Articles; in which there is just as much truth, as there is common fense in his suppoling them to have prediscovered the diffensions, that would happen in the church an hundred years after they were dead.

But the ingenious author of the Case, besides bringing these authorities, bethinks himself of pleading for this latitude from the reason of the thing.

"He that composes a form of words, says he, either so inaccurately, or so designedly, as that the propositions contained in them, in the usual literal construction, may or do signify differ-

"ent things, has no reason to complain of pre"varication,

se varication, if men of very different notions u-" nite in subscribing such form."

But the church denies that this is her cafe. She declares her articles were not fo composed, either inaccurately or designedly. The fallacy of this reasoning consists in the Casuil's supposing, that the usual literal construction of words is not always the same. When the church set forth these forms of words, the usual, literal construction of them was but one. If time, and the mutability of language, have given room for another usual. literal construction of these words, or forms, the church cannot help that, because she could not foresee it. They who understand both constructions (as all fcholars do) know very well, that the old one is the church's construction; and therefore, they who put the new construction upon the church's old words, or forms, -they, I fay, and not the compilers of the Articles, are the inaccurate persons, and, as such, are justly complained of for prevaricating. And indeed all the subsequent sophistry of this writer turns upon what he calls, the natural and proper fignification of words. Natural and proper, with respect to the fignification of such words in modern usage, were, he well knows, though he chuses to diffemble it, unnatural and improper, in the year 1562.

Let us now take a view of another fincere friend to religious liberty, who wrote a pamphlet, much esteemed, in the year 1719, under the name of Phileleutherus Cantabrigiensis, intituled

An essay on imposing and subscribing Articles of Religion.

This very fensible writer begins with making allowances for an (humanly) established authority in matters ecclesiastical. (And by the way, makes a great many more allowances than he ought to have made [R].) After which he insists, that, "no Articles, as a Rule and Standard of doctrinal preaching, ought to be imposed, because of the great danger that the right of Christians to private judgment incurrs by such imposition;" notwithstanding which, he is of opinion, that, "for the sake of peace, a man may fubmit to an usurpation upon this right, provided he believes what is contained in the Articles."

When he comes to explain what he means by believing what is contained in the Articles, it appears to be, "believing them in any fense the "words will admit of." In consequence of which, he takes some pains to shew, that "these "Articles may be subscribed (and consequently believed) by a Sabellian, an orthodox Trinitation (whose opinion he calls nonsense), a Triz" theist, and an Arian so called."

One would wonder what idea this writer had of peace, when he supposed it might be kept by the act of subscription, among men of these different judgments. Why might not the same

[[]R] See An Apology for a Protoftant Diffent, printed for Burne 1755, p. 28, 29.

men, with equal fafety to the peace of the church, subscribe four several forms of words, each expressing his own system clearly and explicitly, as subscribe the same form of words, in four different senses?

But did this Gentleman, in good earnest, believe, that the compilers of the Articles intended to make room for these four several senses? I will answer for him—He did not believe it. We all know, by the title of the Articles, and he knew it as well as any of us, that the sense of the compilers was but one sense; and that sense being bound upon the subscriber by law, it is plain that three of the senses abovementioned are excluded, both in the intention of the compilers, and by the tenor of the law which establishes the Articles, and injoins subscription to them.

Let us now look back to his principles. Why ought not fuch Articles to be imposed upon Christian Preachers, as a test? He does not, indeed, answer this question in plain terms; but his principles lead us to a very just and proper answer to it; namely, because the subject of preaching in a Christian Church, is the Gospel of Christ, over which no human power can have any controul, or exercise any, without incurring the guilt of setting up another Gospel, under another authority, distinct from His, who hath declared himself to be the ONE Master to whom all Christians ought to submit. Would this Gentleman have afferted totidem verbis, that we may give

up our Christian liberty to those who usurp the province of Christ? He makes use, indeed, of the word usurpation, but he refers it only to the right of private judgment, and of this right or liberty, he makes little doubt, but a man may abridge himself, p. 33.

But upon what is this right founded? Is it not folely upon those principles of the Gospel, that Christ is King in his own Kingdom? That he is the only Lord and Master in matters pertaining to conscience? And can any man give way to an usurpation of that authority, which Christ claims folely to himself, without revolting from his allegiance, and submitting to an usurper of his Kingdom?

Here let us stop. There is no occasion to proceed a step further, or to enquire upon what notions of latitude in the Articles the Essayer could reconcile his subscription to them with his obligations to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ bath made bim free. Upon which subject he hath indeed brought no more than hath been answered already.

There is yet another writer upon this subject, of the same complexion, who must not be wholly passed by, as he hath been at the pains to sum up the whole merits of this case in a few words [S].

[[]S] In a pamphlet intituled, The external Peace of the Church only attainable by a Zeal for Scripture in its just Laticule, 1716, printed for Baker.

"If."

"If," fays he, "we consider ourselves as members of the church of *England*, we are not obliged to an uniformity of opinion."

In other words, the church of England, as fuch, hath no uniform dostrine; which, whatever the matter of fact may be, the church, I apprehend, will not take for a compliment. But this idle notion being built entirely on His Majesty's Declaration, falls to the ground along with that. He goes on:

"If the Legislature do not think fit to deter"mine in what particular fense the subscriber
shall give his affent, it is very possible and well
known, that persons of quite opposite opinions
may and do subscribe."

Hath the legislature then determined, that men may subscribe the Articles in opposite senses? No. If not, then hath the legislature determined any thing about articles and subscriptions? Yes, it hath determined that the xxxix Articles shall be subscribed, for the purpose of avoiding diversities of opinions. The legislature then hath determined that the Articles shall be subscribed only in one sense respectively; and that is, in the most obvious sense of each Article.

"The fense," saith this author, "which such as require subscriptions accept and tolerate, is to be the rule of subscription."

This matter is put in a wrong light. It is the Law, and the Law only, which requireth sub-

fcription; and "requireth that it should be made "before the Ordinary, that is, in the presence "of the person who institutes. The Ordinary "is not bound to offer the Articles to be sub- "fcribed; but the Clerk himself is bound to "offer to subscribe them; and he must subscribe "without any reserve, exception, or qualifica- "tion [T]."

The canonical subscription is indeed another affair, of which there is no present occasion to say any thing, as the question bere is only concerning subscription, as enjoined by the legislature. And enough has been said of this to refute our author's fancy about accepting and tolerating senses.

The author concludes thus: "Since the church "therefore accepts and tolerates contrary opinions, "its plain the church does not conceive identity of opinion necessary to her tranquillity."

The church, as we have feen, accepts or tolerates nothing, but what the Law allows her to accept and tolerate: which is just the reverse of contrary opinions. The notion indeed is absurd, even so far as there is any colour to apply it to the church. If the church accepts and tolerates, she likewise espouses and maintains contrary opinions. For the persons, whose contrary opinions she accepts and tolerates, do, by this very act of subscription, become part of the body of the church herself, and most commonly are the very

mouth of the church; and retail their contrary opinions to the public, by the very authority which the church gives them. Is not this to lift the church off her ancient foundations? Or rather is it not to own the justice of that reproach, "That "the church of England, properly fo called, is "not now existing [U]?"

There were several others of this way of thinking, who bore a part in this controversy, but, as they all went into the church at the same door which Dr. Clarke had opened for them, and believed, or pretended to believe, the protestations of the church, against the matter of fact, we meet with nothing in their respective systems of latitude, which hath not already been obviated. And, the matter of fact being so plain and in-

[U] See a pamphlet intituled, Observations upon the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to the thirty-nine Articles. "frictures of Religion," fays this excellent writer, (meaning the thirty-nine Articles) "are either a rule of teaching in "this church, or they are not a rule. If they are not a rule, "what constitutes the church of England? If they be a rule "and a standard, where must be grounded the authority of "modern teaching, which is not only not agreeable to these "Articles, but absolutely a contrary system? In case, by any " after-lights, a clergyman finds cause to change his subscribing "opinion (a right I shall not dispute), and goes into different " schemes, why is not such disagreement with his rule publicly "acknowledged, and the people advertised of the difference? "This mystery of the pulpit appears to me unfair with respect " to the people. They have no fixed fight of their minister's "fcheme. They can have no fecurity, no dependance upon " him, in any doctrinal point whatfoever." Pag. 2, 3.

disputable, it is to little purpose to argue the matter of right, upon the original Protestant principle; as if that principle was still allowed to have its uncontrouled operation in the matter of fubscription to the Articles. We frankly allow that every Protestant, as such, has a right to deny his affent to, or approbation of, any doctrine, which he himself conceives to be contrary to the scriptures. But the moment he fits down to fubscribe the xxxix Articles, circumstanced and conditioned as that subscription now is, he sits down to fign away this right (as much as in him lies), and to transfer it to the church. The church, indeed, does not in fo many words require him to fubscribe to any thing which is contrary or even disagreeable to the scripture. But the church, by obtaining that subscription from him, takes the interpretation of scripture out of his hands. It is the church, and the church only, that finds therein, and proves thereby, the propositions to be subscribed. And if a man should after that pretend to interpose his own judgment in contradiction to the church's findings and provings, the church, with the help of the state, would foon shew him his mistake; by virtue of that Alliance, the original inftrument of which hath been so happily discovered and commented upon by a great Genius of our own times. The church of England "tells mankind indeed, they shall "judge for themselves. But if they who take

"her word, do not think and judge as she does, "they shall suffer for it, and be turned out of the "house." To prove the EQUITY of which proceeding (EQUITY and UTILITY, in this author's idea, being the same thing) is the laudable purpose of this samous new-found ALLIANCE.

There is yet one writer behind, who hath offered a plea for liberty and latitude in subscribing the Articles, of a different complexion from the rest. The writer I mean is Dr. Clayton, the late worthy Bishop of Clogher in Ireland, and author of the Essay on Spirit, who, in his Dedication of that learned work, hath taken this matter of subscription into particular consideration.

Bishop Conybeare had observed, in his sermon on the Case of Subscription, that the xxxix Articles are not to be considered as Articles of Peace, but of Doctrine, as the very title denotes, which is, for avoiding diversities of opinions, and for establishing consent touching true religion. And from this circumstance his Lordship inferred, and very justly, "that every man's subscription amounts to an approbation of, and an affent to, the truth of the doctrine therein contained, in the very sense in which the compilers thereof are sup-"posed to have understood them."

Now, the right reverend Essayist tells us his case was this: "Being a clergyman, he had sub-" scribed the Articles pretty early in life, and "probably in the sense in which the compilers understood them. But finding reasons after-

"wards to disagree with his former opinions, he laboured under some difficulties how to direct himself in these circumstances."

Had Bishop Conybeare been consulted upon these difficulties, there is little doubt but he would have answered, that this change of opinions in the Essayist was virtually disclaiming his subscription, which let him into his function; and, as he now no longer complied with the conditions required by the church of all her ministers, an obligation seemed to lay upon him to resign his preferments in the church.

To avoid this confequence, Bishop Clayton was inclined to consider these Articles not as Articles of doctrine, but as Articles of peace. "As I ap-" prehend," says he, "that the church of Ireland does not set up for infallibility, I do not think the requireth any other kind of subscription than such as is necessary for peace-sake."

What the laws of subscription are in *Ireland*, I know not; but if his Lordship formed his judgment only on the circumstance of the church of *Ireland's* disclaiming infallibility, I fancy the case may be much the same there, as in our own country; where, though we are not *infallible*, we are always in the right. His apprehensions, therefore, of ecclesiastical moderation, in the one country or the other, will go but a little way towards settling the debatable point between the Essayist and Bishop Conybeare, which, resting upon a mat-

THE CONFESSIONAL. 201 ter of fact, must be determined by suitable evidence.

"I apprehend," fays Dr. Clayton, "any attempt towards avoiding diversity of opinion,
not only to be an useless, but an impracticable
ficheme." In which I entirely agree with him.
But what then? It actually was the attempt of our first Reformers, and is still the scheme of the churches of England and Ireland.

"I do not only doubt," continues he, "whether the compilers of the Articles, but even whe- ther any two thinking men ever agreed exactly in their opinion, not only with regard to all the Articles, but even with regard to any one of them."

The presumptive proof is very strong, that Cranmer was the fole compiler of K. Edward's Articles. The alterations and corrections of 1562, are well known to be in Parker's hand, who, though he might make a shew of consulting his brethren, most probably gave them to understand at the same time, that the Articles were to pass as they were then settled *. Thinkers in those days, any more than in our own,

^{*} The Irish Articles were different from those of the church of England, till the year 1634, "when, by the power of the "Lord Deputy Wentworth, and the dexterity of Bishop Bram-"hal, the Irish articles were repealed in a full convocation, and those of England authorized in the place thereof." Heylin's History of the Presbyterians, p. 395.

were not very common; and perhaps not half a dozen of those to whom they were communicated. or who subscribed them, considered how far they differed from each other, or suspected that they differed at all. They received them implicitly, as hundreds do to this hour: and confequently in the fense of the compiler or compilers. transmitted them to posterity just as they received them; and just so were they bound upon posterity by law. The inutility, therefore, and the impractibility of an uniformity of opinion, where men are disposed to think for themselves, is indeed an unanswerable argument why such Articles should never be imposed, but will afford no proof that our xxxix Articles are not imposed with this particular view.

But though the right reverend Author of the Essay thinks thus of our Articles, and of the subscribers to them, he seems to think it expedient that there should be some such system of doctrines, not indeed as a test of opinions, but of profession. I say, he seems to think so. But let the reader judge from his own words.

"An uniformity of profession," says he, "may indeed be both practicable and useful; and feems, in some degree, to be necessary, not only for the preservation of peace, but also for the general good and welfare of society."

His Lordship must mean, an uniformity of profession with respect to those things, concerning which the belief or persuasion of the several professors may be different and multiform. Otherwise the proposition is not of sufficient importance to require, or indeed to deserve, a formal argument to support it. For who ever doubted but that, in matters of religion, a man both usefully may and reasonably ought to profess what he believes?

By religion I mean the Christian religion: But to believe one thing, and to profess another, the Christian religion calls hypocrify, and under that name severely censures and condemns it. Hypocrify, indeed, may ferve the turn of a particular class of men in society, who have views and interests distinct from the general good and welfare of the whole. But how this grand enemy to truth and virtue should contribute either to the peace of, or be otherwise useful or wholefome to, fociety in general, is a mystery that will require some elucidation.

"I do not conceive," fays this ingenious Prelate, "how any fociety or commonwealth can " fublift, unless some form of religion or other " be established therein, as well with regard to "doctrine as discipline; which spoints of doc-"trine] however ought to be as plain, few, and " fundamental as possible."

Forms of discipline are not, indeed, now at issue; but are however necessary to be taken into the account. And as St. Paul thought, that men might lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and bonesty, under proper subjection

to, and coercion of the civil magistrate, I do not see that I should be ashamed to think so too. And this point being settled, how the subsistence of any society or republic should depend upon the establishment of dostrinal forms of religion, is just as difficult for me to conceive, as it was to the learned Prelate to conceive the contrary [W].

That his Lordship meant some buman form of religion, is evident from his adding, that the points of dottrine in such form, should be as plain, few, and fundamental as possible. But, for my part, I cannot see why establishing the scriptures should not answer all the ends of civil society, in this respect, as well as any other forms. When you have made a proper provision for the external deportment of men, as subjects to the state, by a wholesome and righteous civil institute, it remains only that their religious manners, sentiments,

[M] "With regard to the safety of the government from "persons disapproving the communion of the church, that "point the Prince only has to do with, and the Legislature." In case a test can be found, of a secular kind, adequate to "that purpose, as certainly there may, to draw religious controversies into the question, is altogether foreign. This latter makes the safety proposed by it (if I am not mistaken) not so properly the safety of the Prince or Monarchy some may add likewise, of the state, as the safety of the Clergy and "Hierarchy, in their authority and acquisitions. Otherwise the oath of Supremacy and Allegiance would be sufficient." This the only test the occasion naturally calls for." Sea-GRAVE'S Observations on the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to the thirty nine Articles, p. 45, 46.

and dispositions should be formed by the rules, precepts, and doctrines of the word of God. But this being a matter rather of personal than of public concern, must be left to the men themfelves, if we would have the work done with its proper influence and effect. Whatever appearances of fanctity, devotion, and Christian virtue, external forms and ordinances may produce in public, it is but so much hypocrify, if a real principle of religion is not in the hearts of the feveral individuals; and how this principle should be planted in the heart, rather by buman forms. than by the genuine scriptures, no mortal can From what I have seen of human forms, I will venture to fay, that points of Christian doctrine cannot be made plainer in them, than they are already in the scriptures; and fewer or less fundamental they ought not to be made.

But, to come a little nearer the point in hand: The Bishop doubts, as we have seen, "whether "any two thinking men ever agreed exactly in "opinion with regard to any one of our xxxix "Articles." And he who doubts this can hardly suppose that any form of doctrine can be drawn up in human language, consisting of points so plain, sew, and fundamental, as that all, or even a majority, of those for whose use they are intended, shall persectly agree in them. The Bishop will say, there is no occasion they should, because uniformity of prosession is all that he wants to have established. But, if so, why will not

our present Articles, why indeed will not the Articles of Trent, do as well as any other for the purpose? He that professes to believe points of doctrine which he does not believe, be they ever so plain, few, or fundamental, in the apprehension of the establishers, is just as much an hypocrite, as if such forms were stuffed with ever so many impertinences, or even falsities.

The use of religion to society, I apprehend to be, that men having in their hearts the sear of God and of his judgments, may be restrained from evil, and encouraged to be virtuous, in such instances as are beyond the reach of human laws. Points of doctrine therefore, established for the public good of society, must have this use of religion for their object. But if a man disbelieves in his beart, what he professes with his tongue or with his pen, religion, as such, has no hold of him in that instance, and society has no more benefit from his profession, than if such points of doctrine had not been established.

Again. To make uniformity of religious profession necessary, in any degree, for the subsistence of the commonweath, it must be necessary that the points to be professed, be established upon exclusive conditions. And this extending, in our author's plan, both to doctrine and discipline, will leave no room for dissenters in either. For every dissenter breaks in upon the scheme of uniformity, and consequently on the peace and welfare which this uniformity is intended to main-

tain. This, at once, demolishes all those systems of Government which tolerate doctrines and disciplines, contrary to the established forms. Whereas, experience has taught us, that those commonwealths have always been either the freest from religious seuds, or the least incommoded by them, which have tolerated different sects with the greatest latitude, and appropriated the sewest emoluments to one.

If the question should be asked, why a commonwealth, or a state, cannot subsist in peace and welfare without some established form of religion? the answer to be expected from his Lordship would be, that except men were uniform in their profession of religion, there could be nothing in a state but discord and confusion. And yet his Lordship says, "if men were not to speak their minds in spite of establishments (that is to say, openly profess things contrary to establishments), truth would soon be banished from "the earth."

Does not this plainly imply, that establishments banish truth from the earth, in the same proportion, as they answer the ends of peace and welfare to the civil community? Or, how could worse evils result from mens speaking their minds, when they were under no restraints from establishments, than now, that they take that liberty in spite of them?

The Defender of the effay on spirit, is displeased with somebody for suggesting that his client ought to have been against all religious establish-

ments, which however is true enough, if these abovementioned are the effects of them. True Religion never can subsist, whatever may become of civil communities, upon the basis of hypocrify; or where men are obliged to prosess one thing, and allowed to believe another. And if the rule of true religion be taken from the Christian scriptures, the temporal peace and safety of any Christian, in civil society, is but a secondary consideration, to the obligation he is under to hold fast his integrity, in truth and sincerity.

The reason given, why human establishments with regard to religion are necessary, is, "that "the welfare and support of society is so founded "by the great Author of Nature, on the basis of "religion, that it is impossible to separate the "one from the other; and, of consequence, the sessiblishment of the one will necessarily re"quire the establishment of the other [X]."

The meaning of which, at the bottom, is only this, that human laws reach the exigencies of civil fociety so imperfectly, that, unless the influence of religion is connected with them, the welfare and peace of civil society cannot be supported. Which, I apprehend, no body will deny.

But then, as this plan of civil Government is delineated by the great Author of Nature, it will be necessary to take bis directions in the execution of it; if any such directions may be come at. And if no such directions are to be found,

it is doubtful, whether the plan itself, authorized by the great Author of Nature, may be found.

The fophism here turns upon the word establishment. Religion may be said to be established, when it is received and professed by individuals, upon the fole authority of divine revelation. Civil fociety can only be established by human Laws and ordinances, at least as this author conceives, and as, for the present, I am willing to grant. If then the establishment of religion by divine revelation, is sufficient to answer the purposes of civil fociety, the purposes of the great Author of Nature, in creating this connection, are answered at the fame time; and with any farther establishment of religion, human laws have nothing to do. Whether they have or not? is the question. And hereupon, the writer of the Letter to the Bishop of Clogher, very pertinently asks, Who is the judge? That is to fay, who is the judge, how far it may be necessary to establish religion by human laws?

To this the Defender answers without hesitation, "The same legislative powers, which estamblish the one, have a right to establish the or, ther; and to chuse that religion which they think to be best [Y]."

Where it must be supposed, that the great Author of Nature hath left it as free for Magistrates, and Legislators, to establish by human Laws, what doctrises or modes of religion they

[[]Y] Defence of the Essay on Spirit, p. 3.

chuse, or find expedient for secular utility; as it is for them to chuse what modes of civil society they find convenient. Which indeed is to suppose, that there never was any authentic revelation of true religion in the world. For as surely as God has revealed true religion, so surely has he inhibited Magistrates, and all others from establishing any thing contrary to it, or deviating from it.

But by what is faid in the *Dedication* prefixed to the *effay on spirit*, the *Defender*, most likely, would confine this *right* of the legislative powers, to the inforcing of an *Uniformity of Profession* only.

But it has been shewn above, that in this view, the establishment of religion will afford no aid to civil laws; in as much as he who professes one thing, and believes another, will derive none of that influence from his profession, which is necessary to supply the unavoidable defects of civil ordinances. Not to mention, that if the great Author of Nature sounded the welfare and support of society, on no surer basis of religion than this, it hardly seems worthy of his infinite wisdom to have interposed in this matter at all.

But indeed, both the wisdom and goodness of our benevolent Creator are most ungraciously misrepresented by this author. Upon his principles, whatever right Christian Legislators have to establish what religion they chuse for the best, the the same had the Pagan Legislators. Suppose

these

these then to have extended their establishment no farther than to an uniformity of Profession, what were St. Paul's converts to do? were they to comply with the modes of the times, and profess themselves idolaters? This the Apostle prohibits in express terms; and herein ventures to counteract this right of the civil legislative powers. And no doubt upon good authority.

When we apply this theory of religious establishments to our own circumstances, the case will stand thus. Our legislative powers have a right to establish human forms of religion, so far at least as to require uniformity of profession. This right they have exercised, and this right they have from the great Author of Nature. The consequence is, that all Dissenters from these established forms, that is, all who disclaim the profellion, as well as the belief of them, are not only offenders against civil peace and order, but wicked opposers of the authority of God himself. This indeed has been charged upon them by our zealous church-memorialists with all freedom. The civil powers have however granted them a toleration, which we may be fure they would not have done, unless they had entertained more qualified fentiments concerning their own rights; as well as more accurate conceptions of the welfare and support of society, than this Defender of the Essay on Szirit exhibits.

But to conclude this chapter. There is one particular weakness and want of forecast, com-

mon to all these pleaders for latitude. If you take their several schemes, as they are sounded upon the church's declarations, nothing can be more righteous or reasonable than to comply with the terms prescribed by the church; and then, perfectly consistent is the reasonableness of conformity, with the rights of private judgment. But go back to their principles of Christian Liberty, on which they oppose the Advocates for Church-authority, and you will find there is nothing more inconsistent with those principles, than the Authority which the church of England actually claims and exercises.

The high Churchmen, Rogers, Stebbing, Hare, Waterland, Potter, Snape, and their retainers, claim no privileges for the Church of England, which she does not actually enjoy, nor any powers which she does not actually exercise. Their proofs are accordingly directed to shew, that she rightly enjoys and exercises these privileges and powers.

When therefore their opponents had shewn, that the church had no such privileges or powers of right; consistency required that they should have withdrawn from a church, which usurped an authority that did not belong to her, and to have born their testimony against her in DEEDS, as well as words.

· C H A P. VII.

An attempt to discover whence the practice of subscribing the xxxix Articles in different senses, was derived; and by what sort of casuists, and what sort of reasoning it was sirst propagated, and has been since espoused.

It is a fact in which our historical writers of all parties agree, that, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and for some part of the reign of King James I. there was no difference between the episcopal churchmen, and the puritans, in matters of doctrine. The Contests between the Bishops and the Puritans of those times concerning subscription, arose from those articles which asserted the powers of an episcopal Hierarchy, and an authority to prescribe and injoin rites and ceremonies. To these forms of Church Government the Puritans had, as they thought, unanswerable objections; and therefore would never subscribe those articles, which approved them, without exceptions and limitations.

The Parliament of 1572, seems to have thought these objections of the Puritans reasonable; and accordingly in the Act of that year, injoining subscription, those Articles are required to be subscribed, which only concern the confession of the true faith, and the sacraments. And when Archbishop Parker took upon him to expostulate with some members of the House of Commons, for leaving

out the rest, he was answered, "that they were "not satisfied concerning their agreement with the Word of God [2]."

The Bishops however, who were the persons appointed by law, to take the security of subscription from the candidates for the ministry, artfully sound the means of evading this moderation of the Parliament, by making certain canons, in consequence of which, subscription was exacted to all the Articles without exception. These canons are to be found in Sparrow's collection, under the title of Liber quorundam canonum, anno 1571 [B]."

The Queen, it seems, (for what reason does not appear) could not be prevailed with to ratify these canons in form; and they were framed likewise, and made public without the *royal license*, requisite in such cases. They had however her Ma-

[A] Strype's Life of Parker, p. 394. See also Selden's Table-

[B] That is, according to the ecclesiastical computation; but they were not published till after the act was past. In the first of these Canons, subscription is injoined in these words, ita tamen ut su'scribant articulis Christianæ religionis, publice in synodo approbatis, sidemque dent, se welle tueri et desendere Doctrinam ceritati verbi divini; which seems to be much the same with the subscription injoined by the Act. But under the title, Concionatores, the Candidate is to consirm, by his subscription, the Book of Common-prayer, and the Book of Ordination, &c. And upon this injunction were modelled four articles, called in those days, The Bishop's Articles, the three first of which were much the same with those in our 36th Canon.

jesty's verbal approbation, or rather perhaps her connivance; with which, by the way, Grindal then Archbishop of York, was by no means satisfied, and very probably, never ventured to carry them into execution within his own Diocese [C].

The Puritans opposed this subscription with all their might. None of them, that I can find, refused to subscribe according to Act of Parliament; that is to fay, to subscribe the dollrinal and facramental articles. They, among them, who subscribed them all, never omitted to make fome exception, or protestation, with respect to the articles which concerned church-government or discipline. Where this was not allowed, they refused to subscribe at all, and chose rather to undergo what the Bishops thought fit to inflict upon them. I say thought fit; for, certain it is, that the faid Bishops, had then no legal authority to filence, imprison, or deprive, as they did, great numbers of those who refused to subscribe their articles.

These facts are sufficiently proved by Mr. Pierce, in his vindication of the Dissenters. For the present however, I chuse to appeal to a testimony less exceptionable to churchmen, I mean Thomas Rogers, in the dedication of his exposition of the xxxix Articles to Archbishop Bancrost, published 1607. Where, though he extolls the Bishops, and reviles the Puritans with the most abject sycophantry, he hath nevertheless represented

[C] See Strype's Life of Parker, p. 322,

the matter so, as to shew, with sufficient perspicuity, that the Puritans might, with great truth and propriety, have said to Elizabeth, what the Hebrew officers pleaded to Pharaoh, Exod. v. 16. Behold thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people.

Upon the accession of James, things went on pretty much in the same way, till after the Hampton-Court-Conference, and the publication of the Canons of 1604. When, as we are informed by Rogers, certain of the brethren, meaning the Puritans, refused to subscribe, not only to the Hierarchical Articles, but to the rest likewise, "be"cause the purpose or intention of the church, if not her doctrine were somewhat varied, sfrom what they were in time of Queen Elizabeth, in proof of which they alledged the late book of "Canons, the book of Conference, (meaning Bishop Barlow's account of the Conference at "Hampton-Court) and some speeches of men in great place, and others [D]."

I do not remember to have feen any mention made of this scruple of the Puritans, in any other history or account of those times; and as it is the first instance of their refusing to subscribe the dostrinal articles of the church, it may be worth the while to look a little farther into it, and to find out, if we can, the nature and cause of this new scruple.

[[]D] See Rogers's Dedication, Sect. 34, 35.

Rogers wifely fays nothing to the particulars of this objection; that is, nothing of the Canons, or the passages in the book of conference, which had given offence. He was writing a fulfome dedication to Bancroft, the father of all this new mischief. To have entered into the merits of the complaint, might have diffurbed his patron. We are obliged to him indeed, that he would mention this matter at all: and cannot but do him the justice to acknowledge, that he hath acquitted himself of the difficulty upon his hands by a very dextrous quibble; viz. "that the " words of the articles being still the same, the " doctrine, purpose, and intention of the church " must be the same likewise." And if the Puritans would not be imposed on by this fophism, it was none of his fault.

But to come to the point. The regal supremacy, as extended to ecclesiastical matters, and especially in the hands of a woman, was an eye-fore from the beginning to the Puritans, as well as to the Papists. This obliged Parker, in reviewing Edward's Articles in 1562, to add a pretty long explanation, to the article concerning the Civil Magistrate, importing, "that the "ministring either of God's word, or of the sa-" craments were not given to our Prince, —but only that prerogative which we see to have been given always, to all godly Princes in the holy scriptures, by God himself;" meaning the godly Princes of Judab and Israel. Article thirty-seven.

With

With this explanation the Puritans had reason to be (and probably were) satisfied. When the Kings of Israel and Judah interfered with the sacred office of the Priesthood, farther than they were warranted by the law of Moses, they ceased to be godly Princes; and so long as our own Princes kept themselves within the like bounds, their supremacy was liable to no abuse. Should it prove otherwise, the Puritans had no objection to the doctrine of resistance; or the lawfulness of transferring dominion from ungodly Princes to the pious and elect.

But these dostrines James could by no means relish. He knew not in what light he might stand with his people in process of time. If in the light of a reprobate, here was a door left open for transferring his crown to a better man.

Bancroft therefore took care to falve this matter in the canon which enjoined subscription, by adding to the authority of the godly Kings in scripture, that of the Christian Emperors in the primitive church, godly or ungodly; and at the same time vesting James with the supremacy in ALL causes ecclesiastical and civil [E].

[E] See Canon ii. xxxvi. and lv. The Article to be subscribed to, concerning the Queen's [Elizabeth's] supremacy, in the injunction appealed to in our thirty-seventh Article, was thus worded: "The Queen's Majesty is the chief Governour, "next under Christ, of this church of England, as well in ecciclesaftical as civil causes." Which may be compared with the first of the three Articles, enjoined to be subscribed by our thirty-sixth Canon.

This

This alteration put matters upon a very different footing, and made no small variation in the doctrine of the church. It is but dipping into the imperial law, wherever it opens at an ecclesiaftical case, to be convinced, that the *Christian* Emperors far outstripped the Jewish Kings, in the powers they claimed and ex ecised over the church [F]. But,

2. The passage in the Book of Conference, which gave offence, was chiefly this. In the sixteenth Article of our church it is said, that after we have received the Holy Ghost we may fall from grace. Dr. Reynolds imagined this might feem to cross the doctrine of Predestination, unless some such words were added as, yet neither totally, nor finally, which he desired might be done by way of explanation. He likewise desired that the nine Lambeth Articles, drawn up by Whitgist, might be inserted in the book of Articles.

Dr. Bancroft was highly provoked at this, and observed, "that very many in those days, neg-

" lesting holiness of life, presumed too much on

" persisting in grace; laying all their religion on

"Predestination; if I shall be saved, I shall be faved: which he termed a desperate doctrine,

" flewing it to be contrary to good divinity, and

" the true doctrine of Predestination; wherein we

[[]F] They who choose not to turn over voluminous codes of the imperial law, may find what is here advanced tolerably well made out in Father Paul's History of Beneficiary Matters.

66 should rather reason ascendendo, than descendendo, thus, I live in obedience to God, in love with my 66 neighbour; I follow my vocation, &c. therefore I " trust God bath elected me, and predestinated me to 66 falvation. Not thus, which is the usual course of argument, God bath predestinated me to life; " therefore, though I fin never fo grievously, yet I 66 shall not be damned; for whom he loveth, he loveth to the end. Whereupon, he shewed his 46 Majesty, out of the next article, what was the 46 doctrine of the church of England touching 46 Predestination, in the very last paragraph; se namely, we must receive God's promises in fuch wife, as they be generally fet forth to us 66 in the holy scriptures; and, in our doings, that 46 will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God" FG7.

The Bishop was much in the right, to shew his Majesty only the very last paragraph of the seventeenth Article. Had he turned the King's attention to the foregoing paragraphs, his Majesty would have seen, that his learned harangue was rank Arminianism, and a flat contradiction to the said Article; which actually argues, as the Bishop termed it, descendendo; inferring the walk-

[[]G] Phanix, vol. I. p. 151.

ing religiously in good works, and attaining to everlasting felicity, from previous predestination [H].

When it came to the royal moderator's turn to determine this matter between the two parties, he contented himself with shuffling it off as well as he could. He chose not to disoblige the Bishops; and yet in his own opinions was a rigid Calvinist, at this period at least. But however, as he began with approving very well what Bancrost shewed him in the last paragraph of the Article, it is probable that this, and his refusing to admit the Lambeth Articles into the public confession, might be among the speeches of some great ones, from which the Puritans concluded, that the purpose and intention, if not the dostrine

[H] A certain pamphleteer, having objected to the English Clergy, that they subscribed Articles which they did not believe; Dr. George Fothergill of Oxford undertook their defence, in the postfcript or appendix to a Fast-fermon preached before that university, February 17, 1758. His aim is to shew, that the Articles are not Calvinifical; and one of his arguments is the "non-acquiescence of the Calvinists in the present set of "Articles, and their repeated attempts either to get them " worded more strictly, or to have others superadded more de-"terminate in their favour." It is plain he had this motion of Dr. Reynolds in his eye, and probably took the hint from Heylin and Montague, whom he refers to, without knowing, or perhaps caring to know, how these writers had been refuted by Carleton, Hickman, and others. It appears, however, that the feventeenth Article afferts Calvinistical Predestination descendends in positive terms, and is so far, according to Bancroft, false divinity. And, if the very last paragraph is Arminian, what will Dr. Fothergill get by shewing that he and his brethren subscribe ex animo to contradictions?

of the church, had varied from what it had been.

And let me remark, that these same Puritans. in refusing to subscribe the dostrinal Articles. when they faw this inclination in the Bishops to put a new construction upon them, seem to have understood the nature of the case much better than our modern fubscribers. What the Bishops then aimed at (and what their fuccessors have fince accomplished), was to bring men to a fimple implicit subscription, without any reserve or limitation whatever. The Puritans had all along fubscribed the Articles with various protests and exceptions against those which related to discipline. And these exceptions the Bishops, in some cases at least, admitted. The dostrinal Articles were fubscribed by all parties without reserve; because the opinions of all parties were tolerably uniform with respect to the subject-matter of them. But now the cafe was altered. This variation in the purpose and intention of the church, made it unfafe for the Puritans to subscribe the doctrinal Articles implicitly, or without referve. They did not think, as the generality of fubfcribers feem to think now, that they might be allowed to abound in their own fense, in what form soever they subscribed. They were wifer. They knew that the Bishops, taking upon them to interpret the Articles, in the manner Bancroft had done at the Conference, would put what construction they

pleased

pleased upon their subscription, against which they had found by experience, all their subsequent remonstrances would signify nothing. They knew, in short, the Bishops had suppressed the protestations they had made with respect to the disciplinarian Articles, and proceeded against them as revolters, and as though they had subscribed all the Articles implicitly. And therefore they wisely avoided the snare, and kept themselves out of their power [I].

It does not appear, however, that Archbishop Bancrost made any farther attempt to introduce Arminianism into the church. And one pretty clear proof that he did not, is that he authorised Rogers's Exposition in the year 1607; which, as a very competent judge observes, went upon the Calvinistical frame [K]. The reason, probably, was, that he found the King not sufficiently pliable to come into his notions. Doctrinal matters, therefore, continued still upon the old soundation, notwithstanding the suspicions of the Puritans, till Bancrost's death, which happened in the year 1610.

He was succeeded by George Abbot, a man of a very different character in all respects.

The next year, 1611, happened the ruffle between James I. and the States of Holland, con-

^[1] See Pierce's Vindication, p. 109, 110.

[[]K] Hickman's Animadvertions on Heylin's Quinq. Hift, p. 218.

cerning Vorstius, who was called by the University of Leyden to succeed Arminius, as their Divinity-professor. The King's remonstrances against this promotion proving ineffectual, his Majesty thought proper to attempt the consutation of Vorstius's book de Deo, in a formal controversial writing; in which he calls "Arminius a seditious and heretical preacher, an infector of Leyden with heresy, and an enemy of God; and with al, he complains of his hard hap, not to hear of him before he was dead; and that all the Resormed churches in Germany had with open mouth complained of him [L].

[L] See Harris's Hist. and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of James I p. 124. Dr. Harris fays, " James is " faid to have been excited to declare against Vorsius by Abbot, "archbishop of Canterbury; and it is not unlikely. Most of " the ecclefialtics of that time abounded with a fiery zeal, which " frequently hurried them into actions not to be justified." p. This information comes, it seems, from La Roche, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 318. but, I apprehend, without the least good authority. Fuller fays not a word of Abbot's being concerned in this matter. And Heylin makes no remark upon his filence, which, attached as he was to the opinions of Vorflius, and rancorously disaffected to Abbot, he would certainly have done, had he known of any just grounds for the story. Heylin himself says indeed (having just mentioned the King's declaration against Vorfius, and his Majesty's animosity against the Remonstrants) - "Some think, he [James] was drawn unto it "by the powerful persuasions of Archbishop Abbot, and Bishop " Mintague, who then much governed his counsels in all "church-concernments." Hist. Presb. p. 402. But, besides that this relates to the King's general disposition towards the Remonstrants, he immediately subjoins three other conjectures,

I cite this passage only to shew, that King James, at this period, was no friend to the Arminians.

and adopts the last as most rational, viz. reason of state. If Sir Ralph Winwood had mentioned the King's being instigated against Vorstius by Abbot, I take it for granted, Dr. Harris would have cited him, instead of La Roche: In the mean time, the compilers of Abbot's life, in the Biographia Britannica, tell us. that, "When it was found difficult to obtain from the States " that fatisfaction [in the matter of Vorstius] which the King de-" fired, his Grace, in conjunction with the Lord Treasurer "Salisbury, framed an expedient for contenting both parties." And for this they cite Winwood's Memorials. This does not look like the fiery zeal of an infligator. Not to mention that Abbot was too wife and too good a man to approve of King James's weak and licentious manner of writing against Vorstius. That Abbot had no cordial affection for the Arminians, is very credible and very accountable, inafmuch as it was the universal opinion of the wifest and best of men in those times, that Arminianism was a back-door to Popery; and certain events in our own country have not at all contributed to diferedit that opinion, as I observe below. The Archbishop's disaffection to Grotius was owing to the endeavours and proposals of the latter towards a coalition of the Protestants and Papilts, which every wife and confishent Protestant, in every period since the Reformation, as well as Abbot, has confidered as a fnare, and treated accordinglv. In the famous letter of Abbot's against Grotius, preserved in Winzvood, the worst part of that great man's character is taken from the report of others, and might make the worfe impressions upon the Archbishop's mind, as his Grace was aware of the pernicious tendency of Grotius's negotiations with James and his Arminianizing prelates, particularly by his joining with the latter in advancing maxims in favour of arbitrary power. For the rest, there never was a prelate freer from the fiery zeal of an ecclefiaftic, perhaps hardly ever a private clergyman, than George Abbot. It was reckoned his diffrace in the vext reign, that he did not tread in the steps of the fery Ban-

În

In the year 1613, James, indeed, seems to have had more qualified sentiments concerning the Arminian system. He tells the States, in a letter, dated March 6th that year, that, "having seen, "in a letter sent to him by the Sieur Caron, their "Ambassador, the opinions of both parties, and "the arguments by which they are supported, "discussed at large, it did not appear to him, "that either of them were inconsistent with the truth of the Christian faith, and the salvation of souls." [La Rocke, Abridgement, vol. I. p. 325.] Mr. Harris likewise quotes Sir Ralph Winwood for the same fact [M].

The two Historians last cited, Messieurs La Roche and Harris, call this a contradiction in James; and, a contradiction, the latter observes, was nothing to him. But, I apprehend, the most

croft. "Had Land succeeded Bancroft," said they, "and the "project of conformity been followed without interruption, the "ensuing schism might have been prevented." Fuller's Worthies, Surry, p. 83.—" He was slack and negligent," says the firebrand Heylin, "in the course of his government, and too "indulgent to that party, which Bancroft had kept under with "fuch just severity." Hist. Prest. p. 389.—If to this we add, the noble stand he made against the Spanish match; his unwearied endeavours and vigilance against popery; his spirited letter to James I. on that subject; and his not only refusing to license, but consuting the positions in Sibthorp's sermon;—these particulars, and his uniform adherence to the same principles during his whole life, oblige me to wish that so undeserved a censure upon so excellent a person had not escaped the pen of so liberal a spirited writer as Dr. Harris.

[M] Life of James I. p. 124.

Inconstant man breathing, if he changes his mind ten times in a day, has some reason or motive for it, which operates pro hâc vice.

The case appears to have been this. Grotius was very fond of a scheme he had projected and entertained, of uniting the Roman Catholics and Protestants, wherein he was for making concesfions to the Papists, which the Protestants abroad would never come into. It appears by a Letter of Casaubon to Grotius, which bears date January 27, 1612,13, that Grotius had fent some papers to Casaubon upon this subject, which the latter had communicated to James, who greatly approved them; and he tells Grotius, that " he had " found many English Bishops, eminent for their 66 piety and learning, who revolved in their " minds night and day the fame thoughts with "himself [N]." Which was to say, that these Bishops would have made the same concessions to the Papists, that Grotius contended for. That James was in the same way of thinking, is notorious from other documents: particularly his fpeech to his first parliament [O]. Probably he had not confidered how far he must depart from the Confession of faith, in which he had been educated, before the healing measures of Grotius could take place, till Monsieur Caron put into his hands the rescript he mentions in his letter to the states.

[[]N] Casaubon's Epistles, 655, Edit. Brunswick, 1656.

[[]O] See the speech in Rapin Thoyras, and that historian's remarks upon it.

At this time too the Arminians bid fair for being the triumphant party in the Low Countries; Grotius and Barnevelt, being employed by the States, to draw up the edict intended to restore tranquillity between the Gomarists and Arminians [P], which edict was highly approved of by James and his Bishops [2].

With these impressions upon his mind, James wrote the abovementioned letter to the states.

In the interval between this time, and the affembling of the fynod of *Dort*, our histories afford no interesting accounts of King James's theologi-

[P] Burigni's Life of Gretius, p. 47.

[2] Casaubon's Epist. 800. There is a pretty faithful translation of this Epittle in La Roche's Abridgment, vol. i. p. 328, who omits no occasion of doing honour to the Arminians, and shame to their adversaries. In that Letter, James and his Eishops appear to approve the edict without the least exception, and, what is most furprizing, we find the Archbishop of Canterbury among them, which must be either a mistake, or have been a piece of Court complaifance in Abbot, who is well known to have opposed Grotius's project of reunion, to which this Edict was preparatory. But Casaubon, epist. 795, tells Grotius, he had noted one or two passages in the edict, which he could have wished, might have been otherwise expressed. And he tells him in another epiftle No. 777, That the form of the edict was much approved in England, except a few things, concerning which he had taken the liberty to apprize him in another letter. What these things were, we learn from Burigni, namely, that, " the only thing [in the edict] which gave the "King some pain, was to see the civil Magistrate assume a "right of making decrees in matters of religion." Life of Grotius, p. 49. Burigni cites Cafaubon's 863d epistle, which is not in my edition. Mr. La Roche, if he knew it, ought not to have suppressed this circumstance.

cal fentiments. Casaubon, in one of his letters to Grotius, then in England, tells him, that the Bishop of Bath and Wells, was never from the King's fide [R]. And that the Arminian clergy were not wanting, in improving their confidence with the King, appears from the following passage: "It " was infinuated to the King, what dangers would " proceed by training up of young students in the "grounds of Calvinism -; that there was no " readier way to advance the presbyterial Go-"vernment in this Kingdom, than by suffering "young scholars to be seasoned with Calvinian "doctrines; that it was very hard to fay, whe-"ther of the two, either the Puritan or the Pa-" pist, were more destructive of Monarchical Go-"vernment [S]."

This was touching James in a tender part, and procured some injunctions to be sent to Oxford, concerning subscription to the three articles in the 36th Canon, concerning the method of study, and some other regulations relative to the demeanour of scholars, and their school-exercises [T]; but nothing to the disparagement of doctrinal Calvinism, answerable to the expectations of the insinuators.

For by this time, matters had taken a very different turn in *Holland*. Some cities did not approve the edict abovementioned. The Prince of *Orange* had declared against the *Arminians*, and

[[]R] Epift. 745.

^[8] Heylin's Life of Loud. p. 71. sub anno 1616.

^[7] Ibid. p. 72.

had a large majority both of the magistrates and divines on his side. And the common cry was, to have these disputes settled in a national synod. These things (which may be seen in La Roche, and other Histories) could not fail of making impressions upon James, and would restrain him from declaring in favour of Arminianism, to which he was, most probably, averse in his heart [U].

Accordingly, he chose six Divines to assist at the synod of Dort, who were well known to be zealous Calvinists. These, among other things, had it in their instructions, "to advise those "Churches to use no innovation in doctrine, to "teach the same things which were taught twenty or thirty years past in their own churches—

- " and nothing which contradicted their own con-
- " fessions to consult, at all times, his Majesty's
- " Ambassador, [Sir Dudley Carleton] who, says
- " the King, understandeth well the questions and

" differences among them [W]."

These Divines concurred with the fynod in approving and ratifying the Belgic confession [X],

[U] Dr. Featly, according to Mr. Hickman, affirmed that King James, not many weeks before his death, called the Arminians Heretics. Animadversions, 2d Edit. p. 231.

[W] "Grotius, says Mr. La Roche, found out [while he was in England] that the English Ambassador at the Hague [the fame Sir Dudley Carleton] had represented to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the ecclesiastical affairs of Holland to the presented of the Remonstrants." Abridgement, Vol. I. p. 326.

iguice of the Remonstrants." Abridgement, Vol. I. p. 326.
[X] In all destrinal points: entering a protest, that the Church of England disapproved some of the disciplinarian Canons. Fuller, X. p. 81, 82.

and consequently in condemning the Remonstrants; and when they returned home, were received by James with approbation, and courteous entertainment. Three of these he afterwards preferred to Bishopricks, viz. Hall, Carleton, and Davenant; and Balcanqual, was made Master of the Savoy. These particulars may be found in Fuller's Church-History, and other memorials of those times; and are sufficient to shew, that at this period, and for some time after, James was no favourer of the Arminian Theology.

Perhaps indeed there never was a period, from his first accession to the English Crown, till the day of his death, when he would not have made his divinity bend to his politics. He hated the Puritans, not for their dostrines, but for their dissilet to a Prelacy. He thought a monarchy as necessary for the church, as for the state; and had much the same idea of classes and consistories, that he had of Parliaments. He imagined, that whoever was not a friend to episcopal power, must have the same objections to that of Kings. And perhaps he was not much mistaken, with respect to his own contemporaries.

The Calvinists in *Holland* strenuously insisted, that the Church, constituted as theirs was, upon a republican model, had the sole power of defining matters of faith, and of distinguishing between points necessary and unnecessary; and they held, that the civil magistrate was bound to inforce the churches decisions, and to discourage

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and suppress all sects and heresies contrary thereunto. They went farther still. They held that the civil magistrate who did not his duty in this province, ceased to be a child of God, and might be deposed from his office. And some of them carried this matter so far, that, upon some remissions in the States to suppress what they called the enemies of God, a deputation had been sent from the clergy, to offer the sovereignty of six of the seven united Provinces, to Queen Elizabeth [Y].

It cannot be denied, that many of the English Puritans entertained the same notions. Perhaps the greater part of them in secret. When any extraordinary countenance was shewn to papists, either by James, or indeed, before him, by Elizabeth, the Puritans gave no obscure intimations of what they thought of the Government; and the less discreet among them openly avowed the lawfulness of resisting ungodly Princes, both in the reigns of Elizabeth and James *.

The King however was not so weak, but that he saw plainly, Popery was at no great distance from Arminianism. The bent of the nation lay against both. And probably, Abbot's influence with him, while it lasted, added to the principles

[[]Y] La Rocke, vol. I. p. 229.

^{*} See Street: Life of Whitgift, p. 291. And Puckering's speech in Fulse's Worthies, Tit. York/Lire, p. 201. Puckering witnout doubt, exaggerated. But his word may be taken with respect to the point of the Queen's Supremacy, in ecclesiastical causes.

(or, if you please, the *prejudices*) of his own education in *Scotland*, kept him in these sentiments, the rather perhaps as he did not see, how what were called the *fastious* attempts of the Puritans, were countenanced by the Divinity of *Calvin*.

It must be confessed, that with such a Prince, the Arminian Bishops had but a difficult game to play; but they managed it like workmen. And in the end, turned even the most unfavourable circumstances to their own account.

Grotius, and the Remonstrants in Holland, pleaded for Toleration [Z]; and from their holding this principle, artfully enough suggested their superior respect for the civil powers: as that would keep Church-authority under the hatches.

James had no idea of the righteousness of a toleration. And he saw that if it took place in matters of doctrine, it might, upon equally good grounds, be claimed for opinions and practices relating to discipline. And perhaps his objection to the edict of the States General, mentioned before from Burigni, might be founded upon the tolerating powers, vested by it in the civil magistrate.

The Arminian Bishops detested toleration, as much as James could do, and for the same reasons. But went much farther than their brethren in Holland, in their concessions to the civil power;

[[]Z] Quinquarticulanam litem, tanti non facerem, nisi conjunctam sibi haberet eam, quæ est de discretione necessariorum dogmatum a non necessariis, sive de mutua Christianorum solerantia. Episcopius, apud Hickman Animadvers. p. 122.

alledging, that fovereignty, particularly in Monarchs, was jure divino, and uncontroulable. They knew this principle could do them no harm, qualified as it was, by James's notions of Episcopacy: and for the rest, it was a sure bait to draw him in to whatever they might see fit to build upon it.

But the great difficulty lay here. They had not only the King, but the people to manage. The Puritan party was strong, and respectable for the quality, as well as the numbers, of its adherents. And it would not be so easily comprehended by the people, how they, who were so perfectly right in their divinity, could be so far wrong in their Politics. The next step then was to cast some slur upon the doctrines of the Puritans, and, if possible, to wean both the King and people from their fondness for them.

Fuller, in his Church-History, informs us, that the Archbishop of Spalato, was the first who used the word, Puritan, to signify the defenders of matters doctrinal, in the English church. "Formerly, says he, the word was only taken to denote such as differed from the Hierarchy in discipline, and church government, which was now extended to brand such as were Anti-arminian in their judgments." And he confesses, that the word in this extensive signification, was afterwards improved to asperse the most orthodox in doctrine, and religious in conversation [A].

[[]A] Fuller, Ch. Hist. B. X. p. 99, 100.

These improvers, were the Arminian Bishops and their adherents. We have seen above, what they infinuated to James, upon occasion of obtaining from him certain injunctions sent to Oxford, Anno 1616. But still, the established Articles of religion, were on the side of the dostrinal Puritans. The writers against Arminianism made that appear beyond dispute: and Laud himself durst not deny it.

The next step therefore, was to get the Puritan party silenced, from preaching or printing any thing upon the subject. Abbot's instuence with King James had been broke, by his untractable sirmness in the matter of the Earl of Esex's divorce; as well as by other accidents: and a missfortune in his private conduct, had afforded room for the full effect of Laud's intrigues, who lost no opportunity of recommending himself and his System to James.

The first-fruits of Laud's power over the King, appeared in those injunctions or directions, bearing date August 4th 1622, wherein among, other things, it was injoined, that "no Preacher, under the degree of a Bishop or a Dean,—should from thenceforth presume to preach — the deep points of Predestination, Election, Reprobation, or of the universality, efficacity, resistibility or irresistibility of God's Grace, &c. [B].

[[]B] Heykin's History of Laud, p. 97, who confesses that his Hero had a hand in digesting and drawing up, these injunctions. What confures were passed upon them may be seen

One might ask how James could reconcile himfelf to a measure, which, in the case of the edict of the States-General, had given him pain? That is to say, how he could, as a civil magistrate, assume a right of making decrees in matters of religion?

His Divines would have told us, upon this occasion, 1. That he was a civil magistrate jure divino; which was not the case with republican magistrates. 2. That by a saving clause in the end of the directions, this was only a kind of interim, till the next Convocation should assemble.

This, however, was all that James could be brought to during his reign; unless the Declaration at the head of the xxxix Articles, is to be ascribed to him; which however, is a problem I cannot take upon me to solve; nor is it very material.

In his fuccessor, Laud found a King more to his mind. James had no personal esteem for Laud, and gave him a Bishoprick with much reluctance. His busy spirit was accordingly, during James's reign, obliged to operate in subordination to some Prelates, who had more of the King's considence.

But Charles I. was wholly at Laud's devotion. Hitherto the Calvinists were barely filenced, and

in Wilson and Fuller, sub anno 1622, who both give the injunctions at large. These censures are acknowledged by Heylin himself, with great indignation, who, as a less suspected witness than the others, in these points, may be consulted, p. 99.

perhaps hardly that. Wilson tells us, "the Arch"bishop recommended it to his Diocesans, that
"these directions might be put in execution with
"caution [C]." And Fuller says, "These instructions were not pressed with equal rigour
"in all places, and that some over-active officials
"were more busy than their Bishops, &c. [D]."
However, it is natural to suppose these injunctions had some effect; especially among those who expected to rise in the Church.

It was not however, sufficient for Laud's purposes, barely to silence Calvin. He wanted to have Arminius take the chair, and to dictate to the church of England, instead of the other.

To try how this would take, he fets Montague to work, a bold, hot headed man (but a good scholar *) who scrupled not to exemplify, and vow the political, as well as the theological creed of Arminius, in the most positive and explicit terms. Take the story from an unquestionable authority.

"Mr. Richard Montague, in the one and twentieth of King James, had published a book,
which he named, A new Gag for an old Goose,
in answer to a popish book, intituled, A Gag
for the new Gospel. The business was then

[[]C] Life and Reign of King James, p. 201.

[[]D] Ch. Hist X Book, p. 111.

^{*} Selden confesses he was, græce simul et latine do Aus. Selden de diis Syris, p. 361.

ouestioned in Parliament [E], and and com-

" mitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury [Abbot], " and ended in an admonition to Montague. " Afterwards the Bishops of the Arminian " party, confulted [confulting] the propagation " of the five articles condemned in the fynod of " Dort, concluded that Mr. Montague, being al-" ready engaged in the quarrel, should publish " this latter book [Appello Casarem], at first at-" tested by their joint authorities, which after-" wards they withdrew by fubtilty, having pro-" cured the subscription of Dr. Francis White "[Dean of Carlifle] whom they left to appear a-" lone in the testimony, as himself oft-times com-" plained publickly. The Archbishop disallow-" ed the book, and fought to suppress it; never-"thelefs it was printed, and dedicated unto "King Charles, whereby that party did endeavour " to engage him in the beginning of his reign. The " house appointed a committee to examine the errors therein, and gave the Archbishop thanks

[E] Upon the complaint of two Divines of the Diocese of Norwich, Mr. Tates, and Mr. Ward. "They accused him of dangerous errors of Arminianism and Popery, deserting our cause, instead of desending it." Fuller, Ch. Hist. B. XI. p.

"for the admonition given to the author, whose books they voted to be contrary to the articles established by the Parliament, to tend to the King's dishonour, and disturbance of church

"and state, and took bond for his appear"ance [F]."

Charles at first attempted to take Montague out of the hands of the Parliament, by claiming him for his chaplain, &c. But afterwards he thought better of it, and determined to leave him at their mercy; which being fignified to Laud by the Duke of Buckingham, "he [Laud] thought it a "matter of such ominous concernment," says Fuller, "that he entered the same in his Diary, "in these words: I seem to see a cloud arise, and "threatening the church of England; God for his "mercy dissipate it [G]."

But this little spirited champion was not so to be baffled. He knew the Duke's power with the King, and, in conjunction with the Bishops of Rochester and Oxford, recommended Mr. Montague's cause to him, as the cause of the church of England.

Rushworth hath given us the topics they insisted on in this recommendation, which I shall here transcribe; taking leave to intermix such remarks as occur upon the several particulars of it.

"They shew, that some of the opinions which offended many, were no other than the resolved doctrine of this church."

These opinions were probably such, as related to the divine right of Kings. I have not Monta-

[[]F] Rushworth, vol. I. p. 173.

[[]G] Church-Hift. Book, p. 121.

gue's Appeal, but suppose he might justify his doctrines out of the Homilies, Articles, Bancrost's Canons, and other documents collected by Bishop Bisson. When our churchmen resolved these points, they were writing against the popish Kingkillers. But, not confining themselves to the consutation of arguments merely popish, they made the right of Kings absolutely indefeasible in all cases; of which Laud and his crew made their advantage.

"—— And fome of them are curious points, "disputed in the schools, and to be left to the "liberty of learned men to abound in their own fense——."

These were the five points of doctrine, disputed between the Calvinists and Arminians. Could Laud have found the means to frame and establish a new set of Articles, I am persuaded, he would have lest little room for the Calvinists to abound in their own sense. As things were circumstanced, he was to make the best of the present set, which was, by pleading in words for a latitude of senses, and by infinuating, that these disputed points were matters of no great consequence, and might be innocently held either way. We shall see by and by how his assions contrasted these verbal pretences.

"——It being the great fault of the council
of Trent to require subscription to school-opinions, and the approved moderation of the

"church of England, to refuse [perhaps resute]
"the apparent dangers and errors of the church
"of Rome; but not to be overbusy with schola"stical niceties——."

The council of Trent is brought in here only as a stalking horse. The infinuation is, that the council of Trent did, and the church of England did not, require subscription to these schoolopinions in a determinate sense. The very reverse of which is the honest truth. " Melantibon, as "may be feen above, accused the council of "Trent of making crafty decrees, that they might "defend their errors by things ambiguously spo-"ken." That is to fay, by fuch ambiguities, as permitted the Jesuits and Dominicans to abound in their own fense respectively, upon these very school-points [H]. And when Grotius came to plead the cause of the Arminians before the Magistrates of Amsterdam, he alledged, among other things, "that the doctrines disputed in Holland, " had not been decided by the church of Rome, " (and consequently not by the council of Trent) "though she is extremely fond of decisions." Which doctrines were the very same with the school-opinions disputed in England [I]. On the other hand, the apparent dangers and errors of the church of Rome, were doctrines and practices,

[[]H] See above, chap. iv. p. 86. See likewise, Heylin's Quinquarticular Hist. p. 26. and Hickman's Animad. p. 42.

^[1] La Roche, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 344.

fo founded upon the Arminian fide of these schoolniceties, that the church of England did not think
the apparent errors or dangers could be refused or
refuted, without determining these school-niceties
the other way. Which was accordingly done in
the xxxix Articles. Was Laud ignorant of all
this, or was he playing the Jesuit? And, of all
things, that he should talk of the moderation of
the church of England!

- "— Moreover, in the present case, they al"ledge, that in the time of Henry VIII. when the
 "clergy submitted to the King's supremacy, the
- "fubmission was fo resolved, that, in case of any
- "difference in the church, the King and the Bi-
- "fhops were to determine the matter, in a na"tional fynod."

But, who made the difference in the church in the present case? These very Bishops. And was it not most reasonable, that they should be both Judges and Parties? But this was calculated for the meridian of Charles's apprehension; and to furnish him with an argument for taking Montague's cause out of the hands of the Parliament.

"——And if any other judge in matters of doctrine be now allowed, we depart from the ordinance of Christ, and the continual practice of the church."

Had the Parliament called for this ordinance of Christ, where would these Prelates have found it? Had they forgot that K. Henry VIII, so lately quoted,

quoted, passing by the Bishops, and the national Synod, made the Universities of Europe judges in a very important point of doctrine?

No Bishop, no King.

"— They fay farther, that K. James, in his rare wisdom, approved all the opinions in this book."

Perhaps some tolerably just notion may be formed from what goes before, what opinions, concerning the five points, James approved. It is highly probable he continued a Calvinist in judgment, even to the very last. No doubt but he approved Montague's political principles.

"—— And that most of the contrary opinions "were debated at *Lambeth*, and ready to be pub- "lished, but were suppressed by Q. *Elizabeth*."

And were these opinions only debated at Lambeth? or only ready to be published? Surely Bancrost gave a different account of them at the Hampton-Court Conference. These Bishops would have it believed, that Queen Elizabeth suppressed these Articles, out of a dislike to the subject-matter of them. Whereas the dislike was to the method used in the procuring of them, and the Archbishop's sending them to Cambridge, to be disputed in the schools. She was certainly displeased with Peter Baro, for espousing the con-

trary doctrines, which indeed gave the first occafion of framing these Articles. And Baro being prosecuted in the Vicechancllor's court at Cambridge, for contradicting these Articles, after Whitgift had received orders to suspend them, the Queen's suppression could amount to a very small matter, since it is plain they still continued to have their currency in Cambridge, as much as before [K].

"—And so continued [i. e. to be suppressed]
till of late they received countenance at the
fynod of Dort, which was a synod of another
nation, and, to us, no way binding, till received
by public authority."

That King James did not continue to suppress the Lambeth Articles, is plain from his sending them to Dort, as part of the doctrine of the church of England; and to Ireland, where they were incorporated with their Articles of Religion. And Mr. Pym, in his speech in Parliament, Janu. 27, 1628, says expressly, They were avowed by us and our state [L]. On the other hand, one would wonder, what, in the opinion of these Bishops, amounted to "receiving the synod of Dort by "public authority." King James sent, by a formal deputation, six of his Divines to that Synod, who concurred with it in its decisions, concern-

[[]K] Strype's Life of Whitgift, book iv. chap. xviii, xviii. See likewise Sykes's Reply to Waterland's Supplement.

[[]L] Rushworth, vol. I. p. 647.

ing all doctrinal matters. The King approved what they had done, and no churchmen in the kingdom were more favoured by him. This puts me in mind of Mr. Le Clerc's observation upon the conduct of the French Divines in regard to the council of Trent. In their public scholastic disputations, they cite the canons of that council, as decisive against the heterodox side of theological questions. But, being pressed with the absurdity of some of those canons, by their Protestant adversaries, their cant is, that the council of Trent was never received in France [M].

"—— And they boldly affirm, that they cannot conceive what use there can be of civil government in the commonwealth, or of exter- nal ministry in the church, if such fatal opinimons, as some are, which are opposite to those delivered by Mr. Montague, be publicly taught and maintained."

This may pass for what it is, a bold affirmation, and no more; calculated to blacken the Puritan party, and to infinuate, that nothing they held, either with respect to religion or politics, could possibly be right.

"Such," fays Rushworth, " was the opinion of these forenamed Bishops; but others of

[[]M] Defense des Sentimens, &c. fur l'Hist. Critique, Lett. xiii.

"eminent learning were of a different judg"ment $\lfloor N \rfloor$.

And no wonder. It would be no easy matter to shew so much prevarication in reasoning, or so much falshood and misrepresentation of Facts, in any other rescript of the same length.

The event of this matter was, that *Montague* in the end was delivered from parliamentary punishment by a royal pardon. And, after the diffolution of the Parliament, *Laud* had *Charles* in his hands, and molded him which way he would.

Laud, accordingly, got the prohibition to preach upon these controverted points, extended to Deans and Bishops; in consequence of which Bishop Davenant was convened before the council, where he was reprimanded by Harsnet, Archbishop of York, for transgressing his Majesty's Declaration, in a Lent-fermon at Court, 1626. (the crafty Laud walking by the while, without speaking one word). Davenant infifted, that he had not broken the Declaration; and they could not contradict him, but were forced to fly to his Majesty's intention, which turned out to be, "that " he would not have this high point [of Prede-" ftination | meddled withall, or debated, either "the one way or the other [O]." It was but a very little before, that Laud had faid, "these cu-

[[]N] Ruspavorth, vol. I. p. 177.

[[]O] Fuller's Church Hist. B. xi. p. 138-141.

"rious points should be left to the liberty of learned men, to abound in their own fense." But the Parliament, which differed from him on this head, was now dissolved, and most probably Laud never expected to see another.

I hope, the foregoing particulars may be fufficient to flew, that subscribing with a latitude, or taking particular Articles in different senses, was an artistice of Archbishop Laud's, to open a way for his own Arminian opinions.

He hath been followed, however, by many in this practice, who have neither had his views, nor approved his example, in other things; and who therefore must be supposed to have some reasons of their own, to determine them in a practice, which, at first sight, is hardly defensible. Let us consider what these reasons may be.

1. Then, it is generally understood, that the points in dispute between the *Arminians* and the *Calvinists*, are points of no consequence, and may be held either way, without any detriment to the true faith.

Dr. Nicholls calls them, "Theological points, "which do not affect the main of religion." So did Heylin before him; and he had it undoubtedly from his master Laud. King James too, once upon a time, thought fit to say, "that, if the "fubject of Vorsius's Heresies [in his book de "Deo] had not been grounded upon questions of higher quality, than touching the number and nature of the sacraments, the points of merit, R 4 "of

" of justification, of purgatory, of the visible head of the church, or any such matters, we should never have troubled ourselves with the business."

Upon which, Mr. Tindal, the translator of Rapin Thoyras, thus descants: "As if wrong nowitions or errors concerning the effence of God, "were more pernicious, than such corrupt nowitions and principles, as are destructive of mowitality, and repugnant to God's moral charater (ter [P]." Such, I suppose, as Mr. Tindal takes the notions and principles of the Calvinists (among others) to be; and consequently esteems them points of great importance. It is much, however, if Vorstius or his followers did not draw some conclusions of the moral kind, from their speculations on the essence of God.

Bishop Burnet, in his travels, met with an eminent Divine among the Lutherans in Germany, upon whom he pressed an union with the Calvinists, as necessary upon many accounts. To which the said Divine answered, that "He wondered much to see a Divine of the church of Eng- land, press that so much on him, when we, notwithstanding the dangers we were then in, could not agree our differences. They differed about important matters, concerning the attributes of God and his providence; concerning the guilt of sin, whether it was to be charged

[[]P] Tindel's Rapin, Svo. 1730. vol. IX. p. 333.

" on God, or the finner; and whether men ought to make good use of their faculties, or if they

" ought to trust entirely to an irresistible grace.

"These were matters of great moment. But, he faid, we in *England* differed only about forms of government and worship, and things which

" were of their own nature indifferent, &c." [\mathcal{Q}].

It would be a very strange thing, if the scriptures, rightly understood, should give any real occasion to the question, whether the guilt of fin is to be charged on God or the finner? But if occasion is given for such a dispute, whether real or imaginary, it is doubtless a point of high importance: fince no fuch question can be decided, without bringing the fupreme God into judgment, as a party, with one of his creatures, and subjecting him to the fentence of another of them. The fcriptures, in truth, give no just occasion for any fuch controversy. But if occasion is taken for fuch disputes from Creeds, Confessions, and Articles of religion of human device; and if, in particular, fuch a dispute may be raised from the express terms of our own Articles, should not a ferious and confiderate man be cautious how he fubfcribes them? Would it not be inexcufeably rash to take it for granted, that they contain matters of no consequence?

Perhaps, our prefent subscribers are generally, though not universally, of the Arminian persuasion.

^[2] Preface to Burnet's Expof. at the end.

I mean, such of them as are of any persuasion at all. For, I doubt, sew of them consider (if indeed they know) the difference between that and the persuasion of the Calvinists. Surely it concerns such subscribers not a little to be satisfied, whether our present Articles are truly and properly capable of an Arminian sense or not. But of this more by and by.

2. Another thing which draws in subscribers of the present generation, is, that, whereas Arminianism was heretofore esteemed to be the backdoor to popery and arbitrary power, that notion has, upon examination, been found to be utterly groundless, and the opinions so called, absolutely innocent of the charge.

"Rapin," fays Mr. Tindal in a note, "as well as most of our writers, especially those of the Puritan party, seem to confound two things, which have no manner of relation to each other, viz. Arminianism, and High-church principles." He then puts down five propositions, which, according to him, contain the Arminian doctrine, which the Synod of Dort, in their wisdom, thought fit to condemn. After which he says, "Now nothing can be more evident, than that a man may embrace all these opinions, without being one jot the more a friend to popery, or arbitrary power [R]."

Mr. Tindal should not have been so positive. He did not so much as know what the five Arminian points, condemned at the Synod of Dort, were; as any one may be satisfied by comparing the propositions Mr. T. hath exhibited, with the genuine ones in La Roche's Abridgment of Brandt.

The *Calvinists* too, certainly, inferred the lawfulness of resisting wicked and unrighteous Princes, from their theological principles of *Elec*tion and *Grace*.

Heylin fays, that Calvin called the contrary doctrine civil idolatry [S]. And Grotius, artfully enough, improved the prejudices which Magistrates would entertain against these unprincely notions, to the advantage of his own party, by infinuating the infinite reverence which the principles of the Arminians obliged them to have for the civil powers. The English Arminians went ftill farther. By excluding Election from any share in the foundation of Dominion, and substituting indefeasible hereditary right jure divino in its place, refistance, even to a Nero or a Caligula, became a damnable fin. Laud, as we have feen, affirmed bolply, that civil Government would be useless, if some fatal opinions, opposite to those of Montague, were to prevail. And Mr. Tindal himself confesses, that Laud, Neile, and Montague, were for fetting the King above the Laws. And

[[]S] History of the Presbyterians, in the beginning.

I know fome very worthy and eminent persons, warm and fast friends to the civil and religious rights of mankind, who are of opinion to this hour, that resistance, even to wicked Princes, cannot be justified upon religious principles, without having recourse to the theological doctrines of the ancient Puritans and Independents.

If the Arminians have learned to separate the divinity of their foresathers from their politics, it is so much the better for the public. But, I fear, they have not been altogether so successful in weeding their doctrine from the seeds of Popery.

That case stands thus: The scandalous trassic of Indulgences gave the first occasion to Luther to discover the corruptions of Popery, and afforded him the first grounds of his opposition to them. But Indulgences were founded on the Merit of Good-works, and that again on Freewill; and, what is more, were so founded by St. Paul's own reasoning: To him that worketh is the reward not of grace, but of debt [T].

The Reformers universally, in a greater or less degree, pursued Luther's scheme of interpretation. They thought they had very good grounds in scripture for excluding Freewill from any share in the work of justification. And therefore, when the Arminians arose, the Puritans apprehended, with great reason, that, by opening a door to Free-agency, it would be impossible to

prevent Purgatory, Saint-worship, Indulgences, &c. from breaking in along with it. And they who will take the pains to read *Montague's Appeal*, and *Heylin's* Introduction to his Life of Archbishop *Laud*, will easily discern, that their apprehensions were not groundless.

Whether the connexion between free agency and merit is real throughout, or where it begins to be broken, I pretend not to decide, or even to examine; being determined, on the prefent occasion at least, to offend or disturb no man. with my private opinions. One thing, however, I beg leave just to mention, in favour of the Calvinifts; namely, that some very eminent men of the present generation have gone a great way in their philosophical disquisitions, towards vindicating the predeftinarian theology of these our forefathers $\lceil U \rceil$. And, when it is confidered that for able a writer as Dr. Clayton, the late Bishop of Clogher, could find no other way of establishing the free-will or free-agency of man, but by putting fuch limitations, as he has done, upon the prescience of God, no reasonable man would hastily conclude, that the Calvinists have nothing material to fay for themselves [W].

[U] See Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man, passim. The Preface to Dr. Law's Translation of King's Origin of Evil. Thournseyer's Letters in the French Magazine, 1750, 1751.

[W] Thoughts on Self-Love, Innate Ideas, &c. Lond. 1753. The Apostle Paul hath said, There must be heresies. 1 Cor. xi. 9. not ex necessitate rei ab intus, but from the perverse nature of

But, to leave the theoretical part of this problem for the present: Those old worthies who predicted the return of Popery, in consequence of the introduction of Arminianism, were not so widely mistaken, as to the event, as may be imagined. They had good reasons to expect it, from the whole conduct of Laud and his fellows. And, though these were seasonably stop'd in their career, their principles have been espoused and pursued by their successors, in such fort, as to give more than a suspicion to some competent observers, that the church of England has been, and still is, though by degrees imperceptible to vulgar eyes, edging back once more towards Popery.

- "From the beginning of Charles I." fays a fensible writer, "the pulpit took up a new scheme, "under the particular influence of Archbishop
- " Laud. A scheme so entirely new, that it was
- " remonstrated against by the Parliament, as con-
- "trary to the Articles, and as what had a ten-
- "dency to carry back the nation into Popery.
 "Perhaps, in some measure, the apprehension of that
- " Parliament has been verified. And from Charles I.
- "the new fystem hath chiefly prevailed, down to
- "the prefent period [X]." And, he might have

man, fay his interpreters. Perhaps, if men had been candid, capable, and upright throughout, all their controversies, from Paul's time to this hour, might have been avoided, save one, that concerning Predestination, which must probably have arisen at all events.

[[]X] Seagrave's True Protestant, p. 25.

added, " has been attended with suitable ef-

If any one is defirous to fee these apprehensions verified in particular instances, he may satisfy himself by consulting a pamphlet written by Dr. Du Moulin, some time History-Professor in Oxford, printed in 1680 [Υ], which might be continued even to the present times, by the addition of examples, still more striking than those of Du Moulin. The effect of which cannot be more convencingly proved, than by the great and alarming increase of Popery in these kingdoms [Z].

The clergy of the church of England, it is true, have constantly disclaimed all connexion with Popery, or any design or disposition to promote that cause; which however is but an equivocal proof of a different spirit, and none at all, that the tendency of their doctrines doth not bend towards Popery.

When Jansenius published his system of Grace, the good Catholics taxed him with Calvinism. In vain did he endeavour to wipe off the aspersion.

[[]Y] Intituled, A short and true Account of the several Advances the Church of England hath made towards Rome.

[[]Z] See Dr. Stebbing's two little Tracts against Popery, just published. Whoever will be at the pains to consult this Doctor's Polemical Tracts, and compare some passages in them (particularly in his Rational Inquiry, &c.) with some things in these little books, will see how he is obliged to lower his high-church notions, to battle the papists; conscious, as it should seem, that his old principles had too much of a popish complexion.

In vain did he write most bitterly against the Protestants, in order to convince his incredulous brethren that he was not to be ranked among them. They returned again and again to the charge, and confirmed it, by shewing both the origin and tendency of his dostrines [A].

The Papists have common sense, and can see, no doubt, into the tendency of certain opinions, as well as Luther or Calvin did. And, whatever Jansenius could say for himself, the orthodox Catholics saw, that, in the next generation, his followers, if they adhered to his opinions, would, very probably, leave their church: to prevent which, they procured the condemnation of his book, anno 1653.

The same suspicions procured the samous Bull Unigenitus, condemning the doctrines of Father

[A] Quin in Galliis, quod beneficii loco sine dubio numeravit, magnam adeptus erat librorum Calvinianorum copiam, quorum de fontibus hausit Augustini interpretationem, et invenerat homines a Calvini disciplina non alienos, quibus liberiores de Gratia sermones contulerat. Bayle's Dict. JANSENIUS, remark [F], cited from a book, intituled Jansenius Suspectus, ascribed to the Jesuit Vavassor. The Jansenists, as may well be supposed, endeavoured, by all possible means, to rid themselves of this imputation. Mr. Bayle reports their success in the following words. "The Jansenists have maintained, with equal heat, that, upon "the point of Liberty, they were not Calvinists. There are " no artifices, or ill grounded diffinctions, but what have been " made use of to colour that pretence; and all this to avoid " the dangerous confequences they forefaw would follow their " confesting any conformity with the Calvinifts." Ibid. Rem. $[H]_{c_{\perp}}$ Pasquier

Pasquier Quesnel, in the year 1713. Was this man fo treated, because his conduct gave any offence as a Papist? No; he died not only a fincere, but a bigotted fon of that church: and, what is more, he so died in a Protestant country, where he was under no necessity to dissemble: namely, at Amsterdam, December 2, 1719. "He received extreme unction, extended on a " matt; he took the holy viaticum on his knees; "- he made his profession of faith in the pre-" fence of two apostolical protonotaries, - imof porting, that he believed all the truths, which 46 Jesus Christ taught his church; that he will die within the bosom of it, and con-"demns all errors which it condemns, or shall "condemn. He acknowledges the Pope the " first Vicar of Jesus Christ, and the apostolical " fee, the centre of union .- But withal, still beic lieves he had taught nothing in the obnoxious " book, which is not conformable to the faith " of the church." - And had his fuperiors thought fo too, they had all the reason in the world to be satisfied with his edifying catholicism:

But go to the propositions, extracted from his book for condemnation, and you will presently see, that he was not only of *Calvin's* mind in the articles of grace, justification, &c. but had built upon those principles, some other doctrines, which

are in little agreement with the faith he professes to repose in the church [B].

I forbear to mention the more recent disturbances that have been in *France*, about the same doctrines; concerning which it has been imagined, that if the church and state could not find the means by their united powers, totally to suppress the Jansenists; Jansenism would infallibly produce a Reformation of Religion, upon the true Protestant plan.

The refult is, that our first reformers framed and placed the xxxix Articles, and more particularly those called *Calviniftical*, as the surest and strongest barriers to keep out popery. A Protestant Divine may possibly have his objections against the plain sense of those Articles; but, in this case, he ought not to subscribe them at all. For if he can bring himself to assent to, and subscribe them in a *catholic* sense, I would desire to know what security the church has, that he does not put the like *catholic* sense (with which he may be furnished by the Jesuits) upon those Articles which concern Transubstantiation and Purgatory?

In answer to this, we are told, that these doctrinal Articles concerning Grace, Freewill, Predestination, &c. are susceptible of an Arminian sense, and this is the

[[]B] These propositions may be seen in The prosent State of she Republic of Letters, for July, 1733. From whence also the account above of Quefnel's death is taken.

Third Inducement our modern fubscribers have to plead.

Archbishop Laud, as we have seen, was the earliest patron of this device: However, I cannot think the practice would have thriven as it has done, if he had been its only patron. His name is in no great veneration with the rational part of the English Clergy, particularly with those who are the most strenuous advocates for a latitude in subscribing. And, by an unaccountable reverse of things, the men who are enamoured the most of Laud's political and hierarchical principles, have contended with the utmost zeal, against putting a double sense upon any of the Articles.

It feems to me indeed, that these two parties have not perfectly understood each other concerning this double sense, of which one affirms, and the other denies, the Articles to be capable. Let us consider this matter, with respect still to the doctrinal Articles called calvinistical.

When the controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians first appeared in form, the latter were told in plain terms, "that whosoever op-"posed the absolute decree of Predestination; "crossed the doctrine of the church of England; "and that the English universities, and Bishops, "had always condemned the contradictory to absolute decrees [C]."

S 2 This

[[]C] Bishop Davenant, Animadversions on a treatise, intituled, God's Love to Mankind, pag. 6.

This has been often denied, and as often re-asferted. Dr. Waterland, in his Supplement, labours strengously, with old Heylin's tools, to prove that our Articles in particular are Anticalvinistical.

But the author of the Reply to the Supplement, who is faid to be Dr. Sykes, hath fo effectually confuted him, that it is not likely that pretence will ever be revived any more.

After Dr. Sykes hath proved his point against the supplement, he subjoins the following ingenuous acknowledgment.

"But without entering into any farther histo-

" rical disquisitions, I think it evident that the "Articles were made by men who were thorough-" ly in St. Austin's Scheme, and that they meant " to express that. They chose to express them-" felves with great moderation and temper; in " consequence of which, men of different opini-

"ons have thought themselves at liberty to take a "latitude, in order to come in. Accordingly

" men of very different opinions, can, and do sub-

" fcribe; and fince the words are capable of fuch

" meaning, an Arminian honestly subscribes to "the general words; whereas were the sense of

" the compiler, and not his words, only the stan-

"dard, none but a Calvinist could honeftly fub-

" fcribe [D]."

I think it very evident that Dr. Waterland and his Antagonist meant, by a latitude in subscribing, two very different things. Dr. Waterland could

never mean to exclude a Calvinist from subscribing the seventeenth Article: since the utmost he ventures to say of it, is, "I am rather of opinion, "that the Article leans to the Anticalvinian per-"fuasion." Dr. Waterland therefore was of opinion, that the compilers left room both for the Calvinist, and the Arminian to subscribe. And that both the Calvinist, and Arminian, may honestly subscribe, that is, consistently with the sense, or rather the intention of the compiler.

On the contrary, Dr. Sykes is of opinion, that with respect to the fense or intention of the compilers, the Arminian sense is quite excluded, and accordingly derives the allowance of a Latitude to the Arminian, from the sense the general words will receive. And this, as I take it, is the latitude, or the literal and grammatical sense for which Bishop Burnet, Dr. Clarke, and perhaps the Doctors Nicholls and Bennet, contend.

I apprehend that, if Dr. W.'s hypothesis could be supported by proper evidence, every one will allow, that he exhibits much the bonester scheme of Latitude, of the two. But that is impossible; and Dr. Sykes's premisses, that the Calvinistical sense of the Articles, exclusive of the Arminian sense, was the sense of the compilers, stand indisputable.

But how could honest men ever bring themfelves to think, they were at liberty to put a sense upon a writing, which the authors of that writing never intended? The writing in question, is a public writing, and no public authority is preten-

S 3 dec

ded for taking this liberty, but His Majesty's Declaration, which, whatever weight it might have had in its day, has evidently been of no force, for above an hundred years past.

What makes it more surprizing, that any the

least stress should be laid upon this Declaration, is, that Dr. Sykes allows, that "supposing the le"gistature itself, considered as such, were (with"out a new declaratory law) to intermeddle in
"determining what is the proper sense and ex"tent of the Articles, and what shall be judged
"agreeable, or disagreeable to them, — this
"would be determining what they had no right
"to determine [E]."

Is this Declaration then, a new declaratory Law? No body, I suppose, will pretend that. So far therefore, as it intermeddles in determining what is the proper sense and extent of the Articles, and what shall be judged agreeable or disagreeable to them, it pretends to determine what it hath no right to determine. It would have been very strange doctrine in the ears of Dr. Sykes himself, to say, that King Charles, in the single capacity of a monarch, had a right to do that, which the legislature in its collective capacity had no right to do.

When Dr. Sykes first undertook to oppose Dr. Waterland in this matter, it is probable he did not foresee, that he should be obliged to own,

that the Articles in question were evidently Calvinistical. His arguments, in his first pamphlet, go upon the supposition, that the sense of the Articles is not fixed; which is only saying in other words, that the meaning of the compilers is not known. And to keep matters under such uncertainty, for purposes now very well understood, seems to have been the view of the King's Declaration.

But the Doctor, by acknowleging the sense of certain articles to be originally calvinistical, has, with respect to those articles, deprived himself of the privilege he might otherwise pretend to derive from the Declaration; namely, of subscribing them in an Arminian sense. The Declaration supposes the Articles to be drawn up in general words, which savour no side. Allow that the Articles were originally drawn up to savour one side, and what use can you make of the Declaration? Or what resuge for various senses, can you find under that?

For my own part, I cannot but think that an honest man, must have some struggles with himfelf, before he can bring himself to give a sense to words, which he knows they were never meant to bear; and especially when those words, are the words of a covenant, importing some kind of security given to the public, by assenting to them.

And yet, certain it is, that some very good and worthy men, by virtue of a certain fort of casuistry, have reconciled themselves to this prac-

S 4 tice,

tice, to avoid some present inconveniencies grievous to siesh and blood. And having met with a remarkable instance of this in the course of my inquiries into this subject, I shall now lay it before the reader, the rather as, from a certain resemblance in the features, I am persuaded, that our modern Casuistry is, in a great measure, derived from this great exemplar.

It has been already observed, that some of the ancient Puritans in King James's time, refused to subscribe the Articles, upon the supposition that the purpose, if not the dostrine of the church, was changed from what it had been. When Arminianism came to be more openly avowed by the Bishops, and supported by King Charles's Injunctions, &c. the same people were in still greater distress, not knowing what use might be made of their subscriptions, as they were taken in the canonical form, which admitted of no reserve or limitation whatever; and it does not appear, that the subscriptions of our modern casuistry had then been found out.

But these same Puritans, having, by opposing these attempts of their adversaries with spirit and vigour, got the upper hand, it came to their turn to impose terms and conditions upon those, who had formerly put the like hardships upon them.

This occasioned a great demand among the Royalists for casuistical Divinity, and falvoes of several kinds; in which mystical science, the most eminent adept was Dr. Robert Sanderson, afterwards

afterwards Bishop of Lincoln. A venerable character, which has descended with much estimation, even to the present times; infomuch that, I suppose, few people, who should fall into any of those dilemmas, from which he provided ways to escape, would scruple to abide by his judgment.

Among other cases of different kinds, a question was put to this able casuist, whether a Royalift, who had taken the oath of allegiance to King Charles I. might conscientiously take the Engagement, injoined by the Parliament in the year 1650, which ran in these words?

I A. B. do promise, that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now established without King or Lords.

But before we take a view of this learned Doctor's fentiments on this subject; it will be proper to look back a few years, to another transaction, wherein this same Dr. Sanderson had a principal fhare.

In the year 1646,47, the Parliament determined to visit the university of Oxford, by a committee of their own house. "But before the vi-" fitation could take place, the Vice-chancellor, " Dr. Fell, summoned the Convocation [June 1.] " wherein it was agreed, not to fubmit to the " Parliament visitors. A paper of reasons against " the Covenant, the Negative-oath, and the Direc-

"tory, drawn up chiefly by Mr. Sanderson, was

" to the world, both in Latin and English, --" under the title of Reasons of the present judg-"ment of the university of OXFORD, &c. [F]."

Under the head, of the salvoes for taking the. covenant, Dr. Sanderson expresses the sense of the. university, and consequently his own, in the following terms.

- (1) "It has been faid, that we take it [the Co-" venant] in our own sense. But this we appre-"hend, contrary to the nature and end of an " oath; contrary to the end of speech; contrary to the design of the covenant; and contrary
- " to the folem confession at the conclusion of it, " (viz.) that we shall take it with a true intention
- " to perform the same, as we shall answer it to
- " the Searcher of all hearts at the great day.
- Besides, this would be jesuitical; it would be " taking the name of God in vain; and it would
- "ftrengthen the objection of those who say,
- there is no faith to be given to Protestants.
- (2) " It has been faid, we may take the cove-" nant with these salvoes expressed, So far as law-
- " fully I may: As it is agreeable to the word of
- " God, and the laws of the land; Saving all oaths
- by me formerly taken, &cc. which is no better
- than vile hypocrify; for by the same rule, one
- " may subscribe to the council of Trent, or the

" Turkish Alcoren."

Thus judged the learned Dr. Sanderson in the year 1647. There are some other qualifying

[[]F] Neal's Hift. of the Puritans, octavo, vol. iii. p. 434particulars

particulars mentioned in this rescript, which may be seen at full length in *Neale's* History. These are sufficient for my present purpose; and very naturally suggest the following remarks.

Either the Parliament visitors would have allowed of these falvoes, or they would not. If they would not, for what purpose are they brought in here? unless it be to condemn some of the royal party who had made use of them. And so far they are right, for this was no better than downright prevarication.

If the Parliament would have allowed of, or connived at, these falvoes (as I think the Oxfordmen took it for granted) we see here was the mens imponentis, the tacit consent, at least, of the imposers, on the side of those who took it with these reserves. And yet we find these casuifts were not for making use of this indulgence, because contrary to the plain and express words, as well as the design of the covenant. They accordingly condemn the practice as jesuitical, full of vile hypocrify, perverting the nature and end of an oath, abusing the end of speech, and highly scandalous to the Protestant name.

Let us now fee how the fame Dr. Sander fon fatisfied his querift, concerning taking the Engagement, in the year 1650, and how confishent he was with his own judgment four years before.

He begins with laying it down as a fact, "that "all expressions by words, are subject to such "ambiguities, that scarce any thing can be said

" or expressed in any words, how cautelously sower chosen, which will not render the whole fubject capable of more constructions than one [G]."

According to this maxim, the Covenant, which was ten times as long, at least, as the Engagement, must be capable of still more constructions. And yet Dr. Sanderson could see plainly and clearly into the Design of that. — He lays it down,

2. "Where one construction binds to more, another to less, the true sense is to be fixed by
the intention of the imposer. For that all promises and assurances, wherein faith is required
to be given to another, ought to be understood ad mentem imponentis, according to the
mind and meaning of him to whom the faith
is given, so far forth as the meaning may reafonably appear."

Now furely no man's mind and meaning may more reasonably, or so reasonably, appear in any other way, as by his own personal positive explanation of it. The short and true answer then to the question had been, "If you are under

[G] Nine Cases of Conscience, p. 94. Archbishop Tillotson hath said much the same thing. "It is plainly impossible, that "any thing should be delivered in such clear and certain words, as to be absolutely incapable of any other sense."—But then he adds,— "And yet notwithstanding this, the meaning of them may be so plain, that any unprejudiced and reasonable man may certainly understand them." Preface to his sermons, octavo, 1743, p. xv. Which seems to have been sufficiently the case with the Engagement, to have excused Dr. Sanderson the pains he hath taken with it.

" any

"any uncertainty, concerning the meaning of any expressions in the Engagement, consult the Imposers, and govern yourself by their interpresitation." Cases might have happened, where the intention of the imposer was doubtful, and where the Imposer himself could not be come at. In the present instance the Imposers were living, easily found, and capable of explaining their own meaning with the greatest precision.

But probably these Imposers would not have answered the Querist's end so well as Dr. Sanderson, who goes on,

3. —— Reasonably appear, I mean, by the "nature of the matter about which it is conversed ant, and such signification of the words where—"in it is expressed, as, according to the ordinary use of speech among men, agreeth best there—to."

But if the mind and meaning of the imposer reasonably appears by the nature of the subject, and by the ordinary signification of the words wherein it is expressed, then it sufficiently appears. There is no pretence left, in such a case, for doubt or ambiguity. The question does not concern such a case; but those cases only, wherein the mind of the Imposer does not sufficiently appear. And here, conscience and good faith require, that you should consult the Imposer himself, if he may be found.—"You are mistaken, "says the Casuist, for,

4. "If the intention of the imposer be not so fully declared by the words and the nature of the business, but that the same words may, in fair construction, be still capable of a double meaning, so as, taken in one sense, they shall bind to more, and in another to less, I conceive it is not necessary, nor always expedient (but rather, for the most part, otherwise) for the promiser, before he give [his] faith, to demand of the imposer, whether of the two is his meaning? But he may, by the rule of prudence, and that (for ought I see) without the violation of any law of his conscience, make his just advantage of that ambiguity, and take it in the same fense which shall bind him to the less."

This looks extremely like a contradiction to what went before, namely that "all promifes, "&c. ought to be understood ad mentem imponentis." But dextrous casuists can extricate themselves out of much more considerable difficulties. Observe how nimbly the Doctor comes off here.

"Since the faith to be given, is intended to the behoof of him to whom it is given, it concerneth him to take care, that his meaning be expressed in such words, as will sufficiently manifest the same to the understanding of a reasonable man. Which if he neglect to do, no law of equity or prudence bindeth the promiser, by an overscrupulous diligence, to make it out, whereby to lay a greater obligation upon himself, than he need to do."

But here the Doctor is met full in the face by another of his principles, which is, that "fcarce" any thing can be expressed in any words, how "cautelously soever chosen, which will not admit of more constructions than one."—So that after the utmost care and caution the imposer could possibly take, his meaning might be dubious to a reasonable man, and much more to a prejudiced Querist, and a willing Casuist, as will more particularly appear, now that we attend the learned Doctor, in the application of his principles to the Engagement.

- " In which, our Casuist says, there are fundry ambiguities.
- 1. "The words true and faithful, may intend,
- " either fidelity and allegiance to be performed to the powers in possession, as their right and
- "due; or such a kind of fidelity as captives taken
 - " in war promise to their enemies, &c.
 - 2. "By the word Commonwealth, may either
 - "be meant—the prevalent party—now possessed
 - " of, and exercising, supreme power in this Kingdom: Or else the whole entire Body of the Eng-
 - " lish nation, as it is a civil fociety, or state with-
 - " in itself, distinguished from all other foreign
 - " states.
 - 3. "The word established, may signify the "establishment of the present form of Govern-"ment, either de jure, or de fasto, &c."

Out of these distinctions he works the two following senses of the engagement.

"I acknowledge the fovereign power in this nation, whereunto I owe allegiance and subigetion, to be rightly stated in the house of Commons, wherein neither King nor Lords
(as such) have, or henceforth ought to have any share. And I promise, that I will perform all allegiance and subjection thereunto;
and maintain the same with my fortunes and
my life, to the utmost of my power."

They who know the history of those times, and the occasion of the Engagement, can entertain no doubt but this was the natural meaning of this security, and will therein see a manifest reason why Dr. Sanderson would not send his Querist to the Imposers for a resolution of his doubts: especially as, by his quibbles, he could, for his satisfaction, squeeze the following sense out of the same words of the Engagement.

"Whereas, for the present, the supreme power in England is actually possessed and exercised by the House of Commons, without either King or Lords; I promise that, so long as I live under that power and protection, I will not contrive or attempt any act of hostility against them; but, living quietly and peaceably under them, will endeavour myself, faithfully, in my place and calling, to do, what every good member of a commonwealth ought to do, for the safety of my country, and preservation of civil society therein."

After which follow some arguments tending to prove, that this latter was more probably the sense of the Imposers, than the other; which can be looked upon in no better light than of an attempt to insult the common sense of all mankind.

In the beginning of this case of conscience, the learned Doctor offers fomething, by way of shewing, that the Solemn League and Covenant, being expressly contrary to the oaths of allegiance, was not lawfully to be taken by any man who had taken fuch oaths, or was perfuaded fuch allegiance was due. Which he feems to have mentioned, left his Oxford-divinity upon the Covenant should be applied to the case of the Engagement. The difference between the two cases, however, confifts fingly and folely in these probabilities he mentions, that the framers of the Engagement intended this lower sense, which no doubt he thought to be consistent with the Querists allegiance to K. Charles. And indeed not without reason, since, without all dispute, both the Casuists and the Querists principles led them to believe, that every good member of the commonwealth ought, in his place and calling, to contribute all in his power to the restoration of K. Charles, and that for the safety of his country, and the preservation of civil society therein. No one can doubt of this, who knows that it was this fame Dr. Sanderson who declared, it was not lawful to refift the Prince upon the throne, even to fave all the fouls in the whole world.

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But did Dr. Sanderson really think that the powers then in being were such sools and tristers, as probably to intend to put no other but his lower sense upon the Engagement, or indeed to allow of that sense at all? — It is too evident for his credit, from his own words in this very tract, that he did not. For he intreats his correspondent to take care, that no copies of his paper should get abroad, "Lest the potent party," says he, "in consideration of some things therein hinted, "might think the words of the Engagement too "light, and might thence take occasion to lay fome heavier obligation upon the Royalists, in "words that would oblige to more."

Could the Cafuist have entertained any suspicions of this fort, had he really and sincerely thought the lower construction was the sense intended by the potent party?

He concludes his case thus: "If any man, "out of these considerations, rather than suffer "extreme prejudice to his person, estate, or ne-cessary relations, shall subscribe the Engagement, "[in that sense which binds to less] since his own heart condemneth him not," [and that it might not, he, good man, had taken no ordinary pains] "neither do I."

Who shall now be saucy enough to say, there is no faith to be given to Protestants?

"Many, without doubt," fays Dr. Waterland, have been guilty of prevaricating with state oaths:

"oaths; but nobody has yet been found fanguine enough to undertake the defence of it in
print [H]."

This case of conscience, however, was in print before Waterland was born; and, what is more, he knew it was. One may charitably hope, indeed, he did not suspect it of defending prevarication, otherwise he would hardly have recommended these Nine Cases of Conscience, in his Advice to young Students. What notion had Dr. W. of defending prevarication? He has told us, in the period immediately preceding the last citation, "Tis defending a fraudulent subscription" upon principle, by rules of art." Substitute a civil in the place of an ecclessistical subscription, and you have a true character of Sanderson's performance.

I cannot avoid remarking in this place the fimilarity of the two cases for which *His Majesty's* Declaration, and this Dispensation of Sanderson's, were respectively contrived.

James I. (or, if you will, Charles I.) wanted the affiftance of the high-flying Arminians. But that he could not have, till, by subscription, they had qualified themselves for preferments in the church: and subscribe they decently could not, till the Articles were some way accommodated to their notions. This was effected by the Declaration.

[H] Case of Arian Subscription, p. 4.

Charles II. then in exile, wanted the aid of the Cavaliers and Presbyterians, and this he could not have, till they had equipped themselves for posts of trust and power; and to these they must pass through the Engagement, which, in its obvious meaning, would not go down with numbers of them [1]. Dr. Sanderson himself infinuates, that this temporizing was neither unknown to, nor disapproved by the King. And, to encourage it the more, tells the Querist, that "whensoever the present force was so removed from the ta"ker [of the Engagement], or he from under it,

[1] The presbyterians, if we may believe Dr. Calamy, were more scrupulous about taking the Engagement, than the Episcopalians. The famous Mr. Richard Vines was, for refusing that fecurity, put out of the Headship of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge, as was Dr. Rainbow at another college in the same university. Dr. Reynolds forfeited the Deanry of Christ-Church, Oxford, on the same account, Abridgment 62, 63. Mr. Baxter, we are told, ib. p. 104. diffuaded men from taking it, wrote against the taking it, and declared to those who were for putring quibbling conftructions on it, that, "the subject's allegi-" ance, or fidelity to his rulers, could not be acknowledged and "given in plainer words." Bishop Sanderson hints at these scruples of the presbyterians, in this very tract, p. 94. concluding however, that, " for his own part, when we speak of learn-"ing and conscience, he holds most of the presbyterians to be "very little confiderable." What would not a man fay to ferve a cause, bad or good, that could say this? But let us not forget the excellent Dr. Isaac Barrow on this occasion, who, "when the Engagement was imposed, subscribed it; but upon " second thoughts, repenting of what he had done, he applied "himself to the commissioners, declared his distatisfaction, and " prevailed to have his name razed out of the lift." Biogr. Brit. in Article BARROW, Text. --- Most people will think Barrow as good a cafuit as Sanderson.

" as that he should have power to act according to his allegiance, the obligation would of itself determine and expire." A fort of doctrine that feems rather to have been born and bred at Liege or St. Omer's, than at Oxford.

One word with the Doctors Sykes and Sanderson together, and I have done.

Dr. Sykes lays great stress upon this circumstance, viz. that the church of England, being a Protestant church, cannot consistently obtrude her own interpretations of scripture upon her members, fo as to superfede or over-rule the right of private judgment, or the liberty every one has to interpret for himself. "What-"ever authority," fays he, "the church may " claim, [he should have added, or exercise] it " must still be subservient to the right of inter-" preting scripture for one's felf; or else the ex-" horting men to study the scriptures, is just such " a banter and ridicule, as it would be ferioufly " to command one to fee clearly and distinctly " any object, and at the same time to put salse " fpectacles before our eyes [K]."

Let us put this into political language. "We must still preserve our allegiance to the scriptures, "notwithstanding our submitting to the claims of the church de fasto, which seem to be inconsistent with it. The church herself acknow- ledges the right of the scriptures de jure, and therefore if she challenges such an allegiance

[K] Reply to Waterland's supplement, p. 26

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" from us de facto, as contravenes our allegiance "to the scriptures" -- what then? -- ? he premisses certainly lead us to conclude - "We "must not comply with her, notwithstanding her "pretences of acknowledging the fovereign au-"thority of the scriptures." - Instead of that, Dr. Sykes only concludes - "She must then be "inconsistent with herself." - As if it was impossible for the church of England to be inconfistent with herself! The question is, whether the church of England does not, by her authority de facto, supersede the allegiance which she professes to be due to the scriptures de jure, by requiring fubscriptions to her own interpretations? And if fhe does, what ought a conscientious man to do in fuch a case? — As little as I am in love with Bishop Sanderson's Theology, I will venture to leave this point to his decision, who in a case exactly parallel, determines as follows.

"The taking of the late Solemn League and Co"venant, by any subject of England (notwithstand"ing the protestation in the preface, that there"in he had the honour of the King before his eyes;
"and that express clause in one of the articles of
"it, wherein he swore, The preservation of the
"King's person and honour) was an act as clear
"contrary to the oath of allegiance, and the natu"ral duty of every subject of England; as the
"assignment of the King to the utmost of one's power;
"(which is a branch of the oaths) and the assignment.

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"ing against any person whatsoever, with his utmost

" power, those who were actually in arms against the

"King, (which was the very end for which that

"Covenant was fet on foot) are contrary the one to the other [L]."

The Doctor has expressed himself aukwardly enough; but his sentiment is plain, and his inference unavoidable. "Therefore, no subject of "England, who desired to preserve his allegiance to King Charles I. could conscientiously take "the Solemn League and Covenant, notwithstand-"ing the saving clauses therein expressed." Let the reader make the application.

I am heartily forry that I cannot derive the practice of our subscribing the xxxix Articles, with a latitude, from a more respectable origin than these foregoing precedents. Every man however, has the fame right that I have of judging for himfelf. And I pretend to no more in this collection of facts, than to affift those to whom the subject is of importance, to form their own fentiments upon it, with precision and impartiality. There will still be numbers among us, who will continue to subscribe, and continue likewise to care for none of these things. Such as these perhaps, care not for matters of more confequence; which indeed, I should apprehend to be the case with the most of those, who can bring themselves to give a security of this kind

[L] Nine Cases, p. 92, 93.

to the church, and to the publick, without a previous examination, to what the nature and circumstances of so solemn an act, do in reality amount.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Concerning the conclusions that arise from the foregoing disquisitions,

T is now time to fum up the account, and to consider to what it amounts. A detail of facts, exhibiting all this contrariety of sentiments, all this confusion and uncertainty, with respect to the case of subscribing our established forms, would be of little use, if some consequences might not be drawn from it, tending to lead us out of the labyrinth, and suggesting some means of putting the matter upon a more edifying sooting.

I have not, willingly and knowingly, mifreprefented any thing, in stating the several cases that have come under consideration. I have cited authorities fairly and candidly, and have not, to my knowledge, suppressed any thing that might shew them to the best advantage. But if any one should think there is a partial bias in the reslexions I have occasionally made upon particular passages, I will readily give them up upon competent proof of such obliquity, and abide by the conclusions, which any man of common honesty and common sense, shall think fit to draw from this perplexity and contradiction among so many

learned writers, who, on other occasions, acquit themselves with sufficient clearness and consistency.

Such a one, I presume, will make no difficulty to acknowledge, that in this matter of subfcription at least, a reformation is devoutly to be The Bishops Burnet and Clayton, the Doctors Clarke, Sykes, and others, confess it, and call for it. And the' fuch writers as Bishop Conybeare, and the Doctors Nicholls, Bennet, Waterland, Stebbing, &c. the heroes of our fifth chapter, neither allow the expedience of fuch reformation, nor would have endured any proposals of that kind without a strenuous opposition, yet their own writings on the subject, when compared together, are more than a thousand advocates for it; if it were only for the fake of taking away the offence and scandal, arising from the supposed occasion the Church of England has to employ fuch a fett of party-coloured Cafuifts.

Indeed an unlimited latitude of interpretation, allowing every subscriber of the Articles, to abound in his own sense, tends in a great measure, to supersede the necessity for a revision of our present system, as supposing that men of different opinions may very well acquiesce in it as it is. This is what Bishop Burnet, Dr. Clarke, and the writers of that complexion contend for, and in so doing, furnish their adversaries with an answer out of their own mouths, whenever they plead for

a reformation; a term which supposes and implies that things are in fuch a state, as honest and confcientious subscribers cannot acquiesce in.

Of late indeed, the necessity for a reformation in this, as well as in other articles of our ecclesiaftical establishment, has been acknowledged by unprejudiced and conscientious men of different perfuasions. And even they who dread it on private and personal considerations, when they think fit to appear in opposition to any proposals tending that way, betray the most manifest tokens of conviction, that a reformation would be a right measure in itself; and therefore set themfelves to shew, that a reformation is rather impracticable, than unnecessary; of which I shall prefently give fome remarkable inflances.

Let us then procede to consider the force of the arguments against a reformation, drawn from the impracticability of it; taking along with us the concession, that a reformation is expedient and defirable.

The question with which this inquiry naturally opens, is, by whom should a reformation in our ecclefiaftical affairs be first attempted?

And here I take it for granted, that all fides will be unanimous in their answer: namely by the Bishops, and other pious and learned divines, who by the courfe of their education and studies, and their intercourse with clergymen of all capacities and dispositions, may well be supposed to have

have the clearest conception both of what is amis, and of the most effectual methods to bring things into order.

Here the only difficulty to be apprehended is, that the Bishops having no authority to undertake any thing of this fort of themselves, recourse must be had to the higher powers, first for leave or license to make a proper examination into the particulars that may want to be reformed, and afterwards to give a legal fanction to such alterations as may be found necessary. And there may perhaps be some doubt made, whether my Lords the Bishops would succede in applying to the Crown for the powers necessary for such an undertaking, or to the Legislature for their authorising such a reform, as their Lordships and their affistants might think requisite.

Now for any such objection as this I apprehend there is not the least room, till such application has actually been made and rejected. Have our Bishops and great churchmen ever made the trial? Have they been disapointed in the event of it?

I will venture to answer both these questions in the negative : and will support my opinion by a witness worthy of all credit.

"I have been credibly informed, fays this de"ponent, his Majesty * has sometimes said to a
"late great prelate, when paying his duty at
"court, — Is there any thing my Lord, you would

"is, let me know it. And he, continues this writer, who of his own motion will say this, cannot receive otherwise than graciously, any petition for leave and opportunity to his clergy, to consult together for its good [Qu. whose good, or the good of what, the church, or the clergy?] if it be made with decency and propriety [A]."

Upon this fact I rest the evidence, that no application has been made to the throne, on the behalf of reforming the church of *England*, and that, if our Bishops had applied, their petition would not have been rejected.

The patrons of the present ecclesiastical system therefore, put the *imprasticability* of a resormation upon the people, with whom they can use more freedom. They tell us, the *times* are not ripe for reformation. The English of which is, that the temper and manners of our people are not in a condition to be reformed.

Hear how the same free and impartial considerer I have just now quoted, sets forth the unripeness of the present times in this respect.

"The gross body of the people are weak, ig-"norant, injudicious, capricious, factious, head-"ftrong, felf-willed, and felf-sufficient, and never "less disposed than at this time to acquiesce in

[[]A] Free and impartial confiderations on the free and candid Disquisitions, &c. p. 56. printed for Baldwin 1751. The author of which is now known to be the rev. John White, B. D.

"the wisdom, and submit themselves to the de-

"cisions of their superiors, nor ever more impatient to be driven from their old habits, and
put out of their way in the offices or any other
matters of religion; especially those which they
themselves are to practise, and have a personal
concern in. This is now grown to be the general
temper of the people. I dont call it their bigotry.
No, 'tis a spirit of mutiny and independence.
And this I think you must allow, is still increasing, as much as you or I can pretend the
other is decreasing among us [B]."

I would not have cited this passage in proof of what I have advanced, but that the author of it gives broad hints that he wrote permissus superiorum. "Some things he omitted by the advice of "those whose judgment he greatly reverences, and " cannot allow himself in any thing to differ from." These must be his ecclesiastical superiors, since in fome or other of his books, he hath allowed bimfelf to differ from men of almost all other denominations, who pretend to be judges of fuch things. He speaks as if he had conferred upon the subject of alterations "with a person in high "flation," p. 63. In another place he fays, " nay I am fatisfied we shall not stand with " them [the diffenters] for half a dozen things of " the like nature, [as the cross in baptism] upon " fo good and valuable a confideration, as their " coming in and embracing the communion of "the church [B]." No man, one would think,

at least no such man as Mr. White, would venture to answer for my Lords the bishops, in so public a manner, and upon so nice a point, without some affurance that they would not disown him, would the matter be brought to a trial. I conclude therefore, that this paragraph is agreeable to the sentiments of those great churchmen who supervised Mr. White's pamphlet; otherwise it certainly should have been omitted, as some other things were, by the advice of his friend or friends in high station. But let us now proceed to consider the case it exhibits.

We have here the general temper of the groß body of a christian people described in terms, which with the addition of one or two epithets, would perfectly characterize the inhabitants of Pandæmonium. Bigotry, or a blind attachment to religious prejudices, would have afforded some excuse for these wretches. Missed by the superstition of ignorant parents, or imposed upon by the wiles of crafty teachers, the fault might not have been wholly their own, that they were not more tractable and fubmissive to proper authority. But this would have thrown part of their guilt where Mr. White did not want to have it thrown. They are therefore deprived of the benefit of this plea, and their depravity ascribed to a factious headstrong spirit of their own; an inborn malignity of heart, one would think, near akin to that of the spirits who kept not their first estate, and equally incurable.

And yet, when this free and impartial confiderer comes to be cross-examined upon this accusation, we shall find such evident tokens of disingenuity, as discover that his testimony was not founded merely on the love of truth. For in the first place, who can these superiors be, in whose wisdom this mutinous people refuse to acquiesce, and to whose judgment they will not submit? Not their ecclesiastical superiors we may be sure; fince Mr. White has told us in this fame pamphlet, that this very people, capricious, factious, headstrong, &c. as he has represented them, bave some respect for their spiritual guides and governors; and fenfe enough, with all their weakness, ignorance, and want of judgment, "to perceive that "those who are led by their office, to think con-" tinually on those things which concern religi-" on, are more likely to judge rightly of them, "than any lay-affembly whatever," p. 2.

The refult is then that this spirit of mutiny, would only be exerted against the lay-superiors of this headstrong people. But how does this appear, or what soundation in the present case is there for any such apprehension? When have our lay-superiors attempted, within Mr. White's memory, "to drive us from our old habits, or put us out of our way, in the offices, or any other matters of religion, especially those which we ourselves are to practise, and have a person"al concern in?" For my own part, I can recollect

collect but one instance, the late alteration of the style, which gave offence, as I have heard, to some elderly semales, by displacing, as they thought, some of their darling sestivals, particularly Christmas-day. For the rest, so far as this instance is in point, nothing can be more unlucky for Mr. White and the cause he is supporting. It is an incident that hath happened since his pamphlet was published. And the general acquiescence of our people in this new law, shews sufficiently, that they are not so very tenacious of their old habits against sense and reason, as he would have it believed, and that he had rashly and unreasonably calumniated his countrymen.

The plain truth is, this gentleman was only dressing up a scarecrow, to deter a certain lay-assembly from taking matters of reformation out of the hands of the clergy, into their own, of which he every where betrays the most abject fears.

In the paroxysm of such panics, it is usual for the party affected, to catch up the first weapon that falls in his way, and to deal his blows with so unsteady an hand, and so undiscerning an eye, as oftentimes to maim or bruise a friend, instead of an enemy. So hath it happened to this valiant champion on the present occasion.

He hath drawn so detestable a picture of the common people, that it may very well frighten any assembly of men in their wits, from meddling

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with them in any province, civil or religious. But is it not natural to ask, how came our countrymen into this degenerate state? There have been times, when they were more reasonable and condescending to the wisdom of their superiors. How come they, particularly, to be so weak, ignorant, and injudicious in religious matters? Does not this representation carry with it some reflection on those who should have taught them better? And who should these be, but the appointed teachers of religion? The Bishops and pastors of the church, who receive some millions annually as a confideration for their watching for the fouls of the people, and particularly for inftilling into them christian knowledge, and christian principles?

Take the matter as Mr. White hath exhibited it, and you can perceive no trace of any due pains taken with them this way. If there is any appearance in his book that their ecclesiastical superiors have taught them any thing, it is only that fort of fense which leads to some respect for themselves, while they have suffered them to act and think with respect to their civil governors, whatever their unruly, headstrong wills and affections may suggest to them: and will it not be said, that the clergy may perhaps soment this spirit of faction and independence, towards their lay-superiors, the better to secure the dependence of this headstrong multitude upon themselves?

In my opinion, Mr. White's friends in high stations could not have pitched upon a worse advocate to plead their cause than himself. It might have been faid on the behalf of the clergy of the present generation at least, that the people were corrupted before they came into their hands; that these extreme degrees of degeneracy, cannot be supposed to have been contracted in the compass of a few years - that our present Bishops and pastors were obliged to take the people as they found them - but that they were using their utmost endeavours to correct their principles, and meliorate their habits, and had reason to hope for fuccess in due time.

But Mr. White, by alledging that this licentious spirit of the people is still increasing, leaves room to believe, that the present generation of religious pastors, are just as negligent of their charge as their predecessors.

But to leave this gentleman a while to himself. I could never perfuade myfelf that the argument in defence of the christian clergy, drawn from the nature of the times they lived in, however it may have been managed, is of any fort of weight. An enterprizing genius of the present age, seems to have made the most of it, in a late attempt to restore the fathers so called, to some part of the credit they had lost under the examination of Dailie, Whithy, Barbeyrac, Middleton, and others

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[D]. And how has he succeeded? Has he shewn. in opposition to the charges brought against them by these writers, that they were judicious critics and interpreters of holy writ; accurate reasoners; found moralists; confistent and conscientious casuists; or even credible witnesses to matters of fact? By no means. His defence of them is founded upon the concession, that they were defective in all these articles, not thro' their own fault, but the error of the times. On this head this ingenious writer takes great pains to shew. by a long induction of particulars, how learning and science were abused, corrupted, and diverted from the purpole, either of discovering or maintaining the truth, in the different schools and fects of pagan orators, fophists, and philosophers. Among these it seems the fathers had their first rudiments, and the fashion of the times keeping up the reputation of these depraved methods of reasoning, &c. the fathers were obliged to deal with their pagan rivals in their own way, and to play their own fophistry and prevarication upon them in their turn.

Is it possible this acute writer should impose this state of the case upon himself, or hope to impose it upon his readers, for a full justification of the fathers? For to what does all this learned harangue amount, but to this, that the fathers, instead of reforming, were themselves corrupted by the men and the times they lived in?

[[]D] Warburton's Julian, Introduction.

If the times had not been faulty, there had been no occasion for the fathers to mend them. And as they undertook this province, it is but reasonable to suppose they had means and expedients in their hands, adequate to the discharge of it. These means and expedients, they themfelves confess, were the holy scriptures, from whence they might have been furnished with all necessary truths, as well as with the methods of inculcating them in simplicity and godly sincerity, without having recourse to the inticing words of man's wildom. Who gave them a commission to model the truths of the Gospel to the taste of a licentious and corrupt world? or to fubrilize the plain doctrines of Christ and his apostles, by the chemistry of the reigning philosophy? I do not know indeed that the fathers pretended to any fuch authority. But if they did, we, who have in our hands the only authentic commission they had to teach, and the exemplification of it in the practice of the apostles, have no occasion to believe them.

The memorable Mr. Hales of Eton, who saw as much of the right use of the Fathers, and as soon, as Mr. Daille himself, and perhaps had full as much candor, with respect to the allowances that ought to be made on account of their situation in the world, was well aware of the apology that this learned Doctor has made for them; but however seems to have paid little regard to its merit.

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Archbishop Laud, offended at the freedoms Hales had taken with church-authority and tradition, in his tract concerning schism, put the honest man to his purgation, which he underwent with a degree of courage, decency, and good sense, that would have done him honour, had he left nothing behind him but that single letter to Laud.

"I am thought," fays this excellent person, to have been too sharp in censuring antiquity be"yond the good respect which is due unto it. In this point, my error, if any be, sprang from this, that taking allions to be the fruit by which men are to be judged, I judged of the persons by their allions, and not of allions by the per"fons from whom they proceeded. For to judge of allions by persons and times, I have al"ways taken to be most unnatural [E]."

[E] Mr. Hales's Letter to Archbishop Land, usually printed at the end of Bishop Hare's Difficulties and Discouragements, &c. The Tract concerning Schism was written in the year 1636, and this apology very soon after. Which I mention on account of a passage in it that amounts almost to a demonstration, that the first clause of our twentieth Article, concerning Church-authority in controversies of faith, was not, at that time, held for authentic, and probably was not in any of the printed books of Articles then in use. The passage I mean is this: "I count "in point of decision of church-questions, if I say of the authority of the church, that it was none; I know no adversary I have, the church of Rome only excepted. For this cannot be true, except we make the church judge of controversies; the contrary to which we generally maintain against that church." Would Hales have said this, and said it too to such a man as Laud, if

Whether the authority of Mr. Hales, with for fensible a confideration to support it, should not be of superior weight to Dr. W----'s, backed only with a large quantity of precarious speculation upon very doubtful facts, must be left to their respective readers. For my own part, I am inclined to think, the fafer apology for the Fathers would have been that observation which the same learned Doctor mentions elsewhere to have been made upon Arnobius and Lastantius, namely, that they undertook the defence of Christianity before they understood it. This is a case which was perhaps common to all the Fathers, and admitted of a reasonable excuse; the same which the Apostle Paul allows in a similar one, they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Whether the case of our modern Fathers would admit of a like apology, is not material to inquire; as it is certain, that an advocate who should offer it on their behalf, would meet with no thanks at their hands. They say, they see as well as others, that things are out of order in the church; but alledge the unseasonableness of these times for any attempt to set them right. In the mean time, others see that the infestion of the

he might have been confronted with an authentic book of Articles? 'Tis not unlikely that Laud, upon this occasion, might resolve to stop that gap for the suture, and take care that the subsequent editions should be more correctly printed. I have now at hand a Latin copy of the Articles, printed at Oxford, by Lichfield, 1736, without the sirst clause of the twentieth Article.

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times has, in some degree, laid hold even of these venerable personages, and produced appearances of secularity, which, whenever a reformation shall be happily brought about, we may be sure will not be suffered to disparage their sacred characters, nor to give offence any longer to those weak and short-sighted brethren, who cannot comprehend that such conformity to the world can contribute to bring the times to maturity for planting and bringing forth more evangelical fruits.

But let us do all fides justice, and now proceed to examine how this plea of *impraticability* has been elucidated and enforced by certain writers, who were a little more prudent and cautious than the above-mentioned Mr. White.

"In all proposals and schemes to be reduced to practice," (says a very dextrous champion of the church of England) "we must suppose the world to be what it is, not what it ought to be. We must propose, not merely what is absolutely good in itself, but what is so with respect to the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions we know, and are sure to be among us [F]."

To this doctrine a very eminent name is subteribed, which is likewise subscribed to some other doctrines utterly inconsistent with it, at least in

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[[]F] Bishop Hoadley's Reasonableness of Conformity, apud Phil. Cantab. p. 17.

my apprehension, unless conforming to what the world is, and conforming to the sovereignty of Christ in his own kingdom, is precisely one and the same thing [G].

Be this as it may, the doctrine of conforming to the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions, that we know to be among us, has clearly carried the vogue, and is now pretty generally adopted by the clergy, in whatever repute the rest of the right reverend author's divinity may be with them.

- "'Tis represented, that the world was never less disposed to be serious and reasonable, than at this period. Religious reslexion, we are informed, is not the humour of the times; nor can men of any sort be brought to examine their own opinions and popular fashions, with attention sufficient to enable them to judge, either of the efficacy of such remedies as might be proposed by public authority, or the propriety or expediency of administring them."
- "We are therefore advised, to exercise our prudence and our patience a little longer; to wait till our people are in a better temper, and, in the mean time, to bear with their manners and dispositions; gently and gradually correcting their foolish and erroneous notions and habits; but still taking care not to offend them with unseasonable

[[]G] Sermon on the Nature of the Kingdom of Christ, and the Bishop's Defences of it.

truths, nor to throw in more light upon them at once, than the weak optics of men, so long used to sit in darkness, are able to bear.—In one word, to consider the world as it is, and not as it ought to be."

This is the common cant of those both in higher and lower stations, who defire to put a negative upon a review of our ecclefiaftical system. It is fomething, indeed, that, with respect to our prefent fystem, they will own that the body of the people fit in darkness; which implies, that, if they were more enlightened, they would have no inconfiderable objections to the forms in which they now acquiesce. But when it is considered from whence this light and truth are to come; namely, from those records which have preserved to us the Gospel, as it was preached by Christ and his Apostles, is it not a little strange, that this truth should be unseasonable, and this light intolerable, after the Gospel has been taught, received, and professed, in a succession of generations, for near eighteen hundred years?

But to examine his Lordship's doctrine a little more narrowly. What the Bishop calls the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions of men, are known to be much oftener, and in much greater abundance, on the side of folly, falshood, and vice, than of truth, virtue, and good sense. Prejudice and partial affection carry their point every day, against the loudest remonstrances of reason, and

the clearest light of revelation. If this were a new, or an incidental case, peculiar to the present, and unknown to former times, we might be at a loss for directions how to deal with it, and excuseable enough for taking up with the best expedients that human prudence should suggest. But these, in fact, are the very same circumstances in which our blessed Saviour found the world at his sirst appearance. The prejudices, tempers, and constitutions of the men of those days, had in them the very same perverseness and obliquity, of which we complain at this hour; and from the staal effects of which Jesus came to save such as would hear his voice.

According to the Bishop's maxim, our Saviour should have ordered his *proposals* with a view to the prejudices and tempers of the Scribes and Pharisees, the leading men among the people to whom he made his first overtures of reformation, and from whom the people derived their own prejudices and tempers.

Instead of this, Jesus seems to have formed what this right rev. author calls an ecclesiastical Utopia. He paid little respect to the established church, as it was then modelled. He openly reproved, and by his teaching opposed, the traditionary religion of the rulers of the Jewish church, both as to their forms of worship and points of doctrine; and taught many things on those occasions, which shew he never intended bis religion should be shut

up in a national church, or established upon exclusive conditions. The consequence was, that he was pursued by the great churchmen of those times with their utinost vengeance, even to the death.

This he knew from the beginning, would be his fate; nevertheless, what is still more strange, he commanded his apostles, and in them, as it should seem, all who were to succeed them in the same province, to follow his example, and to adhere to the same methods of reforming the world. It seems, he committed the event to the providence of God, who savoured the plan so far at least, as to make it probable in the highest degree, that if any other had been substituted in its place, there would not have been one Christian this day in the world.

In answer to this, it hath been suggested, that the circumstances of both clergy and people, are very different now, from what they were in the apostles days. The manners and opinions of mankind, it is said, have undergone great alterations, insomuch that if ministers were to insist, either upon the severe personal discipline, or the unadorned simplicity of saith and worship preached and practised by the apostles, men would rather be prejudiced against, than converted to the practice and profession of the Gospel.

But is not this to suppose that upon every change of public manners, upon every sluctuation of popular opinions, the teachers of religion

have

have a power of varying their rule? that is to fay, to suppose what is utterly false? Can they shew any other authentic rule of teaching religion, besides that in the New Testament? Does the N. T. mention any powers given to preachers to judge of sitness and expediency in respect of events, and in consequence of that foresight, to vary their doctrine and accommodate it to supposed exigencies? If they have no such powers, and yet act as if they had, what are they doing but superseding the authority of Christ in his own kingdom, and setting themselves up in his place?

Some, indeed, lay so much to the account of the great difference there is between the manners and sentiments of the present times, and those of our Saviour's ministry, as to suppose that a discretionary power in the Clergy to accommodate themselves and their doctrines to the times, must arise from the nature of the case; which they endeavour to justify by various arguments, particularly the example of St. Paul, who became all things to all men.

In answer to this, I shall, for the present, admit that the manners and opinions of the present generation, are as remote as you will from the genius and spirit of the gospel; yet you cannot say they are more remote from it, than the manners and opinions of the Jews and Gentiles were. On another hand, the manners and principles of the Jews and Gentiles, were in no better agreement

with each other, than either of them were with the Gospel. The Gospel was nevertheless preached to them both, as a common measure of believing and obeying unto salvation, and that without any of those accommodations and allowances which are now pleaded for; so that all arguments for such accommodation from the reason of the thing, are absolutely excluded by the practice of our Saviour himself.

As to the example of St. Paul, it is first to be confidered, for what end he became all things to all men, namely that he might gain some. Gain them? To what? - Why to the profession and practice of Christianity. We may be sure then, that he neither indulged them, nor complied with them, in any thing which was a disparagement to the profession, or inconsistent with the practice to which he laboured to gain them. Dr. Middleton hath infinuated that this faying of St. Paul is hyperbolical [H], or, in his own language, had in it some degree of siction. And it is probable the Apostle meant no more than that fort of accommodation to the humours of men, which is implied in the fon of man's coming eating and drinking, by way of shewing, that the austerer discipline of John, was not essential to the faith and duties of the gospel. Let our modern accommodaters keep within the same bounds, and we shall willingly allow them the benefit of these precedents.

[[]H] Miscellaneous Tracts, p. 306.

2. But this is not all, St. Paul and his companion Luke have between them left us some remarkable instances of the Apostle's compliance with, as well as of his indulgence to perfons of different religious prejudices. His permission to Christians to feast or eat with the Gentiles, is plainly qualified by feveral cautions. Some of his accommodation to the Jewish customs, turned our very unhappily; and there are evident marks in the epistle to the Galatians, that he thought he had formerly gone too far in his compliances with them; and he plainly condemns the practice of circumcision as destructive of the faith of the Gospel, at least in a Greek or a Gentile. And yet it appears he once thought it necessary to circumcife Timothy, who was of Greek extraction by the father's fide, for no other reason asfigned, but because of the Jews who were in those quarters [1].

These matters of fact then, are necessary to be taken in, to illustrate the apostles meaning in these large expressions. And it is no less expedient for us to look at matters of fact nearer home, to set bounds to the fancies which we are too apt to build upon them.

It is now about fifty years fince the venerable Bishop of Winchester advanced this maxim of confidering the world as it is, rather than as it ought to be; and as the maxim itself has been almost universally adopted by the clergy, it is but reason-

able to expect it should, by this time, have been justified by better fruits, than would have been brought forth by our endeavouring to reform the world by the stricter precepts of the Gospel. Are then the men, or the times, upon whom these accommodating methods have been tried, in any better disposition than they were, before they were introduced? Are their prejudices rooted out, their tempers foftened, their constitutions refined, or their manners purified by these prudential expedients of reformation? We have feen what Mr. White thinks of the matter: and we are told from other hands, that it is the same fort of prejudice, &c. which overawes our fuperiors from attempting to reform, what they are very fensible greatly wants reforming, in more respects than one.

The Bishop of Winchester's maxim is, however, in as much repute as ever. And no wonder. Doctrines which have in them so much ease and convenience, with respect to the teachers of religion, and so plausible an air of moderation towards their disciples, are in no danger of going out of fashion, let them be confronted with ever so many plain facts, or resuted by ever so solid reasoning. They pass from hand to hand with the perfect approbation of all sides; and with whomsoever it is that we have any disputes, of which the conduct of the clergy makes a part, disquisitors, dissenters, insidels, or heretics, the apology

apology is always drawn from the nature and necessity of the times.

Thus in a late answer to Lord Bolingbroke, we are informed that; "I here are times and occa"fions when politeness, civil-prudence, and the
"private motives of friendship, ought to deter"mine a man who is to live in the world to comply
"with the state and condition of the times, and
"even to chuse the worse instead of the better
"method of doing good [K]."

How good things may be improved by keeping! In the beginning of the century, compliance with the times, was only a matter of prudence and expedience; it is now become a duty. The adversaries of the doctrine heretofore were only harmless theoretical Utopians. They are now, fanatics, enthusiasts, and bigots. — Justice however must be done to this last writer; who tells us, that "there are times and occasions when the " soberest thinker (i. e. he who is neither fanatic, " enthuliaft, nor bigot) will confels, that the in-" terests of particulars, should give way to "those of the public." And one of these occafions, it feems, is this on which he writes: and where he thinks it would be wrong to admit these considerations of politeness, civil prudence, &c. - How fo? Because the noble author laid the author of the View, under a necessity to represent him both as detestable and ridiculous, on

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[[]K] Apology prefixed to the third Letter of a View of Lord Bolingbroke's philosophy, p. xlix. 1 edit. 1755.

account of the freedoms he had taken with Moles, Paul, &c. and fo far his reason is good. But Lord Bolingbrroke had taken great freedoms (greater than with Mofes and Paul) with the modern clergy of our own establishment. Had the author of the View therefore, been able to have prevailed upon his own politeness and civil-prudence to have defended Moses and Paul with sobriety and feriousness, and to have chosen on this occafion, what he calls the worfe method of doing good, some people will be of opinion that his arguments would have loft nothing by it, either of their frength or perspicuity; and he would certainly have avoided one evil suspicion, which has stuck to him, and of which his friendly monitor forgot to apprize him; namely, that his free treatment of Lord Belingbroke, did not arise so much from his zeal for true religion, as from his fensibility of the affront offered to the modern clergy; in which, it is but too visible, the author of the View is personally concerned.

But what are those times and occasions which call for this strain of good breeding? The learned writer hath not condescended to inform us, nor what fort of good may be done by it. When religion is to be promoted or defended, a plain man would be apt to think, that no times or occasions should make it a duty to chuse a worse method of doing good, but where a better is absolutely not to be had. But where, as in the present case, a man is supposed to have both me-

thods before him, and yet ought to postpone the better; and chuse the worse, the obligation should feem to arise from some Law, or to refer to some rule of moral practice, which hath no connexion with the Christian religion.

The learned writer, indeed, hath limited this duty to the man who is to live in the world. But which of us is not to live in the world, in the common acceptation of that expression? If indeed by a man who is to live in the world, is meant a man who is so to live in it, as never to give offence (" the thing, fays this write:, of all " to be most dreaded by those who know the world,") it is well if; in the gospel-account, this politeness, civil-prudence, and private friendship, turn out to be any better than, hypocrify, partiality, worldly wifdom, and respect of persons.

The plain truth is just this. The prejudices. tempers, constitutions, &c. of mankind, with refpect to the expedients of reformation proposed in the Christian scriptures, have been much the fame in all ages fince the heavenly preacher of them first appeared. Senfual, worldly-minded, and incorrigible men bated him, because he reproved their pride, their avarice; their hypocrify, and other vices, without referve. And fuch men hate fuch preachers to this hour, and will hate them to the end of the world. And yet fuch doctrines must be preached, with the same unreferved freedom, if the men who are appointed to the office would discharge it faithfully. Un-

less our prudent and polite reformers can produce a new revelation, exhibiting new sanctions, and new terms of salvation; or unless they can shew (what indeed some of them have more than half infinuated) that the same occasions which the men of that generation gave to our Saviour, exist no longer, and that pride, avarice, hypocrify, superstition, and sensuality, are banished from the sace of the earth. When they have made either of these appear, then, but not till then, we can allow them to accommodate themselves, their doctrines, and expedients of reformation, to the taste and temper of the times.

But to proceed a little farther in our examination of these commodious maxims. What consequences do these cautious reformers apprehend, from proposing to the world such measures of reformation, as are absolutely good in themselves, and tend to make men what they ought to be? Few trials, that I know of, have been made upon this plan, nor does it appear by any repeated experiments, what it is that would disappoint them.

On this occasion we are told, "that factions would be created, dangerous to civil government itself, and productive of evils in society, which all the good that could possibly result from such endeavours to reform the world, would not counterbalance."

I cannot represent this argument in any terms fo well adapted to give it its full weight and lustre,

as those of a late sensible writer, whose views and occasions will be explained in the sequel.

"I am very fensible, says this gentleman, that " the truth of any point, or the certainty of any " matter of fact, can never be determined by the " confequences that flow from it; yet I think it a " part which virtue, as well as prudence prescribes, " to be more reserved, and cautious of meddling, "where little or no advantage can be gained to "fociety; but where confequences may possibly " prove hurtful; and especially where the point " in question is only speculative. For speculative " truth, tho' it greatly contributes to the perfec-"tion of human nature, may yet be recovered, " in some cases, at too dear a rate. What ever " unfettles the foundations of government, af-" fects the well-being of fociety, or ANY WAY " disturbs the peace and quiet of the world, is of "very destructive consequence; and the man "who should retrieve fifty such truths, at the " expence of one faction, would, in my opinion, " be a very pernicious member of fociety [L]." Either this ingenious person hath written himfelf quite out of fight of his own principles, or I am not clearlighted enough to discover his mean-

ing. Let me first confess my own ignorance.

1. I cannot comprehend how any truth that is merely speculative, can contribute to the perfection of human nature. Human nature has

[[]L] Remarks on Dr. Chapman's Charge, &c. p. 9, 10.

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always appeared to me to advance the nearest to persection, by the means of moral habits, formed and invigorated by principles of truth, and of religious truth in particular. Whatever discoveries may be made by the way of speculation, if they may not be turned to some practical use, or improvement of the moral man, they will pass with me, for little better than the groundless visions of imagination.

- 2. It is equally mysterious to me, how truths that are merely *speculative*, should unsettle the foundations of government.
- 3. Nor can I possibly conceive, how such truths as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature, should affect the well-being of society. I mean, as I suppose he does, affect it with an evil influence.
- 4. In the last place, I should have apprehended, that the recovery of fifty truths, which greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature, would pay the expence of one faction at least, even though the peace and quiet of the world should be, in some measure, disturbed by it; unless we must say, that little or no advantage is gained to society, by the recovery of so many such truths, as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature.

As this ingenious writer has, on this occasion, contrary to his custom, expressed himself loosely and ambiguously, I dare not take upon me to as-

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certain

certain his meaning. I imagine it however to be this. That where speculative errors are established by public authority, it is better to let them rest, than to attempt to remove them at the hazard of a faction, or by any fuch opposition or remonstrance, as any way disturbs the peace and quiet of the world.

Now to this doctrine I would readily subscribe, if I knew of any truth or error of the religious kind (and of such truth and error this author is here treating) that could be called merely speculative: that is to fay, fuch truth or error, as hath no influence or tendency to improve, or debase, the religious conduct of those who entertain or reject it respectively. With respect to such truth, or such error, 'tis of little consequence what becomes of them. But few are the truths or errors that I have met with of this complexion.

It should seem indeed, that this remarker does not restrain this prudence and caution to these infignificant truths and errors. For, he fays, "WHATEVER unsettles the foundations of go-" vernment, &c. is of very destructive conse-" quence."

Can this be admitted, without condemning the practice of the apostles, and first preachers of christianity?

These, said their Thessalonian adversaries, that bave turned the world upfide down, are come hither also, whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, there is another king, one Jesus [M].

I expect here to be told, that the apostles were falsely accused, and that they made no attempt to unsettle Cæsar's government. I acknowledge it. But the fastion was formed upon that supposition, and operated on the well-being of society, upon that occasion at least, with as much malignity, as if the charge had been ever so true. And may not the same thing happen again? Has it not happened in many instances, that pious and zealous reformers have been accused of disturbing the public peace, when they were as innocent as the apostles themselves of any such intention?

Besides, no sensible man can doubt but the immediate establishment of christianity in those early days, would have made great alterations in the Gentile, as well as the Jewish civil and religious polity. The total abolition of the latter was the inevitable consequence of the Kingship of Jesus; and what struggles and tumults were occasioned by attempting to introduce it, the sacred history has fairly informed us. And yet I presume, our Lord imagined, the truths that would thus be recovered to mankind, would more than atone for these temporary inconveniences. Otherwise he would certainly have taken and prescribed other measures.

The learned writer, with whom I am making fo free, was a fecond to Dr. Middleton in the controversy concerning the continuance of miraculous powers in the Christian church, and a very able one; and I the rather hope I have not misunderstood or misrepresented his meaning in the foregoing citation, as he immediately subjoins to it the following apology for meddling in that controversy.

"But, in the prefent debate, [concerning miraculous powers, &c.] all such fears are vain and chimerical. Where we may dispute for ever, without unsettling or disturbing any thing, except some fanciful systems, which have been ingrafted on the religion of the gospel, and which some of our present churchmen, for reasons of policy, have been endeavouring to defend, as absolutely necessary to support it."

That is to fay, "The miraculous powers of the post-apostolic church, are not affirmed in an established Article, or Homily." Had that been the case, the point could not have been disputed without unsettling, or at least disturbing, something more than a fanciful system of our present churchmen. Something with a more substantial support, than the political reasons abovementioned.

I am of opinion, that, if some of our ancient churchmen in former times had foreseen this controversy, or if some of our modern doctors had even yet the power to bring it about, the question,

fo far as legal decision could give it a sanction, would not be found so naked of this kind of support. Had this point been secured in due time, the Doctors Chapman, Stebbing, Church, and Dodwell, who, for the general, have been so tame in the controversy that you, might stroak them, would have thundered about Dr. Middleton's ears from the artillery of an establishment, the moment he had made his appearance in that province; and have plyed him with their great and small shot, as long as ever he was in a condition to be galled by it.

I should be glad to know, what, in such circumstances, would have been the conduct of this his ingenious advocate? He will hardly fay, that little or no advantage could be gained to fociety by this debate, after it has been demonstrated by Dr. Middleton, Mr. Toll, and himself, how much the Protestant cause is interested in the determination of so important a fact. He calls the system contrary to that he espouses, a fanciful one, unfupported by any thing, but the dirty politics of interested churchmen. Would the circumstance of being established have added any truth or solidity to the fystem, or given it any more merit with respect to the Protestant cause? If not, what would there be in the one case, that ought to hinder a reasonable and conscientious Protestant from exposing and consuting it, more than in the other? Would it be sufficient to excuse a man so perfunded,

fuaded, that a faction might be occasioned by the dispute, and something unsettled and disturbed, which might affect the peace and quiet or welfare of society?

Now, it is very possible that some other person, equally discerning, able, and conscientious as the Remarker, may think some other system of these fanciful divines just as pernicious to the cause of true religion, and just as void of truth and reason, as this of the miraculous powers; some system, I mean, which is under the protection of an establishment. What is to be done? Is this man to sit down and acquiesce with the herd, under the apprehension of causing a fastion, and unsettling, in some degree at least, the peace and quiet of the world? Had this been the persuasion of good men at all periods, what had been the creed of the Protestant, or indeed of the Christian world at this instant?

It is well for us that some, both of our fore-fathers and contemporaries, have had none of these scruples. And it may perhaps add some light to the present enquiry, to remark how it has fared with some of these later adventurers, upon a point of orthodoxy, of which all the churches of *Europe* are extremely tenacious.

It is well known, that, fince the commencement of the prefent century, the great Athanafius has been attacked by a fuccession of eminent men, who could not be brought to think his sy-

ftem less fanciful, for being enclosed in the fortress of an established Creed.

Mr. Whiston led the way. A faction enfued, and the event was, his expulsion from a famous university, and an exclusion from all other preferment. Dr. Clarke made the next effort, nor could he, who was a much more temperate man, prevent a faction; and what would have come of it in the end, if an effectual interpolition from the higher powers had not over-ruled those of the lower, none can tell. More lately, a learned and eminent prelate, in a neighbouring kingdom, opened the trenches once more before the formidable Athanasius, with all his myrmidons and fortifications about him. Faction was again the consequence; and, had not death snatch'd him off the stage in a lucky moment (of which I am informed as I am writing this), he might probably have been fent, whither his mitre and his rochet would not have followed him. There were feveral others of less note, who had their factions as well as these more eminent leaders; but these are enough to explain the case in hand.

Let the next question be concerning these fastions. Whence did they arise? As far as I can perceive, the laity of Great Britain and Ireland were all this while very much at their ease, carried on their affairs with their usual tranquillity and success; nor did I ever hear, that the well-being of society was at all affected, at any

of those periods of time when the Trinitarian controversy was on the anyil. Hence it should feem, that no factions either arose or spread among the common people on these occasions; and yet factions there were, as appears both by the offence given by, and the molestation returned to, the culprits above mentioned. We must look for them then among the clergy.

Who expelled Mr. Whiston? The churchmen of Cambridge. Who attempted to proscribe Dr. Clarke? The churchmen of the Lower House of Convocation. Who took counfel against the Bishop of Clogber? The great churchmen of Ireland. Who profecuted Dr. Carter in the ecclesiastical court? The church-officers of Deal, at the instigation, as it is faid, of a churchman of that place. Who profecuted Mr. Emlyn in Ireland, and Messieurs Pierce, Withers, and Hallet, in England? The diffenting clergy, abetted, as appeared openly in the first case [N], and as was strongly fuspected in the latter [O], by some great churchmen of the established church. In one word, what lay-man who was not the instrument of fome one or more churchmen, was concerned in these factions?

Let it then no longer be faid, that the times, but that the churchmen, are not ripe for a refor-

[[]N] See Emlyn's Works, vol. I. p. 26.

[[]O] Tindal's Transl. of Rapin, 8vo. 1746. vol. XXVII.

mation. The impracticability, as far as yet appears, arises wholly from that quarter. Let the churchmen of the establishment shew themselves desirous of, and sincere in solliciting, a reformation of our ecclesiastical constitution; and, if they miscarry in their endeavours, it is but equitable that the impracticability should no longer be put to their account.

Here, methinks, I perceive a fly orthodox brother, who has all this while hung his ears in a corner, begin now to prick them up, and come forward with this expostulation in his mouth: "What! reform according to the detestable fystems of Arius or Socinus! Is it not that you are pleading for? And does not this confirm the suspicious of those who imputed these views to the free and candid Disquistors?"

Soft and fair. Let the Disquisitors answer for themselves and their own views and principles; but do not prejudge them beforehand. They have laid before you a great many particulars, which perhaps give more open and immediate offence to the common people, than the doctrines of the Trinity; about which, I am apt to think, sew of them form any ideas. Had you shewn a disposition to reform these necessary matters, and had you set about it with alacrity, time and credit would have been given you for the rest. This I presume to say on the part of the Disquisitors.

On my own part, I am neither afraid nor afnamed to call for a review of our Trinitarian forms, as what, I think, is quite necessary for the honour of the church herself. Consider how the case stands on the very face of our present forms.

"So that in ALL THINGS (nala walla) fays the " Athanasian Creed, the Unity in Trinity, and the "Trinity in Unity, is [or ought] to be worship-"ed." Is this the case in ALL our forms of worship? Turn back to the Litany, and you will fee three distinct invocations of the three Persons. to each of whom the term God is affigned; implying a sufficiency in each, in his personal capacity, to hear and grant the petition. Instances. equally remarkable and notorious, of our deviation from the Athanasian maxim, might be given in great abundance. What miserable sophistry Dr. Waterland employed to make our liturgical forms consistent, has been noticed in these papers: nor, to fay the truth, is Dr. Clarke under much less embarrassment. And, while these inconsistencies remain. I cannot fee how a defender of our forms of worship should be in much better agreement with Athanasius, than Whiston, Clarke, or Clayton. To make these matters confistent, is certainly the proper object of a review, on which fide foever of the contradiction the truth may lye.

One of the last pieces published on the subject of the Trinity, was, An Appeal to the Common-sense of all Christian People, &c. which book has passed through two editions without any fort of reply that I have heard of *. This looks as if able writers were not willing to meddle with the subject, or that willing writers were not able to manage it. Many of the wiser and more thinking part of the clergy have been long sick of the Athanasian Creed, and have, by degrees, disused it in their churches. And many of the congregations, where it has been so disused, if by accident an officiating stranger should read it to them in its course, have been known to signify their surprize and dislike by very manifest tokens [P].

From these particulars I conclude, and venture to repeat it, that, when our leading churchmen tell us of the imprasticability of an ecclesiastical

reformation,

^{*} When this was written, I did not know of Dr. Macdonell's answer to the Appeal, and much less of the Appellant's replication, intituled The Trinitatian Controversy reviewed, printed for Millar, 1760: It is something, however, to my purpose; that no Englishman of any name has offered to consute the Appeal, and that the Athanasian doctrine seems to be consigned to the sole protection of our Irish champion, who makes so indifferent a figure in the hands of the Appellant, that probably we shall hear no more of him; the said Appellant having said enough to deter wise men of both sides from meddling farther in the controversy, unless in the way of a Review.

[[]P] See A serious and dispassionate Inquiry, &c. concerning some passages in the public Liturgy, Athanasian Creed, &c. p. 80—95, 96. Of this I have been an eye-witness more than once.

reformation, through the unripeness of the times, the true meaning is, that they cannot obtain their own consent to any measure, or to any attempt of that fort. And no marvel. A reformation that should reach to the extent of our deviations from the scriptures (and, when the door is once opened, who knows how far a reformation might extend?) would not stop at a few liturgical forms and ceremonies. The conductors of it might probably proceed to inquire, how far the prefent polity of the church ftood upon a scriptural foundation? And should such inquiry be pursued to good effect, the consequence might be, that the repose of some great churchmen would be grievously disturbed, their labours increased, the nature and tendency of their present occupations greatly altered, and their temporalities reduced to a due proportion to their duties and services.

The worthy friend who fent me the first notice of the demife of Bishop Clayton, and an account of the clerical machinations against him, inclosed in the same packet a small manuscript, intituled The Bishop of Clogher's Speech, made in the House of Lords in Ireland, Feb. 2, 1756 [2]. I will not answer for the authenticity of this little rescript, though it feems to have paffed for genuine in that country, and it is certain that the bishop moved in parliament for such a bill as is there mentioned.

^[2] It has fince been printed at London, for Balliwin and Gooper, 1757. Y In

In this speech I find the following passage: "I " am perfuaded, that if my lords the bishops will " but flew themselves inclined to amend, what "they cannot but acknowledge to be amis, they " will find the laity ready to affift and support " them rather than otherwife."

No man knew the world better than the late Bishop of Clogher. His adversaries objected it to him, after they had ranfacked all the obscure corners of the kingdom for scandal, that he knew it but too well. Even they therefore might take his word on this head. But indeed the thing fpeaks for itself. Whenever the people shall see this imprasticability subdued on the part of the clergy, it is impossible they should not be convinced both of the utility of the measure, and of the integrity of those who undertake and promote it. Such instances of self-denial, and so many circumstances of ease and profit facrificed to the public welfare and edification, cannot but give them the highest esteem and affection for so faithful and difinterested Pastors.

I am willing, however, that our spiritual fathers, among whom are fome persons of distinguished merit, should have the benefit of every plea that can possibly be offered for their inactivity and acquiescence in our present inconvenient and unedifying system. And if any of them can derive any confolation to themselves, or any apology to the world for their conduct, from the following concession, I shall not desire to deprive them of it.

"Though the church of Christ," saith a pious and learned writer, "has been thus corrupted "[viz. by copying the church of Rome more or less] in all ages and nations, yet there have been, and will be in all, many who receive the feal of God, and worship him in spirit and in truth. And of these, as many have filled high stations as low ones. Such persons, though they have concurred in the support of what is contrary to the pure religion, have, however, done it innocently with respect to themselves, being led thereto by invincible prejudices [R]."

What particular examples this good man had in his eye, would be hard to fay. Perhaps, some of the first Bishops of the Christian church, commonly called the Fathers, as well as Pastors of more modern times. Let us pitch upon a few of the most eminent of these, and begin with the upper classes sirst.

The Fathers, so called, have ever been esteemed the lights of the Christian church, and have been justly revered for their piety and fanctity of manners. But no one will deny, that they were deeply prejudiced in favour of some things, which greatly disfigured and corrupted true religion. The question is, how far these prejudices were invincible?

Jerom is one who hath figured in all ages, both on account of the aufterity of his discipline, and

Y 2 the

[[]R] Dr. David Hartley's Observations on Man, vol. II. P. 371.

the superiority of his learning. Both popish and protestant writers have, by turns, put their cause under his patronage; till the protestants found they were losers upon the balance, and from thenceforward began to look a little more narrowly into the character and merits of the man; and then they found his genius was wholly turned to bragging and diffigulation [S], that he frequently contradicted himself [T], and paid little regard to truth, when he had a controverfial point to carry, for which Le Clerc gives a very probable reason, namely, his reading and admiring Cicero. " For Cicero," fays this excellent Critic, " pro-"vided what he fays fuits his present purpose, " and may make an impression on his audience, " takes no thought whether it be true, nor cares "at all whether he hath contradicted it elfe-" where [U]."

[S] Ingenium Hieronymi totum fuit ad jastationem et dissimulationem compositum. Le Clerc, Questiones Hieronymianæ, III. p. 62.

[T] Le Clerc, Sentimens de quelques Theologiens d'Hollande, &c.

Lettre xiii. p. 307.

[U] J. Clerici Quæstiones Hieronymianæ, VIII. § xiii. p. 248. He gives several instances of this conduct of Cicero, and observes after Quintilian, and after Cicero himself, that the definition of an Orator should not be what it usually was, wir bonus dicendi peritus, but wir callidus mentiendi pro re nata, et dissimulandi peritus. Le Clerc shews that Jerom was deeply sinctured with this oratorical craft, and had his orationes causarum et temporum, non judicii, as well as Tully, which is likewise acknowledged by Erestonus, his great advocate. But what shall we say to a certain Christian divine and critic, who will have it

Another

Another excellent pen hath proved these contradictions upon more of the Fathers, particularly in one instance which shews a disingenuity,

" that in all this Cicero acted no unfair part, because forsooth "he acted it not in his real, but his personated character." Postfeript to Dr. Warburton's Visitation fermon, printed for Fletcher Gyles, 1738. p. 31. A personated character is a fictious one, and whoever puts on such a character with intent to deceive, feems to me not only to act an unfair but an immoral part. "Hold, fays the nimble cafuift, unfair is an expression that " relates to a man's breeding, to a point of civility, in not im-" posing on good company, rather than his morals." The reader will be pleafed to take notice, that this good company was often a bench of judges, affembled to try causes of the greatest importance to the peace and welfare of the community. Had Cicero appeared on the stage in the character of Agamemnon, and spoke nothing but what Euripides put into his mouth, the good company would have had no reason to complain, either of his rudeness or his dishonessy. But when he appears in the naked character of Cicero the advocate, and endeavours to impose upon a solemn tribunal, by a false representation of facts in a criminal cause, he forseits all pretensions to the character of a good patriot or an honest man. And, whatever becomes of his breeding, in fo far as he lays claim to these titles, is every way unfair. There is, however, one instance upon record, which impeaches Tully's breeding. Quintilian informs us, that he boasted, se tenebras offudisse judicibus in causii Cluentii. Inslit. Orat. lib. ii. cap. 17. What would be thought of an Attorney-general that should boast, he had amused and missed the Judges of the court of King's-Bench? Certainly not that he was a polite man. But what is this to Ferom? A great deal to ferom, and to the rest of the Fathers, defended by the Prefacer to Julian. The Apology for Cicero extends to the philosophical, as well as rhetorical discipline of those times. If that was blameless, the Fathers who pursued it were so too. Their faults were therefore neither faults of the times nor of the men; that is, the Fathers had no faults at all.

of which the most invincibly prejudiced among them, must have been conscious. He has shewn, from the words of above a dozen of them, that when the question was concerning conformity to any particular religion, they all had the clearest conception of the iniquity, as well as impiety of intolerance. Nevertheless, his adversary challenged him to shew a single instance, even in those councils of which these fathers were members. and wherein some of them presided, where there was any trace of toleration towards those who differed from the established faith and opinions. The other knew better than to undertake to hopeless a task; and therefore contented himself with shewing, that these fathers contradicted in their practice, what they had folemnly laid down for their incontestable principles [V]. On which fide of fuch a contradiction can the moincible prejudice be supposed to lie?

To draw nearer to our own times, and to mention one of the most illustrious characters in all history. *Eresmus* saw, complained of, censured, and exposed the corruptions of Popery with all freedom. It is hardly possible he should not perceive, that all these corruptions arose from the spurious authority to which the Popes laid claim. Many passages in his comments and paraphrases on the New Testament, shew his

[[]F] Barbeyrac, Traité de la Morale des Peres, Chap. xii. §

differenment in this matter beyond difference One, I have pointed out in the note [W]. And

[W] Jam vero de Romani Pontificis potessate, pene negotiossus disputatur, quam de possifiate Dei, dum quarimus de duplici illius potestate, et an possit abregare quod scriptis apesiolicis decretum est? An possit aliquid statuere quod pugnet cum dostrina evangelica? An possit novum articulum condere in sidei symbolo? Utrum majorem babeat potestatem quam Petrus, an parem? An possit præcipere angelis? Utrum simplex bomo sit, an quasi Deus, an particibet utramque naturam cum Christo? An clementior sit quam fuerit Christus, cum is non legatur quemquam a purgatoriis panis ravocasse? An solus omnium non possit creare? Sexcenta id genus disputantur, magnis editis voluminibus, idque a magnis Theologis, præsertim professione religionis insignibus. Atque hac fiunt non fine manifesta suspicione adulationis, nec sine injuria Christi, ad quem collati principes, quantum vis magni, quid aliud sunt quam vermiculi? An putant hac placere LEONI nostro, germano, veroque Christi vicario, qui tanquam verus pastor, nihil habet antiquius salute gregis christiani, ut verus Christi vicarius, nihil habet carius gloria principis sui Christi. Erasm. Annotat. in 1 Tim. i. 6. Upon this passage, I would observe, 1. That Erasmus very well knew that the transalpine divines, held all these questions in the affirmative. 2. That he was little less guilty of the adulation wherewith he reproaches them, in calling LEO X. the true vicar of Christ, who had nothing more at heart than the glory of his prince, and the salvation of the Christian flock. E-RASMUS could be no stranger to what all the world knew, namely, that neither the personal, nor papal character of LEO, intituled him to any fuch encomium. 3. He infinuates, that these strains of adulation were disagreeable to LEO; and yet it is certain that Leo never discouraged them, as Erasimus very well linew. Palavicini, defending this pope against the cenfures of Father Poul, who had faid, "that he was better ac-" quainted with profane letters, than with facred or religious "learning," allows the fact; but in alleviation of it fays, "that "he favoured scholastic divinity, and that he honoured three "divines of this complexion with the purple, and made a

to these an hundred more might be added. He well knew that the scandalous traffick of indulgences was grounded on the papal power, and -upon no more of it, than the most moderate doctors afferted to belong to it. If Erasmus was of a different opinion, he might be retained in the church by a prejudice, but certainly not an invincible one $\lceil X \rceil$.

Come we now to some doctors of our own reformed church. I do not know of any of our Bishops since the reformation, who has had more incense offered up to him, than Archbishop Whitgift, and that by the very historian from whom I take the following fact.

In the year 1572, a pamphlet was published in defence of the famous Admonition to parliament, intituled An Exhortation to the bishops,

" fourth master of the sacred palace." See BAYLE's Dictionarv, Art. Leo X. Rem. [H]. These divines then above all others, were Leo's favourites. Was this, do you suppose, because these doctors had determined the questions abovementioned in the negative? Was Erasmus a stranger to the promotion of three cardinals? or to the characters and studies of the men? Erasmus, I say, who knew what was doing in every court, and in every corner of Europe? Let it not be faid, that these incidents might not have happened when Erasmus wrote his annotations. Pope LEO X. died before Erasmus published the third of his five editions of the N. T. and the same annotation is found in them all. Can it be faid, with the least probability, that Erafinus's prejudices on this head, were invincible.

[] See what Barle favs of this subject. Dict. Art. Agri-COLA GEORGE, Rem. [B].

wherein

wherein their lordships were reminded, "how hard it was to punish the favourers and abettors of the Admonition, because they did but disclose the disorders of the church of England, and only required a reformation of the same, according to the rule of God's word. Whereas many lewd and light books and ballads flew abroad, printed not only without reprehension, but cum privilegio."

Archbishop Whitgist condescended to answer this pamplet, and to this objection thought fit to say, it was a fault to suffer lewed books and ballads touching manners, but it was a greater fault to suffer books and libels, disturbing the peace of the church, and defacing true religion [Y]."

Which was to fay, 1. That lewd books and ballads, printed with privilege, neither disturbed the peace of the church, nor defaced true religion. 2. That provided the church might quietly enjoy and practife her forms, rites, and ceremonies, titles, and emoluments, it was the less material what were the manners of her members. 3. That true religion consisted in those forms, rites, ceremonies, titles, and powers, which the puritans were for defacing.

These were prejudices with a witness, and, if they were invincible, what was this man doing so

^[1] Strype's life of Archbishop Whitgift, p. 40. who honesty tells us, p. 50. that he took the account of Cartwright's Reply from Whitgift himself.

long, in two divinity chairs in Cambridge? Shall we fay that men's prejudices become invincible as foon as ever you name diforders in the church, and talk of reforming them?

I make a transition from this prelate to Archbishop Wake, though the step is a pretty long one. But it is not for want of matter in the interval of time, or of prejudices in the intermediate occupiers of the see of Canterbury, but through a willingness to save the reader's time and my own.

Dr. Wake, then Bishop of Lincoln, at the trial of Sacheverell, spoke with great force and propriety in defence of the Toleration-act, and in vindication of those, who, under a commission from K. William, 1689, were appointed to review the liturgy, and other parts of our ecclefiaftical conflitution, for which, according to the faid Dr. Wake, there was great occasion. When the Schismbill was in agitation, Dr. Wake, still Bishop of Lincoln, opposed it in its progress through the House of Lords, and, when passed, protested against it. But when, in the year 1718, this fame Schism-bill was attacked, Dr. Wake, then Archbishop of Canterbury, opposed the repeal of it with all his might, alledging, that it was one of the main bulwarks and supporters of the establifbed church; whereas, in his speech above-mentioned, he infifted, that the established church neither lost nor suffered any thing by the toleration

tion of differers. On which fide lay the invincible prejudice in this case [Z]?

This is the farthest I choose to venture towards the present times, over which, if I could, I would drop a veil for the sake of some particulars, who, like *Mercurius trivialis*, have pointed out the right road, without stirring an inch themselves from the centre of the cross-lanes. Peace be with those of them that are gone. To such of them as remain, I would recommend the serious consideration of what follows that concession last cited from Dr. *Hartley*.

"Nevertheless, when it so happens, that perfons in high stations in the church have their
eyes enlightened, and see the corruptions and
deficiencies of it, they must incur the prophetical censures in the highest degree, if they still
concur, nay, if they do not endeavour to reform, and purge out these defilements; and

[Z] "A very ancient and worthy gentleman, now living, "[viz. 1755] fpeaking occasionally of Archbishop Wake, in "a company where I lately was, said, he well remembered to "have seen his Grace returning from court, on the day that he "had been there to kis his Majesty's hand upon his advance-"ment to the see of Canterbury. Dining that day at a friend's house, where Dr. S. Clarke was one of the guests, he men-"tioned this incident; upon which the company, as is common, made their several remarks upon that promotion. Dr. Clarke continued silent for some time; but said at last, We have now an Archbishop who is Priest enough." Memoir communicated to the author by a learned friend. It seems, Dr. Charke knew the man better than some others did.

"though they cannot, according to this propofition, expect entire fuccess, yet they may be
bleffed with fuch a degree, as will abundantly
compensate their utmost endeavours, and rank
them with the Prophets and Apostles [A].

Nothing can possibly expose the futility of any pretences to defer reformation, upon account of the unripenels of the times, more effectually, than the folemn truths contained in these few words. Dr. Hartley, indeed, proceeds to observe, that "this corruption and degeneracy of the Christian "church - has, all other things being supposed " to remain the fame, fuited our circumstances " in the best manner possible, and will continue "to do, as long as it subsists. God," says he, "brings good out of evil, and draws men to " himself in such manner, as their natures will "admit of, by external pomp and power, by "things not good in themselves, and by some "that are prophane and unholy. The impurity " of mankind is too gross, to unite at once with "the strict purity of the gospel." Hence he takes occasion to infer, that good men ought to submit to the ecclesiastical powers that be, for conscience sake, as well as to the civil ones. And hence, I do not doubt but the ecclesiastical powers that be, will infer the no-necessity of altering any thing in their present systems: and so we get rid of these prophetical censures at once.

[[]A] Observations on Man, u. s.

But Dr. Hartley knew well enough what he faid, and was only explaining a case which he found in his Bible. The Prophet Isaiab speaks of certain wife and prudent men of his time, who taught the fear of God by the precept of men [B]. But inalmuch as the fear of God was taught, though by things evil, profane, and unholy in themselves, whatever Dr. Hartley has said concerning God's bringing good out of evil, is just as applicable to this period of the Jewish church, as to any posterior state of the christian. It was upon these considerations, that our Saviour and his Apostles observed the law, and prescribed obedience to those who sat in Moses's seat.

But did these considerations exculpate the wife and prudent men of Isaiah's time, or the Scribes and Pharifees of Christ's days, who taught for dollrines the commandments of men? By no means: the prophetical censures fell heavily on them both. And if our enlightened churchmen in high stations would avoid them, let them go and learn what that meaneth, Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

They will tell us, perhaps, that, fenfible as they are of these corruptions, they are equally sensible of the impossibility that their endeavours or remonstrances should overcome the prejudices or perverseness of their brethren, especially as they would be likely to fland alone and unsupported

in the conflict; and consequently that there is not the least hope that reformation would be advanced, in whole or in part, by the utmost efforts they could make.

But let them try their strength, and then they will have a better right to this apology. Men's endeavours, in this as well as in other cases, are not to be suspended by the improbability of success, or even by trials apparently fruitless. We are not judges what success our pious endeavours may have in due time. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The light of our testimony may appear to be wholly extinguished, and the seed we sow, totally buried and corrupted, and yet the one may blaze out, and the other spring up and slourish, in its due season, how, and where, and when, we are unable to foresee or even to conceive.

I believe, no book of equal importance ever funk fo fuddenly into oblivion as the *Free and Candid Disquisitions*; nor was any other ever treated with more contempt and scorn by those who ought to have paid the greatest regard to the subject of it. In short, its pernicious tendency was echoed in the conversation of every expectant of church-preferment, whose success depended, in any degree, upon the favour of his ecclesiastical superiors.

But, in spite of all these arts and all this contumely, the book has had no inconsiderable effects among

among particular persons. It has caused the forms of the church to be weighed in the balance of the fanctuary, where they have been found greatly wanting. Many, who formerly paid an implicit veneration to them, begin now to compare and reason upon them, and to draw inferences and conclusions by no means in their favour. These impressions may possibly be working silently and imperceptibly to a good end, and they who wish well to the prosperity of our Israel, may reap the good fruit of them, either in the present or a future generation. In the mean time, others may fleep on, and take their rest, perhaps, for many years to come, fecure in their numbers and influence, against the importunity of clamorous Disquisitors. The Almighty works those things which are well-pleafing to him, in his own way, and in his own time, by methods to us infcrutable, and out of the reach of human projects. Methods of violence feldom advance the interests of peace and truth. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. And though the spirit of flumber should have seized the public for the present, the drowsiness will in time be shaken off, and the hearts and understandings of pastors and people opened, as of one man, and prepared to receive those truths, which at present are confined to the breafts of a few, who, by the bleffing of God, have found the means of emancipating themselves from the bondage of fear, the idolatry

of lucre, and the enchantments of worldly wisdom; and who, having born their testimony in due season, though without essect for the present, will be found to have delivered their own souls, in the solemn hour of visitation.

Having now examined the pleas that have been offered against a reformation of our ecclesiastical system, it may possibly be expected I should descend to particulars, and point out some of the principal objects, at least, of the reform I may be supposed to sollicit.

The equitable reader, however, will recollect, that my fubject leads me only to one particular, the case of subscription to human creeds and confessions, and other ecclesiastical forms, which are required to be affented to, as being agreeable to the word of God. Undoubtedly, fuch of these as have not this agreement with holy writ, ought not to be retained in the church. Nevertheless. as fomething is due to the ignorance and prejudices of well-meaning people, it may be allowed not to be expedient to discontinue the use of them all at once, provided proper endeavours are used to prepare the people for their removal at a featonable time, by informing them wherein their disagreement with the Christian scriptures consists. But nothing can be more cruel, nothing more inequitable, than to infift, that candidates for the ministry should give their solemn affent and confent to articles of faith, and modes of discipline

and worship, which it is certain many of them must think to be inconsistent with the word of God, and which, for that reason, they are obliged to wrest and distort from their natural original meaning, before they can reconcile themselves to this article of conformity.

I am not now looking into any man's heart. I have given indisputable proofs of what I am here advancing, from the writings of men of great eminence in the church of *England*, by the systems of some or other of whom, it is reasonable to suppose, the common run of subscribers form their sentiments, or quiet their scruples.

This stumbling-block should therefore be removed out of the way, with the utmost expedition. As a test of opinions, it is utterly useless. It is an affair in which the prejudices of the people have nothing to do. The candidates for the ministry are supposed to be persons of learning, capable of judging of fuch things; and liable to be burt and disquieted by so dissigneeable a dilemma, as they are brought into by this piece of discipline. If there are any of this class weak enough to be offended with the removal of this barrier of orthodoxy, why let them be gratified too. The restoration of their sensible and conscientious brethren to their christian liberty, need not preclude them from expressing their belief of, and their veneration for, every thing established in the church of England, in as high terms as they can invent.

6.1

But it may be demanded, would you have the church to authorize and fend forth ministers and pastors among the people, without taking any security of them for the faithful discharge of their office, and particularly, without guarding against their preaching salie and erroneous doctrines?

Answer: In our office of ordination, there are eight questions put to every priest; the answers to the second, fourth, sisth, sixth, and seventh of which, seem to me to contain as ample security in this behalf, as any Christian church can defire, or can be authorized to demand.

Here the priest declares, and declares it at the altar, "That he is perfuaded that the holy fcri-" ptures contain fusficiently all doctrine required " of necessity for eternal falvation, through faith " in Jesus Christ; that he has determined, by "God's grace, out of the faid scriptures, to in-" ftruct the people committed to his charge, and "to teach nothing (as required of necessity to " eternal falvation) but that which he shall be " perfuaded, may be concluded and proved by "the scripture. — He promises, the Lord being "his helper, that he will be ready, with all " faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all " erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to "Ged's word; -that he will use both public and " private monitions, as well to the fick as to the 56 whole, within his cure, as need shall require, « and

"and occasion shall be given; — that he will be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy foriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the sless, — that he will be diligent to frame and fashion his own self and his family according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both himself and them, as much as in him lieth, wholesom examples and patterns to the slock of Christ; — that he will maintain and set forwards, as much as in him lieth, quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian people, and especially among those that are or shall be committed to his charge."

I omit the first, third, and eighth of these queftions, and the answers to them, without any remark, because, whatever I or any other person may think of them, these declarations, in my opinion, are what no confcientious minister would refuse to make, and are as good security as any Protestant church can in reason demand, for the due discharge of the pastoral office; and, I believe, I should have few opponents, if I should add, that whoever performs thus much of what he promises at his ordination, will give little occafion to the church to bind him in any stricter obligation. I will go one step farther still. There is nothing in this declaration, but what the diffenting clergy themselves might declare; and, being laid down as a common measure for all licensed or tolerated ministers, one complaint would be effectually removed, namely, that the diffenting clergy are entitled to their privileges and emoluments upon easier terms, than those of the established church.

But, all this while, you will fay, we have no evidence of this man's opinions; he may think very differently from the church, when he comes to interpret the scriptures. The words of this declaration are general and indeterminate: and after all, they are but words. Here is no subscription; and consequently nothing whereby the declarer may be convicted of falshood or prevarication, in case he should break his engagements with the church.

I answer to some of these objections, by asking some questions. What evidence have you of the opinions of him who subscribes to the thirty-nine articles? Do not the very champions of the church insist, that the words of these articles are general and indeterminate, and susceptible of different senses? Has not this been lately afferted from the pulpit, in the sace of the university of Cambridge, at the solemn time of commencement, in a sermon afterwards printed, and dispersed all over the nation [B]?

For the rest, I take it for granted, that whoever has no objection to the making this declaration, one tenus, in public, will have none to the

fubscribing his name to it. And, if that will fatisfy, it is a circumstance which will readily be given up.

There is, indeed, fomething in this declaration, that amounts to an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the scriptures; and Dr. Hartley, having first reprobated all other subscriptions, hath seen sit to add, "That it seems needless, or in"finaring, to subscribe, even to the scriptures "themselves. If to any particular canon, copy, "&c. infinaring, because of the many real doubts "in these things. If not, it is quite superfluous "from the latitude allowed [C]."

I will freely declare, that I think this is spinning the thread too fine. But, before I proceed to offer my sentiments upon the whole of this passage, let us consider, what may be inferred from so much of it, as may be safely allowed; and that is, that to require subscription to any particular copy or canon of scripture, is insnaring.

That no man, or body of men, have authority to authenticate one copy of the scriptures, rather than another, will, I suppose, appear sufficiently to those who have read and considered what the writers among the Reformed have written concerning the superior respect paid to the Vulgate by the council of Trent. Even the cooler fort of the Roman catholic writers themselves have

found this so reasonable and evident, that, to save the honour of the council, they have been obliged to hunt for a more commodious sense of the canon, than the plain words import; that is to say, a sense which does not imply that the Fathers of Trent intended to authenticate the Latin version in preference to any other [D].

Hence arises an argument a fortiori, against requiring fubfcription to creeds, articles, or fy-Items, either dogmatical or explanatory, composed and established by human authority. If no body of men have authority to authenticate one copy of the scriptures above another, no body of men have authority to interpret the scriptures, fo as to authenticate fuch interpretation, as a standard for all who receive the scriptures. The encroachment upon Christian liberty is the same in both cases. The authority of the council of Trent, in the former case, was disowned on all hands. And concerning the power of Christian magistrates at large, Dr. Hartley has truly observed, that " the " power which they have from God to inflict " punishment upon such as disobey, and to con-" fine the natural liberty of acting within certain "bounds, for the common good of their fub-" jects, is of a nature very foreign to the pre-

[[]D] Le Clerc, Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollank far l'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament, par Mr. Siteon. Lettre xiv. p. 311, 312, &c. and Desense des Sentimens, &c. Lettre xiii. p. 327, e. q. s.

"tences for confining opinions by discourage"ments and punishments [E]."

I cannot, however, come into this worthy perfon's fentiments, with respect to the *inutility* of subscribing to the scriptures with more latitude, let the subscriber pitch upon (for his own use) what copy or canon you will.

It has been observed over and over, that, not-withstanding the variations of so many MSS. of the New Testament, "there is not one various "reading, choose it as aukwardly as you can, by which one article of faith or moral precept is either perverted or lost,—or in which the various reading is of any consequence to the main of religion, nay, perhaps, is not wholly fynonymous in the view of common readers, and quite insensible in any modern version?

Again, with respect to the canon; those books which have been among the alliasyopasa, are allowed to be perfectly consistent, in point of doctrine and precept, with those whose authority is more indisputable, by reason of their universal reception; which latter however, of themselves, contain all things necessary to be believed, or known, in the Christian religion. So that whether you admit or reject the doubtful books, it

[[]E] Observations, vol. II. p. 351.

[[]F] Bentley's Remarks on a discourse of Free-thinking, 6th edit. part i. p. 69-72.

is the same rule of faith and manners, by which you are guided.

This being admitted, it is surely a sufficient description of the scriptures, to call them the books of the Old and New Testament, generally received among Christians; and for a public passor to declare, that he believes the scriptures, and will make the contents of them the rule of his teaching, is a very moderate security, and no more than the society with which he is connected may with reason expect.

I have, indeed, met with some gentlemen, suf-

ficiently disgusted with the present forms and objects of our subscriptions, who would propose, that the candidate should deliver in an account of his belief of the scriptures, and of the principal articles of faith he draws from thence, in some form of his own. "The man himfelf," fay thefe worthy persons, "best knows his own conceptions 65 concerning the authority, as well as the contents, of the fcriptures; and, by expressing those conceptions in his own language, he will " convey to whom it may concern, a much clearer idea of his reverence for those facred oracles, and of the weight and authority he ascribes to them, than can possibly be gathered from his " affent to any other form composed by others. " Not to mention the abfurdity of obliging men or to confess their own faith in the words of others,

who have no more authority or any better pre-

"tence to interpret the scriptures than themfelves.

"They," continue these gentlemen, "who are fond of deriving our rituals, and other ec-

" clesiastical apparatus, from primitive antiquity,

" will find, that this was the ancient method taken to prove the orthodoxy of Christian bi-

"fhops; and indeed feems to be much better

" calculated for the purpose of a test, than either

"the prefent articles, or any others for which

"they should be exchanged."

With these gentlemen I so far agree, as to defire that such an experiment might be made for a limited time, and in the case only of our elder divines, who may be supposed to have formed such judgment on these matters, as they are not likely to retract. Many of these take institution to new preferments, in an advanced age, and may be supposed to have closed their studies, or, as a certain author has it, made up their minds, with respect to all theological opinions, when they offer themselves to the trial.

But, I believe, the certain consequence would be, that they who should be appointed to receive these formularies, perceiving a wide difference in the sentiments of these veterans, many of whom would be found to be men of the soundest learning and brightest capacities, would think it much better, these candidates should be left to the enjoyment of their own opinions in secret, than that

they, or the church they belong to, should, by such rescripts under their hands, be exposed to the perverse reflections that might be made upon their respective variations from each other.

Nothing, indeed, could be more infnaring to the younger fort of candidates for the ministry, than this method proposed by these worthy perfons above-mentioned. These formularies might be produced against them at some suture period, when, in the course of their studies, they had found reason to change their minds. An inconvenience, to which the declaration I have proposed, and which is drawn as above from the ordination-office, is not liable. There the candidate is supposed to be still carrying on the study of the fcriptures, "along with fuch [other] ftu-"dies, as help to the [farther] knowledge of the " fame;" a supposition, which seems to me to be absolutely inconsistent with any peremptory assent to the articles, as agreeable to the word of God, at his first entrance upon his ministry.

There is another circumstance which recommends these forms of declaration extremely, and that is the *modesty* with which the answers to the several questions are expressed, agreeable to that state of *probation*, in which the compilers of the office knew young candidates must remain, at least for some considerable time.

"Are you perfuaded," fays the fecond question, that the holy scriptures contain sufficiently all "doctrine

"tion, through faith in Jefus Christ?"—The candidate answers, "I am so persuaded." And so he very well may be, without having examined the scriptures with that application and accuracy, which are necessary to form a judgment upon their whole contents. The object of this persuasion lies within a small compass; and the knowledge necessary to produce it, may be obtained with a thousandth part of the pains necessary to persuade an ingenuous mind, that our xxxix Articles of religion are in persect agreement with the word of God.

When we consider the case of candidates for orders in general, it may well be questioned, whether the *persuasion* above-mentioned is not as far as the majority of them can safely go.

Many of them, in the northern dioceses especially, come immediately from a grammar-school, where they have thought of nothing but learning Latin and Greek. At the universities, the point for the first four years, is to qualify themselves for their first degree, which they may take with the utmost honour and credit, without ever having seen the inside of a Bible [G]. And it should

feem,

[[]G] "Young men," faid Dr. Prideaux, "frequently come to "the univerfity, without any knowledge or tincture of religion "at all; and have little opportunity of improving themselves therein, whilst under-graduates, because the course of their studies inclines them to philosophy, and other kinds of learning; and they are usually admitted to their first degree of

feem, by an anecdote in the Life of Dr. Humphrey Prideaux, as if it were determined, that, during that interval, it is better they should not.

That anecdote is as follows. "Dr. Bufby of"fered to found two catechiftical lectures, with
"an endowment of 100 l. per annum each,
"for instructing the under-graduates in the ru"diments of the Christian religion, provided all
"the said under-graduates should be obliged to
"attend the said lectures, and none of them be
"admitted to the degree of Bachelors of Arts,
"till after having been examined by the catechist,
"as to their knowledge in the doctrines and pre"cepts of the Christian religion, and by him ap"proved of.—But this condition being rejected
by both universities, the benefaction was rejected
"therewith, and the church hath ever since suffer"ed for the want of it [H]."

Our universities are generally esteemed to be so far out of the reach of all reprehension, that I should not have ventured to have retailed this little piece of history upon the credit of a less responsible voucher than Dr. Prideaux. But as

[H] Ibid. p. 92. Dr. Bushy was not ignorant, with what tincture of religion these young fiers either came to him or went

'rom him.

Bachelors of Arts, with the same ignorance, as to all sacred learning, as when sirst admitted into the university; and many or them, as soon as they have taken that degree, offering themselves for orders, are too often admitted to be teachers in the church, when they are only sit to be catechumens therein." Life of Dr. H. Prideaux, printed for Knapton, 1748, p. 91.

the fact stands upon so good authority, I hope I may be indulged in a few reflexions upon it, without being accused of outraging these respectable bodies, for which I have the utmost veneration [I].

[1] They who will be at the pains to look into the end of the Preface to the second edition of the Divine Legation, published in the year 17:2, will find enough to frighten any man from ever hinting at any blemishes in our universities. facred fence with which they are there inclosed, one would think every gremial as fafe from impugners, as an article of faith is, when it hath once got into an established confession. The Prefacer, perhaps, did not then know that they had been attacked by any more confiderable person, than the addle-headed Dr. Webster; much less that the eminent Dr. Prideaux had proposed, among other necessary regulations in these seats of learning, to have a new college erected in each by the name of DRONE-HALL, for reasons there specified, by no means honourable to the academical bodies. If I mistake not, two editions of the Divine Legation have fince appeared without that Preface, which indeed would with a very ill grace have introduced to our notice a book, wherein such freedoms are taken with THE KING'S PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY in one of the univerfities, and matter of ridicule and contempt raifed from circumstances of the office, common to all professors in the same chair. I have feen a lift of the compliments paid to the learned and worthy Professor in the performance above-mentioned, drawn out into one view, for which, according to the opinion of very competent judges, the Professor might have made his concurrent a legal return, in a way, however, which would have shewn the little propriety of dedicating a thing, with the title the lawyers gave it, to the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND. I have fince learned, from one of our monthly productions, that the fame hand hath been more lately full as liberal to another Professor of the other university, lest both should not equally partake of its favours. In this last instance (fuch is his diffress) he finds himself obliged to pull off his own

In my humble opinion, the most reasonable account that could be given of the motives of these learned bodies for rejecting a benefaction of this fort, would be, that sufficient care is already taken for the Christian instruction of these younger students, without the aid of a supernumerary catechist. If so, both these doctors must have been mistaken, the one in describing the distemper, the other in indicating the method of cure.

The rejection, indeed, is in the narrative put to the account of the condition, perhaps because the catechist, after the candidate had fatisfied his examiners in philosophy, might have it in his power to put a negative upon him, for deficiency in Christian knowledge, which would look like an hardship; and the rather, as there seems to be an expedient already in the hands of both universities, calculated to answer all the ends of appointing a particular casust.

For, if I am not milinformed, in both universities, every master of arts hath a right to examine every candidate for a batchelor's degree, and a power of putting a negative upon him, and as much for a deficiency in Christian knowledge,

Folemm inquisitionial robe, and force it on to the shoulders of the worthy Professor. After which, he himself drolls away in the Querpo of a pickle berring, first to divert, and then to escape from, the just indignation of his affronted audicace. See a late Letter to the R. R. Author of the Div. Leg. of Moses Demonstrated, in Answer to the Appendix to the fish Valume of that work.

as for any other default. Upon inquiry however, I am told, that few if any candidates have their degree postponed on that account. Perhaps some may think it is, because they are seldom or never examined in that branch, for a reason which the universities think very sufficient, and which operates equally to the exclusion of an appointed catechist.

Let us suppose this reason to be the impropriety of intermixing catechistical examinations with those which ascertain the candidate's qualifications for a degree in arts, and of a catechist's interfering in the conferring such degree; yet might not the condition be model'd by a small alteration, so as to render such a benefaction eligible both to the universities and the public?

Suppose, for example, no academical candidate should be promoted to the office of deacon, without exhibiting to the bishop, among the rest of his papers, a testimonial from the academical catechist of his proficiency in Christian knowledge? It does not seem at first sight at all more proper, that the arts which qualify a man for a batchelor's degree should of themselves qualify him for the Christian ministry, than that Christian knowledge alone should qualify a man for a degree in arts.

But here I shall certainly be told, that this is the affair of the Bishops, and not of the Universi-

ties; and that it is an unwarrantable reflexion upon their Lordships to suppose, they should want to be informed by a catechist, of the abilities of a candidate in that branch of knowledge, which is the particular object of their own examinations.

To this I can only answer in the words of Dr. Prideaux above-cited, "many who have taken "their first degree, ARE TOO OFTEN ADMITTED "to be teachers in the church, when they are on-"ly sit to be catechumens." Perhaps, matters may have mended since the days of Dr. Prideaux; or if not, the whole fault may not belong to the Bishops and their examiners. For if, as the worthy Dean of Norwich hath observed, "bishops "are often deceived by false testimonials," the universities may come in for a share of the blame, since they give as ample testimonials, and often upon as stender grounds (particularly with respect to Christian knowledge), as country ministers.

In the mean time, these considerations, as matters now stand, make it still more necessary, that the church (to save the credit of all parties) should content herself with the declaration, framed from the ordination-office, set forth above. This declaration, not only admits of improvements in theological learning, but exhibits the candidate as determined to make them; and surely the professing such determination, should be no trif-

ling part of the security he gives to the church. And after that, to require the same candidate to subscribe to a system of opinions, or interpretations of scripture, established in perpetuity, and which he may not gainsay at any future period (notwistanding what he may find in the scripture to the contrary) on the peril of being excommunicated ipso fasto, is not only absolutely to preclude him from all suture improvements, but likewise disabling him from performing his promise to any good purpose, viz. "to be diligent "in reading the holy scriptures, and in such "studies as help to the knowledge of the same."

"No, fays a late notable Casuist, young people may give a general affent to the articles, on the authority of others; more cannot be expected or understood to be done by those who are just beginning to exercise their reason — by which means room is left for improvements in theology [K]."

Which, as I take it, implies a supposition that these young subscribers are left at liberty to retrast their affent to the articles, if, in the progress of their studies, they find what they affented to inconsistent with their farther discoveries and improvements in theology. And, if this is really the case, why would not the preacher speak out?

[[]K] See Dr. Powell's Sermon, on Commencement-Sunday,

This fermon, fo far as I know, is the last formal Defence of the subscriptions required in the church of England, that hath yet appeared; and is so well calculated to make all ends meet, that it is a thousand pities it should ever be superseded by any new production upon the subject, which may change the posture of Defence; particularly, as (in conjunction with two or three other tracts, lately published) it will greatly affist our posterity in forming a true judgment of the liberal sentiments of the present age on the article of moral honesty, as well as give them a just idea of our improvements in theology, and how far we go beyond the zeal and dexterity of our forefathers, in accommodating plain, simple, naked Christianity, with the arts, ornaments, opulence, power, and policy of the kingdoms of this world.

FINIS.



