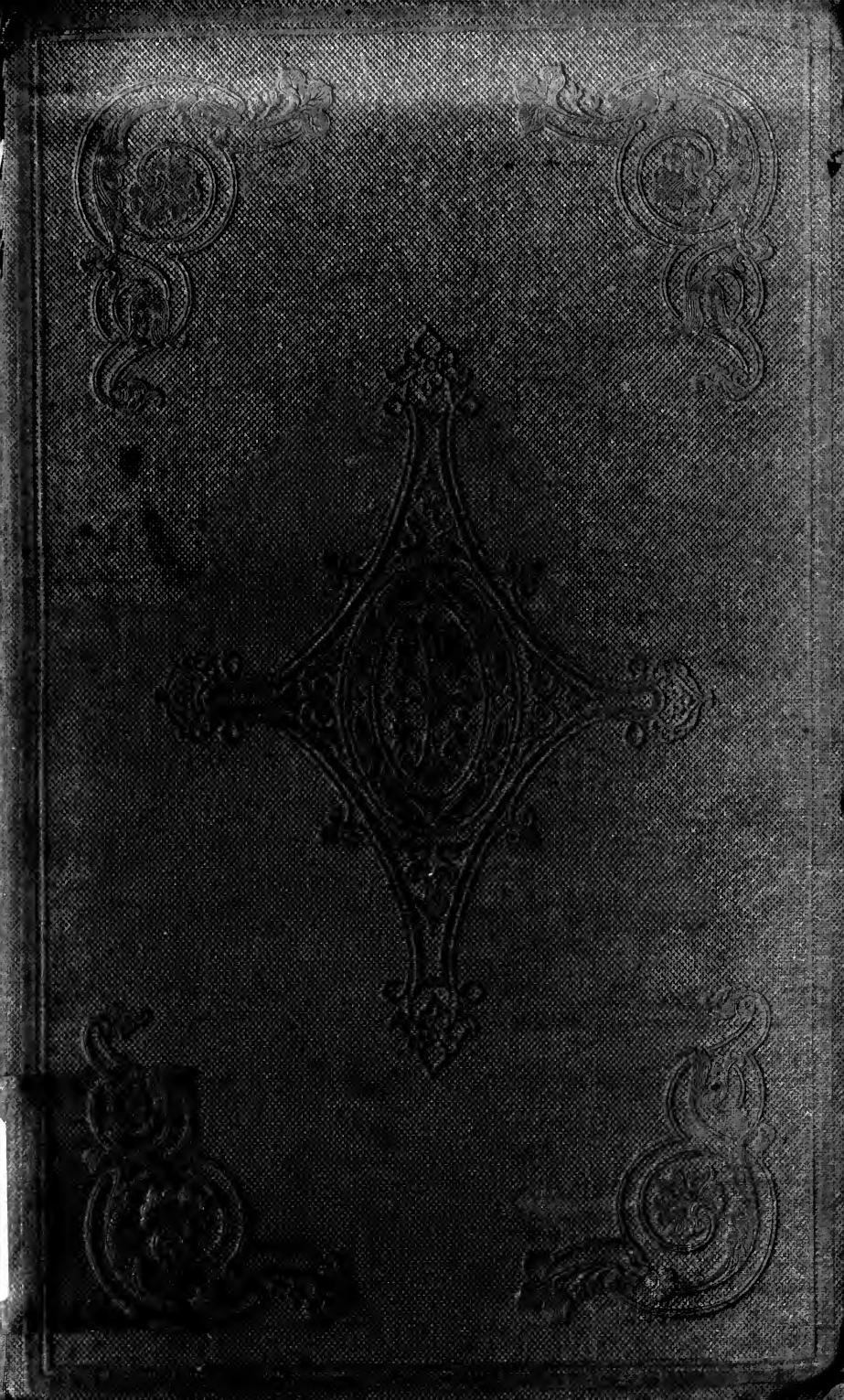

CONGREGATIONALISM:

OR, THE

POLITY OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES,

VIEWED IN RELATION TO

THE STATE AND TENDENCIES OF MODERN SOCIETY.

BY

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CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

THE present publication is divided into two books. The first book consists of an Address, delivered before the Autumnal Meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, convened at Nottingham, in October last. Some change has been made in a few forms of expression, for the purpose of securing to the different parts of the subject the advantage of appearing as the topics of distinct chapters. In other respects, the matter of the first book is printed almost *verbatim* as it was delivered.

Having occupied the attention of a very patient auditory more than two hours and a half, it was inexpedient, on many accounts, to prosecute our inquiries further on that occasion. But while restricted to such limits, it was unavoidable that several matters of great importance, in relation to the question to be examined,

should be passed over, or touched upon in a manner much too general to be satisfactory. In complying with the request of the ministers and delegates to print the Address, I might have interwoven other and more enlarged observations with it; but I have preferred leaving that portion of my manuscript undisturbed, and have treated of certain points belonging to the general subject, which are of a more practical nature, and bear more immediately on our present circumstances, in the series of chapters which constitute the second book.

It will be observed, therefore, that the degree in which my fathers and brethren assembled at Nottingham may be held responsible for the publication of this volume, must be limited to the contents of the first book.

In that division of the work, and in what follows, my views concerning the nature and tendency of the principles of congregationalism are freely expressed, and my intention in giving publicity to my thoughts on this subject is made sufficiently plain. In sending forth such a volume I shall, no doubt, have made a large demand on the candour and forbearance of such of my readers as may be disposed to indulge in extreme views, whether on the right hand or the left. My earnest request is, that the judgment

formed in regard to what I have written, may be a judgment having respect to it as a whole, and not exclusively to any of its parts. If it should not appear from the ensuing pages, that a man may cherish a strong preference in respect to his own religious party, and still do homage to religion itself, as a good much too benignant and divine to be confined to the limits of any party, then have I failed in regard to one object, which I not only meant should be on the whole perceptible, but to which I had hoped to give a distinct prominence. The wrongs privately inflicted on English congregationalism at this moment, by large classes of the wealthy and the powerful, are many, widely diffused, and too often merciless—such as might well excuse some sharpness of rebuke, and almost any measure of retaliation. We hope to bear these things as Christians, but we feel them as men, and must be allowed to protest against them in the language natural to the injured.

Notting Hill, Dec. 21, 1841.

CONGREGATIONALISM.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE INDEPENDENCE CLAIMED BY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

THE subject which the Committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales have requested me to treat, is the natural bearing of congregationalism on the social and religious interests of mankind, an particularly as connected with the State and Tendencies of Modern Society.

The limits of this subject preclude me from touching upon the evidence which might be adduced from the pages of the New Testament in support of the scriptural character of congregationalism. It must be sufficient to say that we think we find enough of precept, of precedent, or of clear principle, in the Sacred Scriptures, to give to our practice as congregationalists a sanction truly apostolic.

Taking that authority as our guide, we learn that the only proper members of a Christian church are true believers—devout persons; that every society of such persons, formed, as a general rule, under the sanction of the Christian ministry, and designed to uphold the divine worship and ordinances, is truly a church of God, and part of the universal church, consisting of all such persons throughout the world; that such societies were at the first, and should have continued to be, purely voluntary; and that every church so constituted, was strictly independent of all uninspired authority, in the conduct of its worship, the admission of its members, the exercise of its discipline, the choice of its officers, and the entire management of its affairs.

This independence, thus comprehensive and complete, had respect, it will be perceived, to the authority of *man* only, and not at all to the authority of God. It is not left to any church, or to any body of churches, to make laws in respect to religion, but to study the law of the Christian dispensation, as given by Christ and his apostles, and to carry it into effect. Our province is purely executive. The law of Christ, indeed, is before us, for the most part, in the form of certain great rules or principles, which admit of considerable latitude in their application. But while these principles leave much to human discretion, they also put limits to it, restricting the province left open to the exercise of Christian prudence to small matters

affecting the mode of administration merely, without ceding power of a strictly legislative character to any authority on earth. The rule that should be observed, and the spirit in which it should be observed, are always sufficiently plain. Our business is in no sense to originate, but simply to administer or apply.

Of course, if the church at large has no right to impose laws of its own on any particular church, much less has the world any such right. Power which it has not been deemed safe to place in the hands of Christians with regard to their brethren, it can never be safe to trust to men who are not Christians—to the world, in the character of superior to the church. Whenever the state endows religion, it is proper that the ministers of religion should be held responsible to the state in their religious character. But from this reasonable consequence it follows, that congregationalism can never become a state religion, seeing that, so far from bowing to the law of the magistrate in matters of religion, it does not allow one church to receive law from another church, or from any number of churches. This independence of particular churches is the centre principle—the great element of congregationalism. The administrative power in each church is the voice of its majority, from which there is no appeal, except by the consent of both parties, and even then simply in the spirit of arbitration.

This does not of course preclude the moral influence

which may be exercised by some ministers or churches with regard to others, inasmuch as that is a sort of power which comes into existence with all our social relations, and cannot be excluded from them. The wise and good will ever carry along with them the moral weight of wisdom and goodness. A man does not surrender his independence by deferring to the councils of a friend; nor by acting with his fellows in favour of a common object, according to plans agreed upon as consistent with the liberty of their common principles.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM AS ANTICIPATING THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF MANKIND.

It must be conceded that this system is characterized by simplicity. It is at the same time very comprehensive, most wisely adjusted, and of great power when directed aright. In the nature of these principles, as in much beside, the ultimate purposes of Providence in relation to our world, have been fully anticipated by the prescience of divine revelation.

One of the most philosophical and richly endowed minds ever applied to the study of our history, has spoken of that memorable groundwork of English liberty, the Magna Charta, in terms, which, in this respect, are eminently applicable to the nature and destiny of the principles of church polity contained in the New Testament. "It is observable," says Sir James Mackintosh, "that the language of the Great Charter is simple, brief, general without being abstract, and expressed in terms of authority, not of argument, yet commonly so reasonable as to carry with it the intrinsic evidence of its own fitness.

It was understood by the simplest of the unlettered age for whom it was intended. It was remembered by them; and though they did not perceive the extensive consequences which might be derived from it, their feelings were, however unconsciously, exalted by its generality and grandeur. It was a peculiar advantage that the consequences of its principles were, if we may so speak, only discovered gradually and slowly. It gave out on each occasion only so much of the spirit of liberty and reformation as the circumstances of succeeding generations required, and as their character would safely bear. For almost five centuries it was appealed to as the decisive authority on behalf of the people, though commonly so far only as the necessities of each case demanded. Its effect in these contests was not altogether unlike the grand process by which Nature employs snows and frosts to cover her delicate germs, and to hinder them from rising above the earth till the atmosphere has acquired the mild and equal temperature which ensures them against blights.—To have produced it, to have preserved it, to have matured it, constitute the immortal claim of England on the esteem of mankind." *

With this distinguished historian and statesman, we may suppose that the Barons at Runnymede were far from perceiving the extent of that vast system of

* History of England, i., p. 221, 222.

liberty and improvement which history has shewn to have been virtually included in the great charter. We may conclude that at best the dim outline only was before them. But the seeds of political justice, wisdom, and humanity, contained in that document, have grown with our growth and strengthened with its strength; and with every step in our advancement as a nation it has only seemed to become possessed of a new appropriateness and value.

What has been thus said with regard to the political principles of the great charter, may be said with still greater truth in regard to the principles relating to social religion set forth in the New Testament. When knowledge, virtue, and piety shall have been diffused and augmented, so as to realize the most sanguine visions of the philanthropist and the seer, then will congregationalism be found in alliance with the state of things most favourable to a development of its beauty and power. Its nature is such, that its ripeness must come with the world's ripeness. The manhood of the species will be seen in that day, and with it the putting away of childish things; but the change which will prove fatal to a thousand inventions which human imbecility has worshipped, will be as life from the dead in respect to the pure and rational institutes of Holy Writ, as they will then be seen in their fitness to assimilate earth more and more to heaven.

It is admitted that the "saving health" of the gospel

is not suffered to be dependent on the complexion of its outward institutions. God, we are happy to believe, has his renewed minds, his saved men, in every communion. The religion of the cross may bear long with human infirmity in such matters. But when the world shall make its nearest approach toward the social state which the most enlightened and humane have ever laboured to promote, then will come its nearest conformity to the laws of a pure congregationalism. God has so devised this system, that the province of man in social life will ever be—not to amend, but to copy it; not to go beyond it, but to follow after. The system will not change, but it will seem to enlarge, to improve, and to brighten as the world shall be made to possess a greater aptitude for receiving it. The condition of society which is always especially to be desired, is that in which men shall be most observant of the maxim—"Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them"—and with such a state of society, the spirit and letter of congregationalism must ever perfectly harmonize.

How instructive is this view of the religion of Holy Writ! It can extend its infinite blessedness to men in all conceivable diversities of outward condition and observance. It descends to the weakness of the present; it will rise to the strength of the future, and will be ever in advance of that strength. It possesses a universal adaptation. It has harmonized with all

that is good in the past, and it is capable of harmonizing, in the same manner, with all that is, and with all that shall be.

Remember, too, where this system originated—not among the republics of Ancient Greece, but under the shadow of the Asiatic despotisms; not in connexion with the philosophical indifference of Ancient Rome, but in Jerusalem, the city where the narrowness, intolerance, and formalism of a degenerate people had long made the name of the Jew a proverb and a loathing.

Nor is this result to be regarded, as in the case of our Great Charter, as being, in great part at least, a sort of lucky accident. It is announced to us as proceeding from the Divine foreknowledge—as the work of design; and this elevation of society at large to the spirit of a Christian brotherhood, as depicted in the principles of congregationalism, is to partake of the nature of a fulfilled prophecy. We may be well assured that such superiority to local and temporary prejudice would not have had place in the scheme of an impostor. It is the work of the Divine prescience and wisdom, and everywhere breathes the Divine benignity.

The chief design of the subsequent chapters will be to illustrate and confirm this general representation. With this view, reference will be made to some of the more obvious of the beneficial tendencies which now characterize society generally, and it will be made

plain that congregationalism is not only in harmony with them all, but that, in respect to them, while there is very little that it can learn, there is much that it can teach.

CHAPTER III.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO POPULAR INTELLIGENCE.

One of the most characteristic features of modern society, consists in the efforts which are made in favour of Popular Intelligence; and little need be said to shew that congregationalism harmonizes with everything that is wisely done in relation to that object.

The discovery of printing, the right of private judgment, liberty of worship, and freedom of discussion on all subjects—these facts present a state of things in which any attempt to stay the progress of popular intelligence would be vain; and in which to cultivate that power, and to direct it to good ends, becomes the great duty. To retrace our steps in this respect is impossible; to continue as we are is impossible; and nothing accordingly remains but that we go forward. The most reluctant, both at home and abroad,

feel this; and all, either willingly or otherwise, are found contributing to the movement. It is a change which has come with the force of a great law of Providence, and which it would be at once childish and irreligious to oppose.

But to congregationalism nothing could be more congenial than these appearances. It is a system to be worked by a popular power; and it must in consequence depend, if it is to be worked orderly, on popular intelligence. It bestows a kind of franchise on all who become parties to it, and it exacts the measure of discernment and goodness necessary to a right exercise of that franchise. It regards every church as a self-governed body, and as a body accordingly which should be pervaded by the amount of intellectual and moral culture necessary to that end. Its aim is to make all men Christians, and to render all Christians competent to a wise observance of the duties which arise out of the Christian fellowship. It does not resemble an eastern despotism, where everything was to be done *for* the people, and nothing to be done *by* them; but may be compared rather, to one of those free states in which men were accounted citizens, in which each citizen had his public duties to discharge, and all were made to pass through a preparatory education that they might know how to discharge them. Hence the lawgivers of the free states of antiquity were their schoolmasters. They were concerned to enact wise and good laws; but they were

fully sensible that their laws would be so many worthless tablets, except as wise and good citizens could be trained to see to the administration of them. Popular intelligence and popular virtue, therefore, constituted the only atmosphere in which they could hope to reap the fruit of their labours.

It is strictly thus with congregationalism. Leave it in the hands of ignorance and worldliness, and it must be disgraced, corrupted, and destroyed. Like every system of the same free and generous complexion, it is equally open to use and to abuse, and was clearly meant for the wise, and not for the unwise. It has its different spheres, for those who hold offices, and for those who possess greater ability, or greater weight of character than their brethren; but it has no place for the utterly passive and useless, and none, accordingly, for minds without instruction, or without virtue. Hence the zeal of congregationalists in the cause of general education is every way natural, and always to be relied upon. Their system prospers as such efforts prosper; it dies as they become extinct; and the age, in consequence, which is distinguished from all others by its zeal in support of this object is that which must hold out to congregationalism its fairest prospect of advancement. Others may have their reasons for speaking contemptuously of the manner in which knowledge is now made to descend to the masses of the people—we have none. Our *hope*, on the contrary, is *there*.

CHAPTER IV.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO THE HIGHER DEPARTMENTS OF LEARNING AND SCIENCE.

With this new zeal, and this general movement, in regard to popular intelligence, we may connect, as a second feature of modern society, the tendency so widely evinced to appeal to reason rather than to precedent, and to account the labour and discoveries of the past as a starting point, rather than the halting place, in regard to the present and the future.

The charge, indeed, is sometimes brought against our age, and against congregationalism, and the state of society with which it especially harmonizes in particular, that while there are tendencies in such connexions highly favourable to a certain amount of intelligence, those tendencies are blended with others which are directly hostile to the higher pursuits of learning, to more meditative and profound habits of thought, to everything partaking of the nature of the refined and the beautiful, and which may not be converted into an immediate source of gain.

It must, I think, be admitted, that this charge is not

without some foundation. But the ground of this objection is much more apparent than real. Nor is the position which it is intended to serve, one that can be judged at all in a summary manner. Admitting that this is one of the dangers of modern society, have not all states of society their dangers, and is not one state better than another, not as being wholly free from evil, but simply as having its evil more outweighed by its good?

It is manifest that the more society is graduated into castes and divisions, the more must the privileged be at leisure to give themselves to their peculiar speculations; while the more men approach toward the same level, the more must they be men of the same habits and pursuits. But the whole truth is not involved in this fact. Men who have been the monopolists of intelligence, have generally been the monopolists of power; and they have commonly reigned in the midst of their splendour at the cost of the rights of humanity. It often happens, that by such means, less is done to elevate one class, than to depress many. Privilege may operate as a narcotic upon talent, rather than as a stimulant. It may give impunity to indolence, and authority to weakness; and thus not only fail of doing its proper work, but become the great impediment in the way of those who would do it. In the East, its effect has been to stereotype society rather than to improve it; and it has done the

same mischief almost everywhere, in a greater or lesser degree.

At the same time, no man of sense will pretend that the aristocratic elements of society are without their advantage. There is a nameless grace, dignity, and loftiness of purpose, which seem like the natural attributes of high birth and exalted station. There is also an aristocracy in letters and science, to whom the dignity of learned leisure would seem to be every way appropriate, and upon whom its influence might be expected to prove in a high degree favourable. But in both these cases the promise and the danger go together. In the history of nations, the power to become luxurious has commonly been the precursor to indulgence, corruption, and ruin. It is the same with great families as with great nations. The heir to a great house must always have his footing in slippery places. The circumstances which appeal to his loftier passions, are opposed no less strongly by those which appeal to much meaner inclinations. To hope for such persons is delightful; but we too often find it much easier to fear than to hope. It is the same with your intellectual aristocracy. The power to luxuriate there, also, often proves a temptation much too strong to be resisted; and everywhere facts present themselves, as if for the purpose of shewing, that too much independence, and too much leisure, may be as dangerous as too little.

Even in Greece, the *élite* in learning and philosophy would never have had existence, apart from the large and intelligent middle class, which bore the name of citizens, and which separated between them and the multitude given to the drudgery of mere manual occupation. Nor would that higher class have attained to so envied an elevation, had not their distinction been made to depend on their real superiority, and had they not been so closely pressed upon in all things by the culture of the great body of the citizens. The intelligence of that body came first; that of the higher class followed, and was produced out of it; and to the end, the mental power of the few existed in intimate relation with that power in the many. The culture of the greater number gave existence to a sympathy with the more elevated pursuits of the lesser number, sufficient both to generate and sustain them; and when that atmosphere of sympathy, in which alone the plant could live, had failed, its beauty passed away, and it utterly perished from want of its proper nourishment.

The world might have been long before it would have seen the age of Augustus, or of Lewis XIV., if it had not previously seen the age of Pericles. The great fault, indeed, even in Greece, with regard both to learning and philosophy, was, the exclusive bearing which still clung to them; and the great improvement of modern civilization upon the ancient

is, that it connects much more of the useful with the speculative, and is more solicitous about extending its treasures to society at large, than about restricting them to a favoured circle of intellectual aspirants.

With all this, congregationalism is in perfect accordance. It covets most earnestly popular intelligence, as the soil from which extraordinary minds may be expected most naturally to spring up, and from which alone they can derive permanent sustenance and power. It aims to form intelligent churches; it *must*, in consequence, have an intelligent ministry; and it *must*, as a further consequence, have its seminaries of learning to realize that intelligence. It rests nothing upon privilege or prescription, but everything upon truth and reason. It leans not on extraneous support of any kind, but upon its own intrinsic merits. It knows that the learning and science of the world may be arrayed against it, and it is prepared to do battle with the learning and science of the world in its own cause, and to abide, single-handed, the issues of that conflict. This is the spirit of our system, and if so, where is the department of knowledge with which it may not be expected to sympathize and intermeddle? It may content itself with average attainment for average purposes; but it does not rest at that point. Its argument depends on a wide range of philology and history, and embraces a multitude of subtle questions relating to social policy and the nature of man;

—can these things be wisely dealt with by the ignorant, or by the only moderately informed? It contemplates changes which will affect the whole complexion of modern society; and its reasons for these changes must be shewn, or its pretensions be a mockery. Assuredly no contempt can be greater than the abettors of such a system deserve, if, with all this pretension, they could be content to see it allied with ignorance—if they were not prepared to give their meed of encouragement to studies having respect to the very highest departments of learning and science.

It must, however, be admitted, that the age has its danger in this form, and that congregationalism shares in this danger along with the age. Where much time is given to action, there must be little time for meditation. Where men are almost perpetually occupied in applying what they know, they are not in the way of advancing rapidly toward what they do not know. It is natural to conclude, that it is not in such scenes, but in those of seclusion and reflection, that thought will become clear and profound, and the intellect make a real progress. It is, in fact, from such solitudes, that the impulses have generally gone forth, which have put the more busy and noisy world into undulation. It may be that we are somewhat wanting in this particular. But of this we may be sure, the mistake of the world hitherto has been in the opposite

direction, and the penalty which has been attendant on that error through the past, is not likely to be equalled by the defects that may result from an altered tendency in the future. Men of genius should be a reflection of the genius of their country; but we have been too prone to forget that a nation may possess great men without being itself a great nation—the power to benefit society having too often existed without any real disposition to befriend it. Society appears to have become much more observant of this fact than in any former age; and seems disposed, in consequence, to bring all pretensions to greatness to the test of utility in something of the spirit of retribution.

We admit, then, that there are some tendencies in modern society, which are not favourable to the higher pursuits of the intellect. It must be confessed, also, that congregationalism has not done all that might have been expected from it, considered as a system, in this way; though we think it has done quite as much as could well have been expected from it in the unfavourable circumstances in which it is placed in this country. Religion and society among us, have their impression from remote worldly usage, much more than from the authority of holy scripture. Even now, we are the offspring, in nearly all things, of the middle age, much more than of the New Testament. Congregationalism, accordingly, does not compete with other systems on equal terms. We are severed, both by law,

and by the custom and temper of society, from that alliance with the wealth and power of the land which might serve to develop the capabilities of our system, and to shew that everything which the mind of ancient Greece became, in connexion with its freeborn polity, the mind of a Christian nation might become, in connexion with the polity which congregational churches derive from the pages of the gospel. We make no secret of the fact, that we stand in much nearer relation to the popular power of ancient Athens, than to the despotic power of imperial Rome; and we know of nothing in our system inconsistent with any of those higher forms of culture which the latter city adopted from the former.

CHAPTER V.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO THE ARTS OF PEACE.

ANOTHER characteristic of society, during the last quarter of a century, and which it seems probable will rather strengthen than pass away, is its repugnance to war, and its strong disposition toward the Arts of Peace.

Everything done to deliver a people from barbarism, is so much done toward delivering them from the dominion of the war passion, and from subjection to its worst enormities. The degree in which civilization succeeds to barbarism, is the degree in which the capabilities of a people must have been diverted from the practice of war, to pacific occupations. But civilization may take a *more* peaceful complexion, or a *less*. Its great object may be to encourage industry, ingenuity, and commerce, as in the instance of Tyre, Sidon, and other cities; or it may be of a mixed nature, as in Athens and Carthage; or it may be that even in its most advanced state, the military passion will still be the dominant one, as in Sparta and Rome.

Europe has passed through all these stages. It has

had its age of general barbarism, which followed upon the fall of the Roman empire; its heroic age, of which the crusades were the natural outbreak; its age of a mixed civilization, during which the mind of its people has been given equally to war and commerce; and within our own time, a new era appears to be dawning upon it—one in which a knowledge of finance is to be in greater requisition than skill in military tactics; in which minds of the first order are to be much more intent on the gains of a large traffic, than on the wreaths of victory; on building great cities, than on raising large armies; and in which men will be famous, not in proportion to the wrongs they may have inflicted on other countries, but to the service which they may have rendered to the domestic policy and the moral greatness of their own.

This last stage in the history of European society is assuredly its best, and from this also congregationalism has everything to hope. As a polity, it must be in keeping with the state of society toward which such habits and pursuits naturally tend. The substitution of a commercial, in the place of a military spirit, must always tend to substitute a system of equal liberty, in the place of feudal rudeness, arbitrariness, and oppression. The history of commerce in modern Europe, if we except the Moorish power in Spain, is everywhere allied with the history of civil freedom. It has been thus in Italy, Germany, Holland, and Great Britain; while all the European states which have not

become commercial, have remained more or less feudal and enslaved.

The reason of this connexion between commerce and freedom is not difficult to discover. The immediate object of commerce is gain; and the value of property when acquired, must depend upon two things—the security with which it may be retained, and the liberty of the person in order to the enjoyment of it. But the safety of property, and the safety of the person, are the two great departments of civil liberty. The whole scheme is comprehended in these two provisions. It is the natural effect of commerce to make men feel, much more strongly than they would be likely to do in other circumstances, the need of this twofold protection against wrong; and the habit of mind which makes them sensible to their need in this respect, is of that sagacious, inventive, and bold complexion, which must qualify them to see how this need may be best supplied, and to apply themselves effectually to the business of providing for it. Hence it is, that the people of commercial states are so commonly a self-governed people, the *money* aristocracy which in time grows up among them, being much less powerful to prevent this free course of things, than the *landed* aristocracy existing in other connexions.

But not only does congregationalism harmonize, considered as a polity, with these social tendencies—it blends much more freely with them, in consequence of the connexion which is always designed to subsist

between its principles and the feeling of enlightened piety. What it is as a polity, it is simply as means to that end. It may be approved by some who do not connect themselves with it; but its administration among us, is restricted to men of accredited piety; and it is devout men whom we may best expect to remember the precept, "As far as within you lies, live peaceably with all men." In the arts of peace such men find their proper element. The religious conscientiousness which separates them from the pleasures and licence of the world, leaves the full force of their character—with all its habits of peculiar self-control—to bear upon such pursuits as are still open to them. They pursue their object with a less divided attention, and in general, as the consequence, with a greater measure of success. Accordingly, since the age of protestantism, the commerce of Europe has been for the most part in the hands of religious men. It has been thus in Germany, Holland, France, the Northern States, Great Britain, Ireland, and America. Thus the arts of peace are found favourable to religion, and religion favourable to them. Every step, also, in the transition of society, from its purely military state, toward a state in which those arts prevail, is a step in the advance of society from its more unequal and arbitrary form, in which there is no liberty, toward its congregational form, in which the theory of all liberty is perfected. The enemies of civil freedom know this. It would be well if its friends were equally alive to the fact.

CHAPTER VI.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO THE PRINCIPLES OF A REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

From the tendency observable in modern society in regard to the arts of peace, another fact, scarcely less observable, has resulted—viz., the prevalence of a strong disposition in favour of a Representative Government.

Abstract schemes in relation to government are of little value. The government of every state, must derive its first complexion from the character of its people; and it can react upon them, in the way of improvement, only by slow degrees. The best government, accordingly, is that which is best adapted to the measure of intelligence and virtue possessed by the people for whom it is designed. Men may have their fond ideas in regard to what society *should* be, and their notions, accordingly, in regard to what government *should* be; but they are obliged to take society as it is, and they find that governments, in consequence, are matters which will take their shape much more from circumstances than from theory. Hence wise men will often do much to uphold things as they are, though

differing widely from their own notions as to the state of things abstractedly the most desirable. Men who would hail with devout enthusiasm, the setting up of a republic, among a people possessing the culture of heart and intellect necessary to sustain it, might be the first to deplore the folly—the inevitable mischief of entrusting such a system to the agency of the untaught and unprincipled. We may not judge, therefore, with regard to what men are theoretically in such matters, from what they are practically, the question of government being ever with the wise and good a question of right and humanity, but of right and humanity always taking their form from circumstances.

The principles which obtain in congregational churches are essentially popular, and we have no wish to conceal that they are in agreement especially with those departments of our social policy in which popular suffrage and power are most conspicuous. But if the views just stated be correct, there is nothing in congregationalism to prevent its disciples being good subjects of the state under an aristocracy, a monarchy, or even under a despotism.

My intention in these remarks is to meet the old charge, still often preferred against us—viz., that we are republicans in our church polity, and must, in consequence, be republicans in state affairs. This objection is the effect of ignorance, or of something worse. It overlooks the fact that we do not profess to derive our

views with regard to the best forms of civil government from the scriptures at all, but from those broad moral grounds which are open to us in common with all men.

It overlooks, also, another fact—viz., that congregationalism, in our view of it, is intended exclusively for churches consisting of devout persons—the brotherhood of instructed and virtuous believers; and that we can never reason, accordingly, from the polity which obtains in our churches, to the polity which ought to obtain in the state, except as we can regard the state as consisting of such persons only as we now receive in the character of church members. Even then, also, —in a state of things which nothing short of the millennium could be expected to bring about, and which even that could hardly be supposed to realize, even then, we could only reason from the *spirit* of our polity as Christians, either as to the spirit or the form of our institutes as citizens, the inspired writers having been careful to limit their instructions to thus much only concerning the relation subsisting between the laws of the church and the laws of the kingdoms of this world. The former have a fixedness adapted to the immutable purpose of the gospel; the latter are left open to variableness, according to the ever changing combinations of worldly affairs.

But while it is proper to shew that our opponents reason, or rather dogmatize most indiscriminately on this subject, we are free to confess the sympathy which

subsists between congregationalism and every well ordered system of popular representation. We account this as to the honour of our system, and not as its reproach. The man who avows himself the friend of monarchy, is not necessarily the advocate of despotism; and the man who avows himself the friend of popular representation, is not necessarily the advocate of a democracy. There is many a space between these extremes at which a wise man may halt; many a combination from the two which he may cordially approve. He may be sincerely persuaded that the conjoint existence of both, would be much preferable to the separate existence of either; and there may be circumstances in which he may account the one as unduly preponderating, or the other.

We do not hesitate to say, that there is scarcely a vestige of systematic liberty in the world,—liberty defined by law, liberty in the sense of giving protection to the weak against the strong, and liberty, above all, on the side of the governed against the tyranny of the governing, which has not been wrung by the popular elements of society, from the hold of its more presiding elements. There have been nobles and monarchs who have assisted the people in these struggles, sometimes from selfish motives, and sometimes for purposes the most generous and patriotic, but in the main the conflict has been as above stated; and nations have become free, in proportion as they have been able to give power to the representative

principle, along with the other elements of society, and only in that proportion. The representative principle may rarely appear to be all that it should be. But without it nothing is as it should be. It may not seem to be perfect, but it is the only power that has proved effectual permanently to diminish the evils, which must otherwise blight and destroy humanity without end. It may have its defects, its faults, its revolting abuses; but it precludes greater evils, and brings an amount of good which nothing else can bring.

In the history of crowned heads, wisdom and patriotism will be the exception, and not the rule; and in the history of an aristocracy, the permanence of sagacity and power will naturally be the permanence of efficiency to rule for a class more than for the people. To expect that it should be otherwise, is to expect against nature. If a *nation*, therefore, is to possess a system of liberty, the nation must realize it, and realize it through the medium of a representative government. Our own nation has acted under this impression, with more or less intelligence, during the last three centuries. The result is the present power of the British House of Commons, and the security of our property and persons by law, in place of being dependent upon the accidents of the royal pleasure, or on court favour. We owe next to nothing in this form to our princes of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties, but everything to the English people, aided by the generous sympathy of a large portion of our gentry and nobles.

Now the tendency of society to leaven itself more and more with an element of this nature is everywhere observable. Great resistance is made to it, but its course is still, upon the whole, onward. Its intervals of seeming retrocession, are more such in appearance than in fact, and seem to be among the means appointed to favour its safer progress. Mankind are not likely to unlearn what they have learnt in this respect; and with everything wholesome of this sort that is, or that is likely to be, congregationalism is in the strictest unison. It will everywhere be strong in the strength of such principles.

The congregational church retains the right of choosing its own officers, and managing its own affairs; and the social policy which aims to elevate the people, and which gives them a suffrage in public affairs, to the extent in which they may be expected to make a wise use of that power, is assuredly so much of social congregationalism. Our parochial assemblies, our municipal bodies, and our lower House of Parliament, are all based on a recognition of the justice of that principle in regard to *society*, which lies at the foundation of the polity of our churches. Rights like those which belong to the people in our churches, are thus claimed and exercised by the people of the state. The people, in these cases, have their place at the parish vestry, in the town-hall, or at the polling booth; and having chosen their own officers or representatives, they act in relation to the public good through the men of their choice. Nor is this measure of depen-

dence and responsibility, on the part of the church-warden, the city magistrate, or the greatest senators of the land, accounted otherwise than reasonable, wholesome, and consistent with the dignity of those functionaries. Why a similar dependence and responsibility on the part of the ministers of religion should be esteemed degrading, and incompatible with fidelity, we are at a loss to understand. The body of devout persons by whom the congregational minister is called to his office as a pastor, must be admitted generally to be at least as honourable a constituency as the mixed multitude who exercise a similar power in relation to our civil authorities. We must be allowed to say, that it is not a whit more true of the dissenting minister, that he "must please to live" than of the honourable gentlemen who occupy the benches of the house of the people at St. Stephen's; and that the principle which repudiates popular suffrage in the one case, to be consistent, should repudiate it equally in the other.

Tastes differ on such matters, or it might have been expected, that to become possessed of place or power in a manner bespeaking least equivocally that they have been fairly earned, would be much the most gratifying course of things even to a proud man. Where there is a consciousness that the distinction which can only be obtained by real superiority is not likely to be attained at all, the case is of course different. It is natural that such men should lean upon the accidents of family connexion and private patron-

age, and upon systems in which more care is taken to prepare the places for the men than the men for the places. But it is surely a mistaken sense of dignity, which disposes a man to look on the broad suffrage of his fellow men, as the least honourable path to eminence. It is observable almost everywhere, that they are the weak, and not the strong, who so think; men who covet office without fitness, and emolument without labour. No doubt, there are some kinds of talent, in regard to which the public at large will not always be the most competent judge; but in general, the talent of adaptation to the work needing to be done may be safely left to its discernment. The inconveniences that would attend the application of this principle to any church constituted as is the present church of England, are at once perceivable. It would be, indeed, to place the new cloth upon the old garment. But that is a consequence for which we are not responsible.

CHAPTER VII.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO THE FREE INTERCOURSE OF NATIONS.

WHILE our polity is thus in accordance with the tendencies of society in regard to the arts of peace, and in regard to the principles of a representative government, it is not less in agreement with the feeling which has been gathering strength for some time past among us in respect to a more equal and generous Intercourse between the Nations of the World.

The feature of congregationalism which must arrest the attention of every intelligent observer on the first glance, is its broad and equal justice. Its beauty is, that it is constituted at once to resist oppression, and to fail, from its own necessary inaptitude to such an office, if it should attempt to become an oppressor. It provides for a resistance of tyranny from within, as well as from without; nor can it ever depend on anything adventitious to itself. In regard to other communions, it may claim equality, but it can take no precedence. In regard to the state, it may demand justice, but it can never accept of favour. It prohibits exclusiveness in every form, internal and external. It

will not tolerate such an influence within its own limits; it will not act upon it in relation to those who are beyond them. Neither the church nor the world has anything really to fear from it, but rather very much to hope. It can never do men harm, except as it may be done by reason and persuasion. Do it wrong, and it may become dangerous. Do justly toward it, and it is bound from its own nature to do justly in return. Its spirit is that of the precept, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them;" and the maxims of society which are most in unison with that precept are its natural rallying points. It is no more opposed to gradations in rank or in opulence, than to gradations in intelligence or in moral worth. But it knows nothing of the policy which would bestow favour and wealth on some portions of society, at the cost of justice to the rest.

Now the relation is obvious between this love of equal justice between man and man, and between class and class, and the love of it in the intercourse of nation with nation. Men are always found basing their notions concerning domestic policy and foreign policy upon the same principles. What they are to their country, in this respect, they are to the world. They are the abettors of favouritism, or of its opposite; and as such, have generated feud or harmony at home, and have called forth retaliation or reciprocity from abroad. Congregationalism will assuredly dispose to patriotism.

But it will not inculcate patriotism at the cost of philanthropy. It may consist with a peculiar and ardent attachment to one country. But its deepest homage will be reserved for those immutable principles of right which should be common to all countries. It is based altogether on moral grounds, and looks with unspeakably greater interest on the character of man as such, than on any of the circumstances of men. It possesses, accordingly, a powerful tendency to disenthral the mind from the force of conventional superstition and prejudice, and to place it in a condition to judge more freely and justly on all questions affecting humanity upon a large scale. Its principles, rightly understood, and the spirit of them being duly imbibed, must teach us to regard our nation only as our larger family, and the world as made up of a family of nations. Rivers, mountains, seas, languages—all were no doubt meant to separate the human family into sections. But the diverse products of nature and art in different countries, were meant to bring the whole into salutary intercourse. The isolation of nations, was designed as a good to each; their intercourse, as a good to them all. Nations, as well as individuals, have their particular capabilities and tendencies, which constitute their character. These acquire their natural development best in a state of separateness and independence. But as the beauty and strength of society are made up from the varieties of individual character, so in the social intercourse of nations it is designed that

each should be the better for all, and all the better for each.

On this subject it is important to observe, that since the primitive ages of the world, the progress of nations in civilization has been the effect of migration, much more than of invention. For the most part, it has come to such nations from other countries, and has not been originated among themselves. Now the grand agency, by which the treasures of civilization and of human happiness have been thus conveyed from land to land, has been a bold and unfettered commerce. It is certain that the early inhabitants of Europe migrated from the eastward. It is no less certain that civilization migrated after them in the same track, and elevated them, race after race, from the barbarism into which they had fallen in their more scattered and outcast condition. Conquest may have done something to facilitate this course of events, but nothing in comparison with commerce. The adventurous merchant has been the great discoverer, and the great civilizer. Hence, to chain the commerce of the world, would be to place fetters on the appointed means of its advancement. Every selfish impediment of that nature is so much wrong done to humanity. By such means, prejudice is strengthened in place of being diminished; and the social evils of the world are perpetuated in place of being removed.

Congregationalism, based as it is on a reverence for the equal and humane, must ever frown on such a

policy, and prompt its true disciples to protest—and, if need be, to protest loud and long—against it. In our age, nations are beginning to suspect the wisdom, as well as the justice, of their restrictive maxims in regard to commerce; and in all that is wisely done toward rendering them obsolete our principles teach us to rejoice.

The means of secular improvement, then, must migrate, in the manner adverted to, if the world is ever to arrive at a general and advanced state of civilization. And if this be admitted, the course which must be taken by Christian nations, in regard to Christianity, (if the world is ever to become Christian,) will be at once manifest. It is by means of free intercourse that the barbarous are to cease to be savages, and to become men; and through the same means only, will the paganized cease to be the victims of licentiousness and suffering, and become the holy and happy disciples of the gospel.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON CONGREGATIONALISM IN ITS RELATION TO THE PRINCIPLE OF UNION AS ACTED UPON BY INDEPENDENT STATES IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES.

But what, it may be said, can congregationalism do in regard to such general objects? Is not each church fixed in its isolation by your rigid principle of independency? Are not the whole shut out, by this their fundamental law, from ever realizing the strength of association—the power of a comprehensive and duly organized Union?

We answer that it is wholly a mistake to suppose that we are precluded from any real advantage of that nature. We are prepared to shew, on the contrary, that in this respect our polity is in beautiful harmony with the great outlines of Divine Providence towards the nations of the world; and with everything most salutary in the social institutes of the most enlightened states; so as to leave the fault entirely with ourselves, if we do not realize the maxim more fully than any other communion has done, that—union is strength.

But let it be remembered, that union is strength

only in proportion as it is a union of the strong. There is a unity which may act as an incubus on the parts to which it relates; and there is a unity which may be strong in the strength of the parts included in it, and which may re-act to the increase of that strength. This last is the sort of unity which the wise in the study of social policy have always been most desirous of realizing; and this I hope to shew is the kind of unity of which congregationalism is especially susceptible. In this respect, there is a most perceptible and beautiful harmony between what is strictly natural to our system, and what is admitted to be most wholesome in its influence on general society.

The permanent strength of a nation must always depend on the character of its people, and not upon the genius of its sovereigns or its statesmen. By the latter means, a state may rise above itself in one age, only to fall below itself in the next. Such genius is not hereditary. It may be most wanting when it is most needed. But the character of a people must be, to a considerable extent, enduring and certain. It does not grow up in a night, it cannot be made to wither in a night. If, however, a people possess intelligence, virtue, patriotism—the qualities which give strength to nations—it would seem, that, in Europe at least, it is indispensable that such a people should have been accustomed to take some part in public proceedings. Such power must have become theirs, remotely, if not immediately—locally, if not in a more general

form. In the popular states of antiquity, it was this sort of power, attaching to the citizen, which gave him at once his ardent love of country, and his ability to do it service. He learnt to feel deeply interested in the welfare of the state, from being frequently called to act in relation to it; and was made to understand the public business, and to become expert in it, as the consequence of his being thus made a party to it. His country came, as I have said, to be regarded as his greater family, his own household in a larger sense. As it was in this respect in the cities of Greece, and in Rome in its better days, so has it been in the nations of modern Europe, in proportion as they have become steadily powerful and really great. Each nation has been strong, collectively and continuously, as it has been strong locally, and in a manner to affect the character of its people.

Germany, for example, has derived nearly all her greatness from her municipal liberties. To the principle of those liberties, as extended from the city to the province, and from the one province to the union of the whole, the Dutch were indebted for their independence, and their well-earned ascendancy. Among ourselves, during nearly two centuries, municipal corporations have been so many local receptacles for the lowest dregs of political corruption. Our character as a nation would have suffered greatly from this Stuart inroad upon our ancient freedom, if the usages of our country had not been such as to place our people a

good deal in the path of public affairs in other connexions. Our trial by jury, our electoral franchise, and our business habits as a mercantile nation, have been of unspeakable value in this respect.

To the United States of America, the observations now made are peculiarly applicable. The Atlantic rolls between us and those States, and at this distance we are observant of little more than the proceedings of Congress. But you must look beyond the Congress, representing all the States, to the more local institutions peculiar to each, if you would become acquainted with the causes which contribute most to the nourishment of American sagacity and patriotism. The Congress has its definite constitution, but one not more carefully defined than is that of each state, and of each township—it being provided, by a carefully graduated distribution of suffrage and authority, that the capacity and feeling of the people should be everywhere trained, to the greatest available extent, for the service of the great commonwealth. Each township is a commonwealth, as truly as that all the states are a commonwealth. Each state, and each township, has its own important and independent sphere of action; and each local government is a type of the general government.

France has never been self-governed, simply because France has never consisted of self-governed provinces, or of self-governed towns. Paris has been France; and Paris has not governed effectually, because Paris

has been alone. Some French philosophers, and men from whose wisdom on other points better things were to have been expected, have been disposed to represent the mind of the greatest Englishmen as partaking of the insular character of our situation, and have spoken of our principles and course in these matters as too local and restricted, and as wanting in the freer, bolder, more generalized tone of speculation, which they esteem as one of the most brilliant characteristics of the mind of their own country. But we must confess, after giving some attention to this subject, that we think the censure in this case should fall the other way. Our neighbours have failed hitherto in their legislative career, because they have not been sufficiently patient, or sufficiently humble, to begin at the beginning. They have been fascinated with the splendour of results, and have overlooked the more obscure processes by which they have been realized. They have taken upon them to legislate for the millions and for mankind, before they have learned to legislate wisely for the graduated sections of their own people. They have not been willing to understand the simple truth, that the general must be made up of the local; that every great state should consist of a number of lesser states; and that the way to make the whole good is to make the parts good.

Now if these are just views as to what society should be, if they are such as stand approved, as assuredly they do, by many of the most sagacious statesmen of

our own and other lands, then I have to remark, that what society *should* be in this respect, congregationalism *is*. Its churches are located in all parts of the country, each church embraces a system of self-government in matters of religion, and each, as a corporation of its own order, possesses a stronger guarantee for good government, than can be said to belong to the municipal corporations of these kingdoms, even in their present highly improved state. In the state, the test of privilege is solely a pecuniary one; in our churches, it is in a measure intellectual, and especially moral. Every church is not only possessed of its own sphere of independent action, but is placed in circumstances eminently adapted to call forth all its powers of self-improvement. It has to provide its own expenditure, to manage its own secular business, and to regulate its own discipline. If weak, these demands upon it may well engage nearly all its capabilities; and if strong, it has to add to the matters of its own internal government, attention to plans by which the strong may assist the weak, and by which new ground may be successfully occupied at home and abroad. We do not see what could well be added to the general outline of this system, to render it more conducive to religious or to social improvement.

But while these observations may serve to shew, that we are disposed to guard with some caution against being so fascinated by the idea of unity as to overlook the facts from which unity must derive its strength

and value, we are far from looking upon union, when wisely constituted, as a matter of small importance.

The idea of unity is inseparable from that of society. Society consists of men united. It is formed of many, who have become one, instead of the whole being scattered, and each being alone. Without union, in some shape, man must be a savage, and even the race itself must become extinct. The principle of union, accordingly, is inseparable from human nature, and it is only about the extent or the mode in which it may be acted upon, that there can be any room for a difference of opinion. It is certain that without some enlightened conceptions in regard to this matter of unity, small states can never become great, and great states can never become really powerful. Men are in danger of error on this subject in opposite directions. Some minds are disposed to err, in the manner already explained, by supposing that a unity of great compass must be a unity of great power; on which principle, the Asiatic despotisms must have been the most stable fabrics society has ever exhibited, whereas we know that the shock of the first untoward accident was commonly sufficient to crumble them into ruin. But other minds, fully alive to that error, and fixed on working out their principle of unity within narrow limits, are in danger of looking with so much jealousy to the independency of the circle immediately about them, as to lose sight of the importance of the social, or uniting principle, in its wider applications.

The great difficulty of wise and patriotic statesmen has been, to create and sustain public spirit in relation to objects of local interest, and to bring the feeling thus awakened into harmony with more central efforts, in relation to more general objects,—so as, in fact, to place the constitution of the city, in a confiding relation with respect to the constitution of the province, or with any such general confederation for the common interest as circumstances might demand. The monarchical and despotic err in the former direction; the republican and democratic in the latter. The one seeks unity for the sake of power, the other for the sake of liberty; and while the man who seeks power, commonly errs as seeking it in mere numbers and vastness, the man who seeks liberty, is hardly less liable to mistake from his disposition to regard liberty as endangered whenever it passes beyond the walls of a single city, or the acres of a very limited territory. The danger of the one theory is from its tendency to expansion; the danger of the other is from its proneness to collapse; union being coveted unwisely in the one case, and avoided unwisely in the other, from its being viewed apart from those provisions which might give it the strength expected from it on the one hand, and the benignant influence in regard to general liberty which is not expected from it on the other.

The great defect in the polity of ancient Greece was the want of a central power of this nature. All its constitutions were municipal—the constitution of each state being, in fact, that of a single city. It was

so in Athens, in Sparta, and everywhere. But these cities had no system of union among themselves—no central representative body for such general objects as might be common to them all. The natural consequences followed. The states which refused to become strong by means of union, were each left to feel its own weakness in a state of isolation; and much of the time and energy which might have been given to the benefit of their common country, was employed in wasting and devouring one another. Under the strong pressure from without at the time of the Persian invasion, the Greeks became a united people; but so unaccustomed were they to acting in that character, that their feuds, once and again, endangered everything, and without the aid of some favourable accidents, even their high patriotism and courage might not have sufficed to save them.

It is true, the cities of Achaia evinced more wisdom on this point. Those cities were twelve in number; each retained its own constitution, and its own perfect independence; but all united, on certain general grounds, for their common protection. It is to be regretted that this humane and noble expedient came into the field so late. Its effect was powerful; but it only served to give one more brilliant day to Greece, before its glory was utterly obscured; and to indicate, in the old age of that extraordinary people, what might have been done by such means in the time of their manhood.

This confederative, or union principle, which the

Greeks adopted so partially and so late, has not been overlooked by the popular states of Europe in later times. It is in this principle, especially as tending to bring out the true theory of representation, that the free states of the modern world possess their great advantage over the free states of antiquity. The states and cities of the Low Countries, some three centuries since, might each have resolved upon retaining its place apart, and upon the plea of not endangering its particular liberties, by entering into any general confederation, each might have chosen to take its own share in the struggle against the oppressor, after its own fashion. But who does not see what the consequence of this sort of stickling for independency must have been. Each acting in its own way, each would have been subdued in its own turn, and all would have been enslaved together. But the people of those countries were capable of studying political principles so as to reserve to each state its own proper state-independency, and at the same time to bring them all into union for the protection of their common liberty and interest. It was their wisdom in this respect, which not only enabled them to secure their own freedom, but rendered them the great stay, during nearly two centuries, of the protestant religion and of general liberty over the continent of Europe. None of the ancients displayed greater skill or prowess, upon the land or the deep, than did these moderns. Among none of the ancients

were there institutes based in the same degree upon the just, the wise, and philanthropic. From none of the achievements of antiquity did results follow of so great importance to humanity. The early Dutch curbed the power of Spain, the later curbed the power of France—altogether, they were a noble race, but owed their greatness mainly to the fact, that they knew how to combine a love of liberty, as belonging to their particular state or city, with a love of unity in regard to objects equally affecting the whole family of states and cities which their union included.

Observations of the same character might be made in regard to the United States of America. The congress in America, realized the unity and power which had existed with so much effect in the States-General in Holland. In the absence of such organization, even the parts must have been feeble, and the whole an easy prey. It was the necessity which disposed the Anglo-Americans to the union, that placed them on the true path of freedom and greatness.

In our own country, the same principle has been vigorously acted upon, and in a manner which has been made to accord with the monarchical and aristocratic powers belonging to our mixed constitution. Our house of commons is to us, in a great degree, what the municipal representatives in the Achæan league were to the Achæans; what the states-general were to the Low Countries; and what the assembled members of congress are to the United States. It is

the principle of union, accomplishing by one assembly in one place, what must otherwise have been left to many assemblies in many places. It leaves to provinces and cities, such matters as fall most naturally under their superintendence; and it reserves to itself, as the representative of all, the power of conducting affairs equally affecting all. It is in itself a republic, but a republic in alliance with an aristocracy and a monarchy. It is the union of a number of lesser states; and a union so devised, that while each is left in a measure independent, the whole are harmonized and made strong.

In these several instances, then, we see union on a large scale, and in its most enlightened form. These memorable exhibitions of the power of social organization, present the advanced points in regard to government that have been gained by the most civilized states down to our own time. The question now arises—are we up to the line marked out by those points, and if not, do our principles require that we should place ourselves there? We have seen that in those principles of self-government which have their inalienable lodgment in our separate churches, we possess all the elements of strength necessary to render such a union powerful. Nothing remains, accordingly, but that we ascertain if there be fair and open space left to us on which such union may be formed; and if the objects connected with our

denomination that may be served by it, are of such a nature as to make the formation of it expedient.

Persons who are not congregationalists, and who have been at little pains to inform themselves concerning our principles or conduct, generally suppose that we have no such thing as union among us. It is thought to be the very element of "independency," that we should be much more enamoured with isolation than with union. Our system is supposed to be the favourite it is with us, because it serves to scatter us, in the *disjecta membra* fashion, in a thousand directions, and is in its nature opposed to our being conjoined as into one body. This appears to such persons to be the state of things when they look toward us from a distance; and when they hear us talk, our utterances are not always of a kind to remove the impression thus made.

It might, indeed, have been no more than proper in the class of persons adverted to, had they been so far considerate as to have asked themselves, whether it was altogether just, from the little, the very little they may have known of us, to suppose that we were without the disposition to attach some natural meaning to those scriptures which speak so explicitly of the unity which must ever belong to the true church of Christ; and of the obligation resting upon all churches and all Christians, to exercise, as far as possible, mutual recognition, to hold mutual fellowship,

and to abound in good offices one toward another? General principles of this nature occur, both in the precepts and precedents of scripture; and such as seem to point to a wide visible unity among Christians, as not only possible, consistently with all the institutes delivered to churches for their separate observance, but as obligatory, partly from the fitness and beauty of the thing itself, and partly from the useful purposes it might be made to subserve.

The primitive churches, while they retained the company of inspired apostles at their head, were in a condition, in that respect, peculiar to themselves. Their circumstances, moreover, apart from that fact, were such as to render any formidable display of organization among them, however much they might have been disposed toward it, exceedingly inexpedient and dangerous. But due allowance being made for these facts, the general lessons of the New Testament, which constitute our warrant in doing so many things for which we have no exact precedent in apostolic times, are lessons which extend their sanction abundantly to the union of ministers and churches, to any extent that may be practicable, useful, and consistent with leaving our separate churches in their proper independency. In the New Testament, those who serve God are treated as men, not as children. Its instruction is given with a designed latitude of expression, the pupil being supposed capable of using it discreetly. It is deemed enough to inculcate *prin-*

ciples, much in the application of them being left to take its shape from the suggestions natural to a Christian prudence. This is a great fact in regard to the New Testament dispensation, as compared with the Old, and we act in accordance with it every day.

It is common with congregational churches in a small town, or in a large city, to unite and to prosecute their plans of usefulness in their locality by means of a general committee, which, in such case, is a sort of joint representative body. It must be plain that every such association of congregational ministers and churches, is a congregational union. It is a union of ministers and brethren to do good—to do good more effectually by acting together, than they could do by acting apart; to do good of a kind in which they feel a common interest; and in a manner which involves no interference with the liberties proper to either ministers or churches when considered separately.

As it is with congregationalism when viewed thus in connexion with towns and cities, so it is when viewed in connexion with the country at large. There are many objects in regard to which congregationalists must act on a principle of union, if they are to act at all with efficiency. It is thus in regard to the colleges in which our ministers are educated; in the matters of various societies, which aim to extend religious instruction to our seamen and peasantry, to the people of Ireland, and to the heathen world. In

reference to all these objects, the congregationalists of a whole kingdom agree to act through the medium of a chosen number of their body; and this they do because it may be done without the slightest infringement on the principles of independency; because the objects themselves bear an equal relation to them all; and because, moreover, they are of such a nature that it would not be possible to attend to them with effect except upon this principle of union.

But to congregationalists it scarcely need be observed, that there are other forms, partaking still more of the nature of system, in which we act upon this principle. Every one possessing the slightest knowledge of our denomination, must be aware that congregationalists have their county unions in nearly all the counties of England. These unions are so many home missionary societies. They are formed that the strong may assist the weak, and that the whole might act with more effect for the diffusion of the gospel by acting conjointly. Their proceedings also relate to various matters, which, as being collateral to our church polity, rather than a part of it, have been left by the Head of the church to the guidance of Christian feeling and discernment. It must be remembered, also, that each of these county unions extends its recognition to the approved ministers and churches of its own district; and that while any member of an approved congregational church, may obtain admission, on the ground of that fact, into any

congregational church in any county in England; so the minister, approved in one county, is virtually an approved minister in all our counties. When it is further remembered, that our churches are not more characterized by their one polity, than by their "one faith," their belief in the Trinity, the atonement, and the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, it will be manifest to every impartial mind, that with much less of unity than some other religious bodies in appearance, we possess greatly more in reality. Without any denominational creed or confession, we possess almost immeasurably more oneness of opinion than those who most zealously uphold such things. The external semblance of agreement may not be with us, so much as elsewhere; but if our conformity is neither so strict, nor so obtrusive, our unity is greater—yes, greater than will be found extending over the same space anywhere beyond the limits of our communion.

It thus appears, then, that there is everything in the Christianity we profess to dispose us to conjoint efforts for our common objects; that there is nothing in our ecclesiastical system, as affecting particular ministers or churches, to prevent their becoming thus united; and that our practice, in a multitude of instances, is in strict consonance with this liberty.

But it is only within the last ten years that we have availed ourselves of this liberty so fully as in the organization of this union—the one central union, made up of nearly all the county unions of England and

Wales. It is well known that the object we have thus realized, is precisely that which was contemplated by Dr. Owen, and other fathers of independency in England, a little before the Restoration. It was to form a union of this nature that a large number of ministers and laymen were at that time convened, from all parts of the country, in the Savoy Palace; and the platform of a congregational union, embracing all the congregational ministers and churches in the land, was agreed upon, and made public. But with the Restoration came the end of religious liberty, and an end, of course, to the possibility of perpetuating this enlarged association of our body. From the prostrate condition to which independency was thus reduced, it has been gradually recovering through the long interval which has followed. But it is only within the last few years, that it has appeared to be strong enough to demonstrate its power of association in a form so general as in the constitution of this union—and wise enough, it would seem, to perceive the important practical objects which might be aided by such means.

No sober man will hesitate to admit that it must be well to bestow attention on everything which, being lawful in itself, may serve to give us our due weight and place, as a religious body, among the men of our time. Now, to this end, it is of great moment that we should shew to other religious communions, and to society at large, that while we are animated by that love of liberty which ensures to our churches their

separate independence, we are at the same time so far governed by a love of order, as to be capable of giving to our entire denomination a character of unity. Unhappily, we have been so long without any visible union—any union of a nature at once to express our general sentiment, and to secure general observation, that we have at present much to do in order to disabuse the public mind on this subject. It is known that a principle of this kind is recognised among catholics, and churchmen, and methodists, and presbyterians, and quakers; but we independents are regarded very generally as passionately fond of our system, mainly because of its supposed power to put churches asunder, in place of bringing them together. This misconception may be so contrary to truth, as to be in our view ridiculous. But it is not on that account the less prevalent, nor the less pernicious; and its mischiefs will be widely perpetuated, unless we can succeed in giving so much prominence to the signs of unity among us, as may cause them to operate in the way of a corrective no less widely.

So long as we allow the public mind to be thus misled, so long must we be content to suffer loss. The maxim, "divide and conquer," is based on the truth that the disunited are weak, and that the united only are strong. The body which does not possess enough of the power of self-government to become one, will never be regarded by shrewd men, whether in the church or the world, as a body competent to do any

great thing. If we would have men suppose that we are capable of acting powerfully upon affairs beyond our own enclosure, we must allow them to see that there is this kind of power within that enclosure. But if society is left to regard us as a people always in process of being consumed by their own inbred jealousies and feuds, we should expect to be treated as men whose aid must be of small value, and whose hostility may be safely despised. It has been thus with the history of popular power in all nations, and it will be thus with the history of such power in all churches. Nor must we expect mankind to give us credit for being really one, except as we furnish to them the visible signs of our being such. We have not our due place in this respect at present; and we have it not, because, through indolence or pride, we have been heedless of the prudential arrangements that might have secured it. Nothing is more formidable in the eye of the statesman than the consolidated power of union, when in alliance with the diffused power of popular freedom. The weak side of popular liberty is in the facilities which it necessarily affords to men who are bent on faction, disorder, and anarchy. But let this evil be provided against by a well-adjusted concentration, and no other form of power may be compared with it. It resembles the far-famed Grecian phalanx, in which each man was fully armed, and brave in heart, and the whole so conjoined as to become one moving mass of skill and courage, bearing

like the pressure of a mountain against all that opposed it in the battle-field!

We are, I am sure, in the general, very little aware of the degree in which mankind are swayed in their preference of one religious system to another by this one advantage of a strong visible unity. The impression thus made seems to be equally powerful in the case of the wise and the unwise, of the good and the evil. Even wise men are not well at ease, when they seem to be leaning upon a framework which has the appearance of being everywhere disjointed, and ready to fall abroad; and the unwise conclude, as by instinct, that the truth must be with the many who seem to be agreed, rather than with the few who seem to be everywhere divided. Good men naturally confide in unity, as being the strongest form of goodness, wherever they can see that it is in alliance with goodness; and bad men do their homage to it, as being the strongest form of that mere power which is ever the object of their worship. Yes—and men of the most opposite political principles seem to find their place alike within this enchanted circle. To the monarchist, unity is sure to be attractive, because the apex of the social pyramid appears to him as the proper place of sovereignty; and even the democrat feels its influence, inasmuch as it presents to his love of equality the idea of a common centre, and of a common dispensation of things, in which there will be no respect of persons. Hence there are myriads who are democrats in politics

and catholics in religion. Truth must be one in God, and we do not readily conceive of it as shattered into fragments among men. We are in danger, accordingly, of finding it scarcely more difficult to suppose that there is no true religion, than to suppose that the true religion should be devoid of the sublime aspect of unity. It is scarcely to be doubted that the pretensions to this quality which are set forth by the church of Rome, false as they are in the main, have been the most successful of all the instruments which that church has employed in making proselytes to her communion. It is too true, I fear, that our "variations" as protestants have been the great cause why protestantism has made so little progress during the last two hundred years, and why the converts which have been made during that interval have been in so great a degree either to infidelity or to catholicism.

It must be confessed that this source of mischief is one that does not admit of being wholly removed. We can never give to protestantism the sort of oneness which is made to attach to popery. But much would be done toward lessening this disadvantage, if the great sections of the protestant church were each of them solicitous to give visibility and prominence to the spirit of unity pervading them, so far as might be practicable.

It is no doubt true, also, that this susceptibility in the human mind, which causes men to become so much enamoured with the idea of unity, has led to great error and evil. But where is the susceptibility

in man of which this may not be affirmed? It must be remembered, too, that however much it may have been abused, it is still in human nature; that nothing can eradicate it; and that we are not likely to make it serve the purposes of truth or goodness—which, beyond doubt, it was designed to do—by resolving to act as though it had no existence. We must deal with human nature as it is; and he is not only a sorry philosopher, but, what is more, is a person who would seem to be wanting in the humility and benevolence proper to the Christian, who is not willing to adapt himself to humanity in the use of all the innocent expedients by which it may be benefited. Our great want has been, and in a measure still is, a more calm, discriminating, and enlarged habit of thought on this subject.

The great enemy of truth has been always endeavouring to neutralize its influence in the world as by a double expedient—tempting the one half of mankind to apply it so grossly to wrong purposes, that the other half might be frightened from attempting to apply it to right purposes. Thus, by means of wickedness on the one side, and of weakness on the other, the whole mission of truth is often made to fall to the ground. This snare, which has been laid with so much success in all time past, is not laid fruitlessly among ourselves.

The church of Rome, for example, has set up a false appearance of unity, affecting to be influenced

by a oneness of opinion and feeling which she does not possess. But can it have been wise on our part to have been so long prevented by such a cause from shewing ourselves to be one on the points concerning which we are sincerely agreed? The church of Rome, and some other churches, have enforced their symbols of unity and conformity by civil penalties, and in so doing have done much to perpetuate hypocrisy and oppression. But should we allow ourselves to be deterred by that fact from declaring to the world the general agreement in opinion, and the general conformity in usage, which really obtain among us; even though renouncing, at the same time, all authority to legislate, and all power to coerce? Ecclesiastical councils have done much harm,—say, if you will, greatly more harm than good; but should we therefore conclude that it is not in the nature of clerical assemblies, or of assemblies composed as are those of this union, of ministers and laity, ever to do otherwise; and should we, in consequence, fix one broad sentence of proscription upon all such conventions? Churches, taken into alliance with the civil power, have prosecuted their schemes of organization and unity at the manifest cost of truth, justice, and piety; but for this cause shall churches, not so allied, refuse to avail themselves of the power of order and concentration really to advance these objects, in place of subverting them? If we are made of such volatile material as to allow ourselves to be driven off, in this tangeant manner,

from error on the one side, into what is no less erroneous on the other, then is it plain that, in our case, the snare adverted to has done its work.

We ought, however, in such case, to go a step further. In many lands, and during long spaces of time, the abuse of the gospel, and the abuse of the light of nature, have been much more conspicuous than the use that has been made of them. Both, accordingly, ought to be proscribed—it being an axiom in this kind of philosophy, that the institute or usage which has been found injurious in one complexion of circumstances, must be found injurious in all circumstances. The argument is, that union has been abused, and so abused, that it should be no more trusted. But who does not see that the Deist might take this ground against Christianity; that the Atheist might take it against the system of nature; and that the Anarchist might take it as an exception to the social principle in any form!

It scarcely need be observed, that the degree in which we should suffer ourselves to be carried away by a delusion of this nature must be the degree in which we should proclaim ourselves to all the world, as a people doomed by their own narrow views and jealousies to fret themselves into a state of perpetual insignificance, and to remain destitute of the power to do anything considerable in the world, in the way either of good or harm. The imbecile always give hostages to fortune after this manner, ever telling

the more sagacious of mankind that there is nothing worthy consideration either to be hoped or feared from them.

It promises well for the future influence of independency, that the wisdom which has always disposed us to act in the full spirit of this union elsewhere, has of late prompted to the same mode of action upon a scale as extended as the limits of our common country. That we should so do, and in a manner so conspicuous as to remove the last shade of misconception from the public mind with regard to our principles in this view of them, has long been the great need of our denomination—the desideratum, indeed, of congregationalism, ever since those troubled times, when it was given to the people of these kingdoms to revive the polity of the primitive church under that name.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE SYSTEMS OF CONGREGATIONALISTS AND EPISCOPALIANS IN ENGLAND, AS REGARDS AN EFFICIENT MINISTRY.

THE design of this and the following chapter is to indicate the kind of answer that might be given to such objections as may be made to the tone of representation which I have ventured to adopt with regard to our polity.

It will, perhaps, for example, be said, that so far does it fail of being the case that there is a natural alliance between congregationalism and the higher order of culture, that, as every man knows, the education even of its ministers is often pitiably defective, and that even the average of culture among our pastors is so limited, as to be a matter of reproach cast very generally upon the whole denomination.

This objection rests in part upon ignorance, and in part upon a restricted view of things most likely to commend itself to weakness and prejudice. We meet, on every side, with a very wise class of persons, who have learnt to suppose that people not educated at Oxford or Cambridge can never have been educated

at all. Great care is taken that dissenting ministers shall not be educated at those places; and the conclusion seems to follow, as of course, that they have no education. Thus our supposed want of education is first made to be a matter of necessity, and then a matter of reproach. It is quite out of the way of this class of persons to understand, what every person of real intelligence knows—viz., that universities never educated any man. The multitudes who leave universities, do so to float on with the most untaught masses of society to a common oblivion. The really educated are the exception, not the rule; and every mind so educated, educates itself. Milton owed little to Cambridge, and Gibbon still less to Oxford. If those seminaries had never existed, both these minds would have been much as we find them; and the same may be said, in the main, of all who become eminent.

Now it may be asked,—Do you really intend by these observations to utter the Gothic announcement that universities are profitless institutions? By no means. We have no wish to see them extinct; we have no wish to utter one really disparaging word concerning them; we only wish that, like all well-conducted persons, they should be made to know their own place. It is for this cause that we cannot allow it to be said, that these institutions have done for their great men the things which all great men do for themselves; nor must we be expected to concede, that refinement and learning are confined to college

walls; or that men in the habit of touching those walls do necessarily contract those qualities.*

It will suffice here to remark, that congregationalists possess their colleges in common with episcopalians. Many thousands of our hardly-earned wealth have

* It is, in some respects, amusing to observe, the sober earnestness with which a large class of persons seem to act on this assumption, in respect to such dissenters as presume to take upon them the responsibilities of authorship. With these very orderly people, ecclesiastical learning is a sort of preserve, which must be kept sacred to the foot of the authorized. The licence to enter that enclosure must be obtained from certain authorities resident in Oxford or Cambridge; and you may well pity the poor intruder who is detected as making his appearance within those limits without such qualification. The report given of him by the grave functionaries who take upon them to judge such offences, will be, in general, of a very ill-favoured description. It may not be amiss for me to mention an instance or two of this kind which have fallen in my own way. They will be given as samples of what is very common, and may serve to shew that neither the absurd nor the unprincipled are by any means upon one side in the existing controversies.

Something more than a dozen years ago I issued my prospectus of the Life of Wycliffe. There was at that time as curate at Lutterworth, a Rev. Mr. Pantin—such, if my memory serves me, was the name—who, as holding the clerkly office in that memorable parish, had thought it to be cognate to him that he should give to the world some account of the great Reformer. On seeing the advertisement of my intended publication, Mr. Pantin became very much disturbed. Inquiries were made without delay, and it soon appeared that the person signing himself "Robert Vaughan" was, in the language of our clerical friends, a "dissenting preacher." This discovery greatly increased Mr. Pantin's disquietude. It rose at once to a feeling of astonishment, indignation, and alarm. The reverend gentleman then bethought himself of what it might be possible for him to do, in order to strangle that first-born of my brain and labour at its

been expended in rearing such edifices. Large voluntary contributions are annually raised for the support of such establishments. In England and Wales they are some twelve or fourteen in number; and if in place of being scattered over the whole country, they were

birth-time. For this object Mr. Pantin sought an interview with Mr. Murray, who had announced my work in his list of forthcoming publications; but Mr. Murray begged to decline all proffered enlightenment on the subject from the curate of Lutterworth. Subsequently, my book was advertised as in course of publication by the late Mr. Holdsworth; and Mr. Pantin, undismayed by his failure in Albemarle-street, solicited an interview with that gentleman, and delivered such caution and discouragement in regard to the book as appeared to him meet. But all this anxiety and effort was without effect. The book saw the light, and a great eyesore to Mr. Pantin did it prove; for, after frowning upon it in all such ways as were within his power for several years, a long dull paper, with the signature of my old friend the curate, was put forth in the British Magazine, which was meant to work me much harm, by impeaching the accuracy of some statements in my Introduction. The nature of those statements I do not just now remember, except that I know they were not such as at all to affect the main object of the work. There is reason to think that after the appearance of that paper, the supply of bile in the case of Mr. Pantin was found to be in a somewhat more healthy proportion, and that he has since, in consequence, betaken himself to some more appropriate occupation.

Contemporary with Mr. Pantin's paper in the British Magazine, were several others, consisting of criticisms on my account of the Wycliffe MSS. in Trinity College, Dublin. Concerning the spirit of these criticisms, and the degree of confidence that may be placed in them, the reader will judge from two specimens, which I refer to from memory.

In vol. ii., p. 429, I have stated that several of the papers in the appendices of my work are printed from the appendix to Lewis's Life of Wiclif. On this note my critic observes, that it is not only for several, but for the whole of the papers contained in these appen-

located together, they might be made to constitute a university of much better pretensions than many on which princely and royal patronage have been largely bestowed. The effect of these institutions as they now exist is, that, as a rule, our ministers must be

dices that I am indebted to my predecessor. Now, to say nothing of the absurdity of supposing that I must have been under obligation to Mr. Lewis for such papers as were to be found in sources so well known as the printed pages of Knighton, Walsingham, Rymer's Fœdera, and Fox's Book of Martyrs, I have distinctly to state that the above assertion is contrary to fact. This may be seen by looking only to the first paper in the series appended to either volume. The paper, No. 1, in the first appendix, was never before published: it is from the archives of the cathedral of Durham, and relates to the history of the Wycliffe family. The paper of the same number also, in the second appendix, was copied by my own hand from the still unpublished MS. So much for the accuracy of my critic in regard to a matter of fact. From the next specimen, the reader will judge as to the claims of my opponent in regard to ingenuousness.

The heading to the second section of my account of the Reformer's writings is as follows:—"Section II.—Including the Wycliffe manuscripts in England and Ireland. This series contains nearly forty MSS. preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, the existence of which has been hitherto unknown to the Reformer's biographers." Now it is the manner of Mr. Lewis, not only to give the titles of the Reformer's MSS., but to say where they are to be found, and if there were duplicates, to mention them also; thus making his list a catalogue, not merely of the Reformer's *works*, but of *the number of his extant MSS.* This judicious example I followed. Any ingenuous man, one would think, might have seen at a glance, from the terms of the above heading, that such was my meaning. But my critic, well acquainted as he was with the manner of my predecessor in this respect, has been pleased to understand me as meaning to say that my catalogue included nearly forty *works* of the Reformer, unknown to his previous bio-

educated men, in the university sense of that expression; but exception will be left in favour of others, whose piety, information, and general ability, may entitle them to a place among ministers of the gospel, though not qualified in the manner of persons who pass a university curriculum.

graphers, and not merely that number of duplicate or additional MSS.; and upon this interpretation of my words, the reader is called upon to wonder as he is told that, upon examination, it turns out that my list does not contain a single addition to the known writings of Wycliffe!

After this manner a gentleman can write who, in a late work, subscribes himself "James Henthorn Todd, D.D., Fellow of Trinity College, and Treasurer of St. Patrick's Cathedral." I join most heartily in the solicitude of this gentleman, that the Reformer's works might be published, and carefully edited; and as this will probably be some day accomplished, I take this opportunity of putting upon record the expression of my full confidence, that the effect will be to confirm everything material in the account which I have given concerning the history, character, writings, and opinions of Wycliffe. In Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where the greater part of the Wycliffe MSS. are preserved, I had an apartment assigned to me, and the MSS. were left in my possession so long as I had need of them. But according to the usage of Trinity College, Dublin, I could have no permission to examine its MSS. except under the eye of one of its fellows. That slight inaccuracy should have arisen from this cause will surprise no man; but to have fallen into some trivial mistake from oversight, in such a case, is a small matter, compared with the position of a man who stands convicted of error in regard to ingenuousness, and clear matter of fact, as the manifest result of a paltry sectarian prejudice.

As I have touched upon this subject, I shall venture to advert to one other specimen of this edifying description. There is a periodical which assumes to itself the title of the "Church of England Quarterly Review." It has recently contained two articles on my History of England under the House of Stuart. In that work I

As dissenters, we are anxious for scholarship, but we *must* have preachers. In the church of England there *must* be a modicum of scholarship; but the mind well furnished in other respects, and an aptness to teach, are left, for the most part, to come as they

have the following passage on the proceedings of the Long Parliament against the Episcopal clergy :—" Many of the Episcopal clergy were deprived of their livings on the charge of being scandalous ministers, and not unjustly. But men, whose only delinquency consisted in refusing to become parties to the League and Covenant, were called ' malignants ;' and on account of the malignancy said to be thus manifested, with respect to the gospel and the parliament, persons of this description were sometimes expelled to make room for others more conformable to the new standard of orthodoxy. *Such sufferers deserve a place among the confessors of the seventeenth century no less than the Puritans.*" (Vol. i. p. 412.) Now, while commenting on this very passage, the reviewer describes me as fully justifying the parliament in expelling men " for the unpardonable crime of malignancy, and for no other" !

In the next page this writer adds : " With respect, indeed, to Laud's death, Dr. Vaughan has out-heroded Herod himself, for *he has actually justified his execution.*" My only observations on this subject are in the following extract, which, as the reviewer quotes from a paragraph just preceding, must have been open before him when he penned the above passage :—" *This proceeding, in every view of it, reflects nothing but disgrace* on the Long Parliament. It exhibited, in several respects, a wider departure from the forms usually observed in such cases than the attainder of Strafford, and without the plea of necessity, which greatly extenuated, if it did not justify, the sentence passed on that offender. The advanced age of the primate, his growing infirmities, and the wonderfully altered condition of public affairs, all contributed to render him an object rather of pity than of apprehension, and to make it the policy of his enemies to leave him in the insignificance into which he had fallen. By proceeding against him as a traitor, they could not fail to raise him to the dignity of a martyr,

may. We are sure that on this point our own course is the wisest. If we sometimes err upon the one hand, the church of England has erred in a much greater degree upon the other. Some three-fourths of our ministers at present may be esteemed, as I

and to create a sympathy in his favour in many quarters where it would not otherwise have existed. That he would have been a party to the introduction of popery is highly improbable; but that he would have destroyed the constitution, by causing the monarchy to usurp its place, is beyond doubt; and his moral delinquency on this account was as great as could attach to any treason defined by statute; particularly as it stood connected with so many acts of oppression and cruelty. But no statute had pronounced such conduct to be treason; and the extreme measures resorted to for the purpose of bringing the primate within the penalties of that offence, inasmuch as no great public interest demanded them, *deserve to be reprobated as contrary to humanity, justice, and sound policy.*" (I. 414.) This, good reader, is all I have said about Laud's trial or execution, and upon this I am represented as actually justifying both! The author of these misrepresentations, to which the clerical conductors of the Review are also knowingly pledged, is, as I am told, the Rev. Thomas Lathbury, A.M., Oxon, author of a "History of English Episcopacy"—a book the character of which may be learnt from No. CXXIX. of the Edinburgh Review.

It would be easy for me to multiply instances of this nature, and to shew that they constitute the rule, in the treatment to which dissenting authorship is exposed from the hands of our clergy, and that better things are only the exception. Yet does it seem to be assumed, that on the side of the church of England there is always dignity, forbearance, decorum, and refinement; and that every feeling hostile to her pretensions must be vulgar, wanton, and unprovoked. She is the pure, the harmless—always enduring wrong, never inflicting it. Her accredited defenders may descend to the coarsest violations of candour, justice, and truth, and you are expected to be, in return, the pattern of patience, submission, reverence, and gratitude!

presume, fairly educated men. The scholarship of some of these far exceeds the average attainments of the parochial clergy; and the remainder, if not so much at home as their episcopalian rivals in classical studies, are possessed, in general, of a much wider range of theological learning; and if not remarkable as preachers for that very cautious taste, and timid faultlessness, so observable in clergymen, they are distinguished, both in thought and manner, by a much greater freedom, boldness, aptitude, and force. No man of discernment, acquainted with the sermons which dissenting ministers preach, and with those which clergymen not only preach but print, will question this statement.

But it is the manner of opponents to be silent in respect to everything that may not be made a matter of blame. We hear little, accordingly, in the quarter adverted to, with regard to anything which dissenting ministers do well. The burden there, is of our supposed deficiencies and faults, and a strayed anecdote, betraying any real or supposed defect in knowledge, in taste, or in some matter of polite usage, in the case of our humbler brethren, is accounted of especial value. Such a matter may really weigh as nothing, compared with the very different things which might be found in the same connexion, and in the same persons; but it admits of being put into the place of all such things, the exception being passed off as the rule, and even an opposite being used as a sample. Society among us

is too full of this kind of prejudice. The interested administer to it with the greatest assiduity; the press teems with it. On this subject, the educated, who affect to despise the inconsiderateness and coarseness of the common people, seem to account no form of misrepresentation too gross, no sort of abuse too extravagant. No doubt, it becomes us to bear this wrong with Christian meekness; but we are men, and there are times when we feel that to rebuke such injustice with some sharpness would be no more than duty toward the injured, toward truth, and toward the God of truth. This self-control is the more difficult to be exercised, when we remember how easy it would be to shew, that if we fail in some respects in the character of our ministry, the church of England does so still more. For her faults in this way are not necessarily less than our own, because they are of another kind.

It would be well, even for churchmen themselves, if they could be prevailed upon to inquire, whether the sacrifices which they have made to their tastes on this point have not been very costly as regards their principles. In their excessive solicitude that the clergyman should not be a vulgar man, they have forgotten that it is important he should be popular. In their anxiety that he should be very unlike the people, they have not borne in mind that it is really of some moment that he should be capable of making himself understood by them, and of exercising a power over

them. The great wish has been, that he should be a gentleman; and the effect, in many cases, has been that he is left to be a preacher to gentlemen. He is a man of taste, in some sort, but he is a man without power. It has been found possible to drill him to his present standing, but nothing can now be done to make him effective. He has had capacity enough to learn the technical things which he has been obliged to learn, but he is found sadly wanting in the ability to teach the useful things which it should be the great business of his life to teach. He is very polite, but very insipid; very decorous, but very dull. Even the common people see his obtuseness and inaptitude; and in the conflicts which ensue between robust worldly sense, and incurable college stupidity, the man who has been prepared for his office by a process designed to secure him especial reverence, finds himself despised.

All this applies to the *weak* only; but in the case of the strong, the change is often for the worse. The man who might only have been pitied before, may then become hated. The great requisites in the former case have been demanded in his, and he is withal a man of some shrewdness and power. But the whole has issued in the formation of that too familiar character—a worldly-minded priest. He is a minister of religion, but he is himself without religion. He has taken upon him a sacred office, but it is solely because it happens to be allied with worldly

credit and emolument. He could not have taken that office upon him without being, in some degree, a scholar, but usage permits him to do so without being a Christian. Christian he may be in name, but he does not understand Christianity, and cannot, in consequence, either love it or teach it. The hungry flock, in such case, look up and are not fed. They naturally wander in search of pasture elsewhere, and the curse of this spiritual shepherd as naturally follows them.

We might attempt to describe the sort of clergymen who are just now going forth from the new schools of divinity in Oxford. It is manifest that by their measure of intellectual and moral culture, by their professional decorum, and the oracular announcement of their high and exclusive authority, this class of persons are capable of being much more mischievous than any merely imbecile, or than any profane and worldly priesthood could possibly have been. The vocation of these men is to diffuse notions and impressions which embrace everything belonging to the most debasing forms of superstition, and they have addressed themselves to their work in a spirit which seems to promise them a large measure of success.

Now, if churchmen must deal with the ministry of dissenters in the way of rigid scrutiny, let them not betray the childish temper of being offended if they find their own ministry made subject to a similar ordeal. We are most willing to do honour to the good men among the clergy; but we cannot affect ignorance of the fact

that they are not all good. We look to the efficient; but we must look also to the non-efficient. We look to those who preach truth—the truth which saves souls; and we look to those who preach error—the error that destroys them. Over all the good the church of England does, we sincerely rejoice; but then there are her omissions, and there is the fearful amount of harm which is done in the place of good!

To such an extent has the mode of providing a ministry in the established church failed of its object, that within the last two centuries, she has seen half the nation withdraw from her communion; while the majority of her ministers, at this moment, if left to depend on the support which their proper ministerial ability might realize for them from society, would at once cease to be ministers. The people would still have ministers, but they would not be such ministers. In all our great cities, and in the manufacturing districts, this want of adaptation in the services of the clergy, to the state of mind with which they have to deal in the masses of the people, is most apparent. The people in those districts are almost wholly lost to the established church; and there is little prospect of her ever regaining them. Is this really a state of things in which to exult over the alleged inefficiency of the dissenting ministry, as compared with that supplied from Oxford and Cambridge?

But this comes of attaching more importance to a certain kind of scholastic learning, and to our own

little conventionalisms, than to the use that may be made of minds enriched with valuable information, to real genius, or exalted piety. If the first be wanting, all that follows, it seems, should weigh as nothing. On this subject, the church of Rome has been more wise in her generation. She has never thought so meanly of her reputation as to suppose that it must suffer if any part of her affairs should be entrusted to comparatively rude hands. She has found a place in her system for every man, woman, and child, capable of doing it service. She has known how to mingle flexibility with her rigour—how to uphold discipline, and how to assign a place to the knowledge, zeal, genius, and devotedness of all her children. Multitudes, whom the church of England has denounced as schismatics, and left to the uncovenanted mercies of God, would have been cherished by the church of Rome as favourites among her offspring. She would have known how to bear with eccentricity, and at the same time how to keep it within bounds. How to seize upon every new outbreak of religious ardour, and to direct it to its object—in a word, how to adapt every new phase of religious movement to the temper of the times, so as to subserve her own power and grandeur.

Do we mean, then, to express an indiscriminate approval of this policy on the part of the church of Rome? We do not so mean. But we mean to say, that we long to see the time when the church of

Christ will be as wise to do good as the church of Rome has been to do evil; when the great Christian community will know how to avail itself to the utmost extent of its various resources; and when the fashions of the world, which are passing away, will be made to subordinate themselves to the great moral results of the gospel, which must endure for ever. The efficiency of our ministry at present is by no means such as we hope to see it exhibit, nor such as we doubt not it will exhibit in the times to come; but we will venture to say, that, upon the whole, we would not change its character and prospects for those of any other ministry in any other section of the visible church.

Be it remembered, too, that we are what we are, under God, notwithstanding the rank, the wealth, and the power of the land are so far under the influence of a bounty to impede our course at every step. The natural connexion of our system with the higher order of culture cannot be fully ascertained, except as it shall be allowed to develop itself, side by side with other systems, upon equal terms. In place of this, we have, in most respects, to labour as against the stream, while our opponents have only to float on with it. We repeat, there is much in the present dissenting ministry which needs amendment and elevation; but we maintain that those who think us most in fault are themselves more faulty still.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

But supposing it to be admitted that there is more involved in the view now stated with regard to the Christian ministry than would seem to be familiar to the thoughts of English episcopalians, it may still be objected, and with an air of great confidence too, that our system can hardly possess the adaptation to the state of society which we claim for it, seeing that it fails in so great a degree to commend itself to the leading classes among us, and that with the whole land open to the application of our voluntary principle, our denomination is still restricted to its present comparatively narrow limits.

To this second objection, I answer, that two centuries ago congregationalism could make mention of knights and nobles, of some of the greatest names in literature and in arms, and of not a few among the most intelligent and wealthy in the middle class, as giving to it their honest preference before all the systems of that age. The most interesting space, beyond all comparison, in the history of British intel-

lect, was the space between 1640 and 1660; but the true manhood of those memorable times was clearly the manhood of English independency. Many noble spirits then sighed to be free, free in law, free in thought, free in utterance, and it was in the nature of independency to give them what they sought.

We know what followed. With the return of the Stuarts came a long reign of profligacy among the rich, and of ignorance, irreligion, and intolerance among the poor. Nothing of nature or of godliness remained. Conventionalism, in its worst form, was triumphant. It is confessed that independency did not make much impression on the corruption of those times. But this is no more than may be affirmed of Christianity itself. During nearly a century and a half from the Restoration, piety may be said to have been divorced from episcopalianism. If found anywhere, it was almost exclusively among the presbyterians, or the congregationalists. Within the last century, God has blessed the church of England with a growing number of devout ministers; but this change she owes to methodism, operating powerfully upon dissent, and through dissent upon her own laity and clergy. Two hundred years since, the church of England was the church of the whole nation: it is not now the church of more than half of it, and within the same space, independency, which, including baptists and pædobaptists, did not reckon more than some ten or twelve ministers and churches, has risen to number

between three and four thousand. In these churches, too, as in the early days of independency, we find a considerable number of the more wealthy and intelligent of the middle class; and, on the whole, the denomination may be said to possess more than treble the strength at this time that it did at the commencement of the present century.

Some of the most bitter of our opponents have affected to pity our supposed weakness as a denomination, particularly as it is supposed to have been evinced in the issue of recent controversies. If such persons can review the facts adverted to, and conclude that time is telling in their favour, and not in ours, we can only say, that we must leave them to the solace of that conclusion. But it is possible they may some day learn that a cause which embraces the many, especially if that many should possess a considerable amount of sound practical intelligence and real culture, cannot fail to exert a powerful influence on the few. The mighty follow the multitude much more readily than superficial thinkers suppose. The cause which commends itself to the latter will soon commend itself to the former. In all free countries, opinion, laws, and institutes are not from the privileged, but from the people. It is much easier to assimilate a class to a nation, than a nation to a class. Hence, in such cases, the cause which is on its way to possess the popular suffrage, is on its way to possess the power of legislation. Three centuries were re-

quired to raise the primitive church above proscription and persecution, and who can tell what another century may do for independency? Why should not matters continue to take the course during the two centuries to come, which they have taken during the two centuries now closed? Should they so do, the issue must be sufficiently plain. Changes of this nature are not brought to their issue by the struggles of a day or of a generation. Providence is careful that they shall be slow, in order that they may be safe.

We must observe, further, that so far is it from being the fact, that the voluntary principle, on which our churches have ever been founded, has the whole land open before it, and may go without let or hindrance to possess it, that just the reverse is the existing state of things. The whole surface of our country, on the contrary, is mapped out, and given over, to its myriad, or more, of spiritual incumbents, who are charged to keep watch and ward to the utmost against the intrusion of the abettors of that principle. Every acre of the soil is covered, in this manner, by a machinery based upon a principle of coercion; and it has been the work of ages to mould the habits and thoughts of our people in accordance with that machinery. And it is in these circumstances that the voluntary principle is said to have fair-play. Fair-play!—it has had no more fair-play hitherto, as addressed to the people of Great Britain, than the lessons of sobriety may be said to have, as addressed to the constitution

of a confirmed drunkard. The change demanded here, is one affecting national habit—habit which has been made strong by means of the institutes and prepossessions of a thousand years. Were everything coercive, as connected with religion, struck away, and all religious communities apprised that the support and diffusion of their particular faith and worship must depend in future on their own voluntary effort, all such effort being a matter in which they would be held responsible to God only, and not at all to man, in such case, it might be said that some approach had been made toward putting this principle fairly upon its trial; but at present, its history is that of a principle making its way in the face of a mighty disadvantage.

Still it does make way. So far are we from being discouraged by the slowness of its progress, that we are astonished at its rapidity. The cognizance which this principle has obtained from the public mind, and the approval which it has extorted from the public judgment, during the last twenty years, are such as the most sagacious could not have anticipated, even in their most sanguine moments. Opinions which our fathers of the last generation proclaimed to a listless public, and to listless churches, are now the matters of thought, discussion, and agitation, from one end of these kingdoms to the other. Notions which were then accounted too absurd to be worthy of the slightest attention, are now found to be fraught with

so much important truth, that no ecclesiastical personage, no statesman, may safely be unmindful of them.

For example, we now find it avowed, even in journals which are regarded as the ablest defenders of the established church, that the church of the majority should be no longer considered as the church of the nation, and that the time has come, in which the state should forbear to extend toward that church any further marks of preference or favour. The church herself is now told, from high places, that she must look to her own resources for all means of future extension. Voluntary churches, with dependence on a voluntary provision for the support of the ministry in them, are rising up in all parts of the land; and to the principle of voluntaryism, as thus recognised, we see the clergy in hundreds, and the whole grade of dignitaries, from the metropolitan downwards, readily assemble to do homage. Even bishops are not ashamed to go forth on this principle to our colonies; and our baronial prelates at home assure us, by their conduct, that they see nothing degrading to the episcopal dignity in such a course of proceeding. In the same manner, the pretension of the clergy to the superintendence of national education has been repudiated, and they have been successfully told to content themselves with educating the children of their own flock. More than this, also, has come out of the late discussions. The eyes of churchmen have been

turned so effectually toward the relation in which they stand to the civil power, that Edinburgh and Oxford have vied with each other in the most novel and startling utterances on that subject. The strength of the church of Scotland seems to be about to depart from it, and the establishment itself would appear to be on the verge of extinction. In Oxford, the same restlessness, under the Erastian power of the state, is prevalent, and may soon betray itself in forms as little to have been expected as the course of affairs in Scotland.

Now, in all this, we see the progress of our principles—of those principles which the New Testament inculcates, which the primitive church acted upon, which the corruptions of the dark ages so long concealed from the eyes of men, and which, revived in the history of independency, and passing from our churches to all churches, are destined, under the blessing of God, to give to our common Christianity its proper freedom, purity, and power. It is our fate, as holding these principles, to be at once denounced and imitated. We are, however, content to be despised, so we may instruct. We are willing to be accounted weak, so we may impart salutary council to the strong. We can even bear with men who heap insult upon our persons, so they adopt our principles. We think more of truth than of names, and the man who does homage to the truth, must therein minister pleasure to us.

On all the grounds, then, to which our attention has been directed, we see reason to hold fast to our congregationalism, as the true ordinance of God, and as carrying with it elements of law and order, which are not better adapted to secure purity and strength to the church, than to expand, invigorate, and ennoble the most enlightened institutes which have hitherto obtained among the kingdoms of this world. All this we venture to affirm concerning congregationalism. What *we* are, as the men who have been called to the working of it; and what the system itself is, as committed to our hands, are quite other questions. We presume not to think that we have been wholly faithful to it; but, to use the language of Edmund Burke, "whilst we humble ourselves before God, we do not know that it is forbidden to repel the attacks of unjust and inconsiderate men." We do not indeed see, upon the whole, that we stand exposed to the casting of the first stone from any of our contemporaries. On this point, we cannot descend to appear humble at the cost of being insincere. But most sincerely do we confess, that we have not done all we might have done, and that we are not doing all we should be doing. If strong in our hold on the middle class of our countrymen, we have been too much content with that portion of strength. We have not studied, as we should, to influence the more educated and the higher sections of society; and in regard to the lower, we have been perhaps nearly as much

at fault. We have seized upon the middle of the chain; but the ends of it we do not hold, and have hardly sought to hold. From this cause, even our strength is comparative weakness. Our God is dishonoured; our country is wasted, perilled, and near to being destroyed; our people live, to an awful extent, without fear, and die without hope. Do we, then, make a boast of our wisdom, of our fidelity, or of our zeal before God? God forbid! Be that far, very far, from every one of us. "Oh! thou Father of lights, from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift, shed, we beseech thee, upon us new light and power, by the outpouring of thy Holy Spirit. Compassionate, for the sake of our adorable and crucified Saviour, our many infirmities. Behold us, oh! thou All-merciful, with pity, and cleanse us from our guilt, through the blood of the great sacrifice appointed to take away sin; humble us in heart, as we bow in spirit before the bleeding victim on that cross; fill us with all faith in his mercifulness and power; raise us in light, gratitude, and hope, to his service and favour! Create, O God! create in us the mind that was in Him. Enable us to look on man, on salvation, and on the means of saving men, as he looked upon them. Vouchsafe unto us, thou Lord of all might, the manifold power that may fit us to labour in his manner and in his spirit, setting thee always before us. Grant unto thy servants the grace which may so sustain them, that, 'by pureness, by knowledge, by

long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and by dishonour, by evil report and good report,'—that *in* all these things, and *by* all these things, we may prove that we are of thee. Prostrate,—prostrate, O God! at thy feet, would we pour forth the agony of our soul for thy blessing! Oh! fit us to live to thee, to die to thee! Give us to see of the prosperity of thy truth on this sin-marred and long-distracted earth, and raise us at last to the kingdom and brotherhood of heaven. Oh! that it may please thee to smile upon us thus, to deign to use us thus, to provide for us thus. We implore it for the sake of his wounds and death, his spotlessness and griefs, by whose name we are called—and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all the praise and glory! Amen."

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE EFFORTS NOW MADE TO PUNISH PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY, AND TO CRUSH AND DESTROY IT.

During the meeting of the Union at Nottingham, it was made to appear that the congregationalists of England and Wales are steadily increasing in numbers and efficiency. Our places of worship multiply in an improved ratio every year. The proportion of them built in favourable positions, and with better attention to architectural taste and convenient accommodation, is much greater than formerly. The number of our churches in almost every direction is becoming greater; and to most of these, considerable accessions continue to be made. Our ministry is in the same course of advancement, in respect to numerical strength, and in respect to the proportion of our brethren who are possessed of sound learning, and the still larger proportion who bring considerable average ability to the duties of their office. In Wales, it is

generally conceded, that the intelligence of the dissenting body, including in many districts some nine-tenths of the population, is with the independents; and the effect of Welch independency, direct and indirect, upon the morals and the religion of the principality, is becoming every day more powerful and salutary. With the increase of our means, intelligence, and piety, as a denomination, will always be the increase of our efforts to train the children of the generation to come in the way in which they should go. In short, it is the belief of persons who are no incompetent judges on such a question, that British congregationalism has doubled, and perhaps even trebled its strength, during the last quarter of a century. We also give thanks to our God, that the signs of a growing piety are to a great extent observable both among our ministers and people.

But in forming a judgment in regard to the present state of congregationalism, our attention must not be restricted to facts of this nature. They give the real, but they do not give the relative position of our body. Our increase in numbers must be viewed relatively to the increase in population. In the same manner, our increase of churches and edifices, must be viewed relatively to the increase of the same description in other denominations. In this light our circumstances bear another complexion. We can hardly flatter ourselves that we are keeping pace with the population. Nor can it be pretended that the independent chapels

built within the last few years have been as numerous as the new churches. But it is hardly to be doubted that the places of worship built by all denominations of dissenters, during the last twenty years, exceed in number those built by churchmen; and a comparison as to the relative increase of hearers, would probably be found to weigh still more favourably on the side of dissent. For it must not be concluded, that the greater effort now made in the cause of the established church is the effect of a much wider diffusion of church principles. In the present state of opinion and feeling on such matters, every increase in the population, must be expected to give some increase to the number of persons who go to church. But the zeal now evinced on the subject of church-extension, is not to be attributed to any real increase of churchmen, so much as to a new feeling of alarm and interest in the case of multitudes who were always churchmen, but who, until excited by recent occurrences, were indifferent and at ease in respect to such matters.

So long as this zeal to build churches shall continue to be regulated by the principle now in alliance with it, we shall not be found preferring any complaint against it. The principle of the efforts now making to effect church-extension recognises the duty of each section of the Christian church to provide its own sanctuaries, and to support its own ministers, by its own voluntary offerings; and this principle we regard as most consonant with social justice, and

general liberty. We are aware that this zeal may be, in many cases, much more political than religious. It may do much for the church, because it expects the church to do much in return for a party in the state. It may be an ardour having much more to do with politics than with religion. It may look to the worldly influence of the establishment, much more than to its spiritual influence. Even devout men, who are truly anxious to promote the spiritual instruction and the spiritual feeling of the people, may have much of this less elevated feeling mingling with their better thoughts and purposes. All this, however, and much more, we think we could bear, without attempting to subject the motives of those parties to any very rigid scrutiny, if they could only be content to restrict themselves to the use of honourable weapons in the onsets which they are now everywhere making upon us. But they do not so restrict themselves.

Our struggle, just now, is not so much against bad laws, or bad rulers, as against the persecutions practised by means of private wealth and private power. In all places, especially in the smaller cities and towns, and in the rural districts, every mean and merciless device that can be resorted to in order to mark dissent as a crime, and to visit it with punishment, is put into requisition. Dissenters find the opponents of their principles in their landlords, their customers, and their employers, and almost everywhere the instances are manifold in which such persons are made

to feel that their religious preferences are accounted an offence, and that the classes above them are bent upon putting a complete end to dissent; or, failing in that object, are resolved on punishing those who persist in adherence to it to the extent of their power. Every sort of appeal is made to the hopes and fears of the dependent classes of the people, with the intent to diminish the numbers attending our chapels or schools. The course pursued is one of enticement or terror, as the case may demand. The clergy generally find their most effective coadjutors in the more zealous ladies of their flocks, many of whom descend to arts, for the accomplishment of their object, that are too contemptible to admit of description. In short, all those disgraceful expedients which are so commonly resorted to at the time of an election, for the purpose of sending a favourite candidate to parliament, have become so much fixed custom among us, for the purpose of compelling the poor and dependent to abandon one religious profession in favour of another. What is done in this way, moreover, is done everywhere after the same manner. It bears the aspect of a thoroughly adjusted system or confederacy, and we have reason to know that it is in reality, in this respect, what it appears to be. It is a scheme which has its centre and circumference, with their mutual understanding and relations.

It is a bad sign in the condition of any people, when the idea of wealth becomes identified with the

idea of oppression; when it is seen that the possessors of substance can make their own laws, and adjust their own penalties, according to tastes or fashions of their own; and when men are made to feel that of all modes of punishment this is the most insidious, the most pitiless, and the most difficult to escape. This marked alliance between property and tyranny could not be made palpable in any connexion without danger. But in our case, the hazard attendant on such a system must be peculiarly perilous, inasmuch as it is directly opposed to the letter and spirit of the Holy Scriptures, which are open to the inspection of all men; and opposed no less to the laws of the land, which, thanks to a generous ancestry, have been made to breathe another spirit. These inculcate the lessons of equity, responsibility, and freedom. The Bible and the constitution are with us, and with such aid we cannot doubt the issue of the present struggle. But in the mean time a large portion of the rich appear to have resolved upon exhibiting themselves as the oppressors of the poor, and that in respect equally to the things of this world and of the next. The worst enemy of the opulent could not have prompted them to a course more likely to bring a memorable retribution along with it.

The Scriptures require that, in respect to the things of religion, "every man should be persuaded in his own mind." In other words, that religion should be, in all cases, a matter of conscience between man and

his Maker. But the parties adverted to will concede no liberty to conscience, except as it may lead the inquirer into servitude to their pleasure. God requires men to serve him in such way as they may believe to be most acceptable to his nature. But the intolerant would constrain them to forsake that path, and to study to please men rather than God, even in the immediate exercises of worship. Every inducement offered by such persons to the conscientious, is so much bounty laid upon hypocrisy, and upon hypocrisy in religion. It would prevail on men to declare a preference in religion by their outward conduct, which has no place in their heart. To succeed, must be to cause them to worship by restraint, not willingly, which is the reverse of the apostolic rule, and in all cases an offence rather than a homage to the Omniscient.

But thus it has ever been with persecutors. To make the required confession, and to practise the required conformity, however insincerely, have always sufficed to stay the fires of intolerance. The end of the bigot is to make slaves. He cares little about the secret principles of men, so they act with his party. They may insult their Maker to any extent by their frauds and concealments, so they perform a visible obedience to himself. By following such examples, our modern persecutors may seem for a while to be serving their object; but the ultimate effect of their conduct must be pernicious, both to their particular

party and to the cause of truth. In general, the effect of their labours, even where they appear to be successful, must be to seduce men to do evil, in place of aiding them to do well. To be employed in endeavouring to place the apparent interests of mankind in opposition to the dictates of their conscience, is to take up the vocation of the tempter, and possibly with fatal effect, inasmuch as the man who is taught to make light of the voice of conscience on one point to-day, may learn to make light of it on some graver point to-morrow. The man who ceases to be conscientious, even in a slight degree, is in danger of soon ceasing to be in any degree religious, and may possibly have to trace his path to destruction from the point at which the snare was laid which made him a conformist against his convictions. We have the best authority for concluding, that men may become proselytes, only that they may be made tenfold more the children of the devil than before.

Persons who do not scruple to contravene the clearest precepts of holy Scripture, must not be expected to restrain themselves on any principle of deference to the constitution or laws of their country. There are seasons when the persons of whom we now speak can very zealously inculcate the virtue of subordination, the duty of homage to the law, and such like doctrines. Now it would be no more than consistent, we think, in these friends of law and order, to bear in mind that, according to law, dissent is not a

crime; on the contrary, it is recognised and protected,—in the language of the great Lord Mansfield, "established." As such, it is set forth by the legislature of these realms as good, and not as evil; as a matter which should be sheltered, and even fostered, rather than suppressed. The entire majesty of British law is thus extended to the meanest shed that may be set apart to the worship of God, no less than to the proud arches covered by the turrets of Westminster, or by the dome of St. Paul's. That shed may be little proof against the rude elements which often beat around it; the men and women assembled there may be from among the poorest of the people; and the man who ministers as their instructor and their priest may be like them; but the genius of the British constitution is there, and, in the loftiness of her freeborn spirit, declares that poor edifice to be a proper sanctuary for the worship of Almighty God, and those poor of the people to be truly a body of Christian worshippers; and gives forth in solemn warning, that the man of low degree or high degree who shall dare invade that sanctuary to disturb its peacefulness, shall be accounted an enemy to justice and goodness, and be punished accordingly. God bless thee, noble country! Honour be to the men, those still often calumniated men, from whose patriotism and piety this true greatness, under God, has come to thee! Would that all were English who are of England! But it is not so.

It is this very conduct, to which the constitution thus attaches honour rather than reproach, that multitudes who boast of being the great conservators of things as they are, would discountenance, punish, and suppress. To accomplish this object, they set up the laws of their own conventionalism, in opposition to the laws of the land; and in the tyranny which marks the laws to which they give the impress of their own passions, they shew plainly what the laws of the state would become, if they were once powerful enough to dare the moulding of them anew. We do not hesitate to tell the parties who are tyrants to the full extent of the small power they possess to-day, that they would be tyrants to the extent of a much greater power if it should fall to them to-morrow. The men who are unfaithful in little, are the men who would be unfaithful in much. The hard-hearted oppressor on a small scale, only wants space and means to become the same man on a large scale. The man, moreover, who persecutes after the fashion of the nineteenth century among us, would have persecuted after the manner of the sixteenth century, had he lived at that time. The spirit which now prompts him to inflict his petty injuries on the dependent tenant, the humble tradesman, or the needy domestic, on account of their religious faith, would have prompted him three centuries ago to have been a party in sending such offenders to prison and to the stake. The men who are obliged to content themselves now with

calumniating the objects of their dislike, are the very men who a few generations since would have realized the more exquisite gratification of seeing them burnt alive. Circumstances have changed, but the human heart is the same. It is alarming to think on the prospect of multitudes in this respect, if the will is to be taken for the deed in regard to evil as well as good!

We can readily anticipate the sort of objection that will be made to these remarks. The parties intended will no doubt require to know, and, possibly, with the air and tone of indignation, if it is really so, then, that the condition of obtaining our approval is, that they should become wholly inactive, and strictly silent in regard to their principles, and that they should allow society to take just any course it may choose? We answer, that the persons who will be most disposed to make this kind of objection are persons who must know that no such indifference to their principles is expected from them, that nothing of the kind is even desired. In religion, men should be honest, and should hold truth, and endeavour to diffuse truth, in the manner of those who believe it to be truth.

But we do not mean to affect blindness to the fact, that there are circumstances in the history of this new display of religious zeal which must expose it to much suspicion and to unfavourable remark. Not only are the means which it descends in many

cases to employ, such as tend to corrupt the mind, rather than to convert it to goodness, but the course which it takes in other respects, is often such as to betray its spuriousness to every dispassionate observer.

To seek the conversion of the irreligious is the duty of every religious communion. But, at present, the zeal evinced is not so much a zeal to make men religious who were not so, as to make parties go to their parish church who have been accustomed to go to the dissenting chapel. In respect to education, also, it is manifest that the solicitude generally felt is not so much to abate the ignorance and vice of society, as to break down every apparatus of education which has not an exclusive connexion with the established church. It is not the ignorance of the lower classes, so much as the bias of the knowledge which may be imparted to them, that is viewed with apprehension. That they should not be educated at all is accounted a less, a greatly less evil than that they should be educated in a manner which may lead them into the ways of dissent. To save them from utter ignorance and vice may be well, but to save them from the religion of dissenters is the very best thing that can be done for them. From what we know of the proceedings of a very large proportion of zealous episcopalians at this moment, we cannot entertain a doubt that their feeling is precisely to this effect. They have zeal, but it is not so much a zeal

for Christianity as a zeal against sects. It has little connexion with patriotism, but it is animated to the full with party feeling. It would sink into listlessness to-morrow, if it could only be assured that other religious bodies, and that the political disaffection abroad, would follow its example. We so conclude, from the fact that it has increased only as the zeal of dissent has increased, and that its visible aim has been to counteract dissent, much rather than to work side by side with it, or to employ itself largely upon the ground left in the greatest degree at its disposal.*

It is, we think, strictly proper, that the persons who are carried away with this false ardour, should

* If this estimate of the zeal of the parties adverted to should be deemed uncharitable, let the reader weigh the following facts:— The population of Westminster consists of about 56,000. For not more than 5000 of this population is provision made, as respects church accommodation, by the establishment. In one district, it has been ascertained that, of 1635 families, 1324 were living in the habitual neglect of public worship; of 302 shops in the same district, 235 are open for traffic on the Lord's day. Not a few of the habitations in Westminster are known haunts of the most vicious of both sexes. In the Almonry, directly under the shadow of Westminster Abbey, are about twenty-seven houses, nearly the whole of which are houses of ill-fame of the most abominable character. These houses have been so occupied during the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the parish; and, what is more, they are all the property of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster!

But let it be marked, that in all leases now granted by the said dean and chapter is the following clause:—"or shall build or erect, or suffer to be built or erected, any chapel or meeting-house, for any separate congregation of people dissenting from the church

be distinctly apprized that its nature is well understood—that there is more than enough in its circumstances and fruits to render its faulty character plain to every man—even to the humblest; and that society, in consequence, is not likely to be greatly imposed upon by a policy, which, under the mask of pious profession, may be readily seen to be prosecuting its separate schemes of selfishness and intolerance.

My clerical neighbour is satisfied that his system is more scriptural than mine, and that it has a better aptitude than mine to benefit society. Then, in the name of everything ingenuous, let him reason and persuade, publicly and privately, in order to convince

of England as by law established, or the said messuage or tenement to be used for any such chapel or meeting-house."

Now the first conclusion from these facts clearly is, that, in the esteem of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, the people of Westminster had much better be without Christianity at all than be Christianized by dissenters. The second conclusion, following as clearly as the first, is, that there is not so much to merit discountenance in houses of the lowest infamy, as in places of religious worship, whenever the worship in them is not that of the established church. If facts have any meaning, these facts have this meaning. If the Dean and Chapter of Westminster can do such things, what may we not expect elsewhere?

Have I pleasure in calling attention to these matters of accusation? I have no pleasure in so doing. But the press has given them publicity, they remain uncontradicted, and I must suppose them well founded; and to expose that most demoralizing temper which is especially embodied in these facts, whether found among churchmen or dissenters, is the duty of every Christian, and of every friend to the order of society.

men, not only that they ought to be Christians, but that they should be Christians of his church rather than of mine. But let him blush at the thought of seeming to say, that mankind had better be without religion, than fail of receiving it with the adjuncts of his particular church; and that the young had better be without education, than fail of being educated after the same model. Let him, above all, blush to be found acquiescent, even by his silence, in the conduct of the man who can task his ingenuity to the utmost to find out means of punishing all persons who, being unconvinced by his reasonings or dogmas, continue obedient in the things of religion to their own conscience. Our complaint is, not that churchmen have principles, nor that they have zeal in the cause of them, but that their zeal should be so wanting in charity, in the love of equal justice, in the feelings of humanity—in a word, that it should have come into so much alliance of late with the maxim which teaches men to do evil that good may come. The man is a living libel on the gospel, who inculcates by his actions, that to be a good Christian it is necessary to be a persecutor; or who sanctions the practice of doing what is wrong in morals, for the sake of what is accounted right in religion. But this is now done by multitudes in all parts of these kingdoms, many who make the gravest professions of religion being most conspicuous in these displays of a schismatical and tyrannical temper in place of the spirit of the gospel.

We do not mean by these observations to convey the impression that we regard religious prejudice and uncharitableness as wholly on one side. In what degree dissenters may have been at fault in this shape, will occur as a matter of distinct inquiry presently. Indeed, that fault of this nature should be found among dissenters, and that it should exist in the degree just now observable within the pale of the established church, will occasion no great surprise to any man of reading in ecclesiastical history, especially if he has been accustomed to reflect on what he reads. The root of it all is in human nature, the diversity in its development is from circumstances. Men in the same circumstances have always acted more or less in the same spirit. Few things have been more common than that the zeal of one sect against another, should seem to exceed the zeal of either against impiety—especially when secular advantage has been conferred upon one, to the exclusion and disparagement of the other. But this infirmity is not the less foolish, nor the less criminal, nor the less pernicious, because it has prevailed very widely and very long.

The fact that the profession of our faith has been so generally and so deeply disgraced by this means during the past, should have disposed us to guard against such infirmities, as the evil by which we were most likely to be beset, and should have rendered us careful to shew that there is something in the progress of a Christianized civilization in which men may con-

fide, as destined to wipe away this reproach. Something of this nature has been done, but little—very little, compared with what should have been done. We are still degrading the church by subjecting it to the passions of the world, and, for the most part, have still to learn how to be religious in the spirit of religion. In this respect all the lessons of experience seem to be, in a great degree, lost upon us. In the bigotry which rates against sects, we see the bad power which creates them, and the parent, moreover, of sects which utterly discard religion, as well as of those which corrupt it.

We abound in some directions with very orderly, and in others with very spiritually-minded persons, who would almost as soon think of going to worship in a Mahommedan mosque, or in a Pagan temple, as of allowing themselves to be seen within the walls of a dissenting chapel. These persons know that evangelical dissenters are accepted of God as truly as themselves. But to recognise them publicly in that character, by even an occasional act of worship or communion, would be deemed an ecclesiastical delinquency, a sort of religious defilement. Would that these parties, who, in thus spurning the religion of English dissenters, spurn the Protestantism of three-fourths of Europe, could be induced to listen to the sort of use which is made of this prevalent exhibition of temper, by the Infidel Lecturer in his crowded Hall of Science, and could hear the bursts of derision

and exultation which mark the orator's too successful attempt to make it appear that the mission of Christianity has been, directly and literally, not to send peace on the earth, but a sword—not to constrain men to say, "See how these Christians love," but rather to provoke them to say, "See how these Christians hate." The Socialist in low life, and the sceptic of a higher grade, are alike observant of these things; and are not only confirmed in their errors by such appearances, but are more than ever disposed to put Christianity to scorn, by identifying it with these exhibitions in the character of Christians. But even this sort of experience—the increase of sects, both infidel and Christian, as the natural effect of the course intended to suppress them, is so perversely interpreted, that the evil deplored is felt to be augmenting daily, rather than diminishing. Every Christian should be a member of the church of his preference, but he should still be a member of the church universal. He should not be indifferent to principle, but he should be observant of charity. He should know how to unite with the love of his particular church, a proper affection toward all churches; and should give visible proof that the latter feeling exists along with the former.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PUBLIC PRESS IN ITS RELATION TO CONGREGATIONALISM.

To the worst passions in alliance with the evil adverted to in the last chapter, the public press is constantly employed in ministering every sort of stimulant.

During the last century, the great body of the humbler and labouring classes in England were much more superstitious than sceptical, and more inclined to indulge in drunkenness, or in rude sports, than to read or think on any subject. If led to any expression of feeling with regard to religion, it was commonly in seizing upon some methodist preacher, plunging him in a horsepond, or placing him under the nearest pump, and sending him, wounded and half dead, either to prison, or beyond the limits of the offended parish. In these proceedings, the people commonly looked to find a protector in their clergyman, and in general they were not disappointed. The vicar could find means to persuade the magistrate, and secure them. This was the sort of hostility to be expected at that time in the rural districts and smaller towns.

In the larger cities, the same classes sometimes distinguished themselves as "church and king" mobs; and signalized their ascendancy by destroying dissenting places of worship, and committing even the private dwellings of dissenters to the flames. The English gentry, during that period, were the most ignorant in Europe, giving themselves up almost entirely to field sports, to fits of intoxication, and to every kind of excess. In regard to the clergy, such were their general habits, that no man was shocked if he saw the parson keep his full speed by the side of the squire in the chase, nor on learning that his reverence was almost any man's equal at the bottle, and in some other accomplishments as little in accordance with his profession. Even in the highest circles, the most corrupt and factious temper in relation to politics, was allied with the worst species of intrigue in relation to the court, and with the most frivolous dissipation, inanity, and vice, in the daily—or rather the nightly fashions of society. All these things concurred to present a picture of social degeneracy, reaching so thoroughly from the highest to the lowest, as to make it a matter of wonder that we should ever have been rescued from it. Men disposed to prophesy gloomy things, might have given no little of the plausible to their predictions in those days.

But where are we now? With regard to the higher circles, their character and habits are, in great part, as those of another race, compared with their

predecessors of the last century. Not only are the mansions of many of them the houses of every domestic virtue, but instances are not of rare occurrence, in which everything socially, intellectually, and morally elevated, is consecrated by the pervading sanctities of religion; not of a religion taking its precise complexion from this section in the field of our general piety or that, but possessing more of the valuable perhaps from being moulded, in some degree, by the influence of independent principle. Similar remarks might be made with respect to the gentry of England; and with regard to the clergy, with all their present faults in another shape, they are, as a whole, men of eminent purity and consistency, if compared with the same class a hundred, or even fifty years since. But in the case of the mass of the people, the change is still more striking. Notwithstanding all we may see to deplore in their present condition, none of the classes above them have improved in the same proportion, with regard to temperance, culture, self-government, or social power. So far as they connect themselves with religion, they are found in much the greatest numbers with methodists and dissenters. Many of them, unhappily, have placed their politics in the stead of religion. They know more of newspapers than of the Bible. But the system of dissent is more to their taste than that of the established church. They know that in general dissenting ministers are much more capable of dealing with their state of mind

than clergymen. If there are to be religious mobs in our time, it is the church that has to fear, not those who dissent from it. The upper classes must not hope again to gratify their intolerance by means of brute force in the lower. That force is no longer what it was; and such as it is, it is no longer at their bidding.

Now we might have expected, as the consequence of these signs of improvement in social character, that the tone of the public press would also have become much elevated; that it would be characterized, not only by a greater degree of intelligence and taste, but by a greater regard to truth, and an avoidance of those gross personalities, and of that extravagance in abuse, by which the press of the last century was so generally disgraced.

But the change in this respect has not been such as might have been expected. We have more power, and as much baseness. The talent displayed within the memory of the present generation in our public journals, not merely in our Reviews and Magazines, but more particularly in our newspapers, is such as to have given a new feature to the history of society. This talent, as regards literature, is a novelty in its variety, its extent, and its power; and as regards politics, the editor of a newspaper, from being a functionary scarcely a remove from the fellowship of Grub-street, now holds a place among the most intelligent, able, and influential men of his time. But

numbers have not brought purity. Greater ability has not brought a greater regard to principle. We have more workmen, and the work is better done, but the improvement is in the skill, not in the morality. Politics and religion still divide us into parties, each appearing to claim all the virtues for itself, and to impute all the vices to its opponents. Changed as are the relations of these parties, and improved in many respects as is the general spirit of society, demand it seems is made upon the press, to bring to our present differences a virulence as unprincipled as we find disgracing its productions in the shape of pamphlets and newspapers a century since. Hence there is nothing in the meanest personalities, or in the utmost licence of misrepresentation in the past, which has not its parallel in the present, and this in the case of leading journals, recognised as the organs of great political and religious parties.

Subsequent to the restoration, the policy of the ruling powers in England was not only to exclude the Nonconformists from the established church, but to deny them toleration, and to wipe away, as a foul blot, every trace of sects in religion from our future history. In aid of this policy, such men as Le Strange, Parker, and Roger North, employed the press against the Nonconformists, in a manner as unscrupulous as the father of falsehood himself could have desired, and in a spirit of malignity which must have been no less to the taste of that remarkable personage. When the

party thus assailed were down, this abuse of them was incessant, that they might be kept down; and when they rose in some degree from their prostration, with the growing liberalism of the times, especially subsequent to 1688, their better position only served to give more keenness and force to the jealousy and enmity of their persecutors.

The bitterness of the invectives directed against them by the Jacobite factions, lay and clerical, during the reigns of William and Mary, and of Queen Anne, and for some time afterwards, could hardly be exceeded. The whig statesmen of those times might have curbed the libellous spirit which was then abroad, but instead of chaining the press, they chose the more magnanimous policy of fighting the enemy with his own weapons, and the consequence of the liberty thus ceded to a herd of fanatical politicians and high-church divines, was an abuse of the liberty of unlicensed printing, in all respects of the complexion that we have ourselves witnessed during some years past. The statesmen of those times were not without fault; but, in general, they laboured greatly more than any of their predecessors, through a long period, to expand the liberties and advance the true greatness of their country. Yet were they traduced in all the possible forms of misrepresentation, and denounced from day to day, and year to year, without either stay or weariness, as men lost to every public virtue, and bent on every sort of mischief and impiety. In these misre-

presentations, and in these denouncements, Nonconformists fully shared, as being the natural allies of the Whigs.

Some time previous to the commencement of the American war, this storm, especially as it affected protestant dissenters, had in a measure subsided. But with the revolt of the American colonies a new scene opened upon Britain and Europe. During a considerable space preceding that event, English dissenters had been sinking into an unprecedented state of apathy, and to their consequent weakness and inaction, they were indebted for their comparative exemption from those attacks which had been directed so unsparingly against their predecessors. But on the question of the American war, dissenters were more inclined to the side of the colonists than to that of the mother country, which exposed them to much resentment and suffering. Then came the Revolution in France, and in the early days of that movement, dissenters expressed themselves strongly in favour of the changes contemplated in that kingdom, and their conduct in this instance called forth further indignation from the same quarter. The circumstances of the American war, and the excesses of the French Revolution, contributed to place the English government in the hands of the enemies of liberal opinions during nearly half a century. But with the usurpation of Napoleon, men became more of one mind in opposing the military power of France, and a considerable space oc-

curred, both previously to the peace of 1815 and subsequent to it, during which churchmen and dissenters were brought into such intercourse as had not before subsisted between them, and were found acting together for the furtherance of many objects relating to their common Christianity. But the agitations attendant on passing the Catholic Relief Bill, the Reform Bill, and some subsequent measures, have served to generate a schism between churchmen and dissenters, which promises to be of no short duration, and not a little mischievous. Dissent is identified with liberalism, and it is the pleasure of a powerful party opposed to both, to identify both with everything revolutionary and irreligious.

My design in these observations is to shew, that in our history, the relative position of parties in religion, has been constantly varying according to that of parties in the state; and that the social struggle which is now changing its aspect so variously among us, has really nothing in it that should occasion either surprise or misgiving. The institutions and circumstances of our country are of a sort to render such a course of things unavoidable; and our being exposed just now to the full force of a prejudiced or venal press, is no more surprising than that similar conjunctives in the past, fraught with the most important results to posterity, should have brought the same consequence along with them. The fierceness of the attacks made upon us through the press, has

always been in proportion to the defeats which our opponents have sustained elsewhere. It is not our weakness, but our strength, immediately and relatively, which has called forth this opposition, and charged the journalism of the hour in this manner against us. It commends itself, as it does, to the humbler classes, because it knows that they are much more with us than against us. The abuse of liberalism to day, is followed by the abuse of dissent to-morrow, because it is known that each of these is as a right hand to the other; that conjoined, they have proved, on many occasions, more than a match against all that may be opposed to them; and that they will no doubt be found strong enough, in their time, to do again as they have done before.

Be it remembered, then, that this kind of storm is no new thing in the history of protestant nonconformity. Its beatings were not only often braved by our forefathers, but were as often made to favour the furtherance of their cause. Be it remembered, too, that we only suffer, on account of our religion, in the manner in which many of the most distinguished men in our country are willing to suffer as the cost of their political integrity, of their sincere patriotism. We have seen statesmen, whose public virtue every informed and honest man in the kingdom must have known to be unimpeachable, described from morning to morning and from evening to evening, from week to week and from month to month, and from one

quarterly publication day to another, as men possessing no more ability than has sufficed to render them the most despicable examples of hypocrisy, fraud, and inhumanity, that ever disgraced the history of a free people. All this a press, that would be thought very religious, has said concerning the liberal in politics; it can have nothing worse to say concerning the liberal in religion; and good men will, I trust, be prepared to brave the full compass of this kind of rhetoric, if need be, in the cause of patriotism, humanity, and religion. It is not the want of adaptation in congregationalism to the state and tendencies of society which exposes it to these attacks, but a perception of the contrary. Were it a feeble, dying thing, the best policy would be to leave it to itself.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CLAIMS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AS VIEWED BY EPISCOPALIANS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS, AND ON THE TRUE STATE OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THESE PARTIES.

But it will be said that the fault in this respect is not all on one side, that dissenters in fact have been the aggressors, and that they should have laid their account with the sort of opposition which their conduct has naturally tended to provoke.

We will not pretend to say that there is no degree of truth in this representation; but we think we can make it appear, that the error included in it is much greater than the truth. It has respect to one or two points only belonging to the question at issue, and not to the many which it embraces. We admit that there is a use of the press on the side of liberal principles, which we should be as little disposed to justify as the similar use of it against those principles. Nor do we mean to affirm that the press, as connected with dissenters, has been without fault. But there is one claim which we may make in strict justice—let

those who mark the sharper utterances of our brethren in relation to the established church with so much displeasure, remember the things which are said *of* them, as well as the things said *by* them. If this small piece of justice be done us, we feel we can abide the issue, without much apprehension, in the case of every considerate and honest mind.

With regard to the press in general, we are fully persuaded that, upon the whole, the contempt of principle, in the case of the accredited organs of the party claiming to be, by eminence, moral and religious, has greatly exceeded the faults, in that shape, chargeable upon their opponents. There may be instances equally bad on both sides, but the preponderance of the vicious is, as we honestly think, manifestly on the side of those who affect to be so much our superiors, and who, as such, should have been our examples. The parties who tell us they have most to lose by the disorganization of society, are those who have done most towards bringing about that catastrophe, by a lamentable display of the corruptness, either in its direct, or more covert forms, which naturally leads to it.

But if on both sides there has been much to blame, on both sides there is no doubt a large measure of sincerity. On subjects of this nature great allowance should assuredly be made for the strength of prejudice. In the case of multitudes, the zeal now evinced in the cause of the established church, has its origin, no doubt, in much laudable purpose and feeling, such

as the men who think it mistaken should be prepared to respect. In the view of no small numbers of her children, the church of England is possessed of such attractions as belong not to any other institute on earth. Among all the ordinances of God, or of man, she is esteemed the most lovely, the most benignant. Her antiquity carries the mind back to the infancy of our condition as a people. Her visible structures, in every form and shade of beauty, are the still and sensible links which connect her history with all the changes of the past. In their completeness, or as they take the shape of the ivy-mantled ruin, they serve to call up the bygone in lengthened succession, until the imagination rests upon the rudest appearances, amidst the deepening shadows of the most distant time. Before her altars all our fathers stood on their bridal day, and to her sacred enclosures they surrendered their ashes when their race was run. Her solemn forms of worship became more and more impressive to the living, as being through so many ages mementos of the dead. Beneath her roofs—beneath the humblest in common with the proudest—the men of all degrees have worshipped for more than a thousand years. The very paths leading to the spaces on which her spires and turrets lift themselves towards heaven, have been in a measure sacred in the usages of our people; and the sabbath morning groups in our parishes, are among the social pictures we have always been fond of cherishing.

But the institution thus interwoven with our homestead remembrances and sympathies, has still higher claims on our veneration. As we look back on the history of this church, we see monarchs,—a line of dynasties, do homage to her sanctity. Queens also, from the mother of Alfred downwards, bow at her shrine, and give up their children to her blessing. Her rulers, her scholars, and her devout men, are often seen as the only august spirits of their times. Not a few of them appear like personifications of the repose of another world, coming forth amidst the darkness and turbulence of the present. Such men, resting on their own profound thoughts, and strong in their own strength, are often seen rising high above all the men of their time. When the season came, some of these could take the place of the confessor and the martyr, giving to the dignity of their episcopate, th high adornment of a spirit ready to be offered as an oblation on the altar of truth and sanctity. Such were Latimer and Hooper, and such were Ridley and Bradford.

All these images of the weal and woe, of the lowliness and greatness, of the intellectual, the moral, and the holy, through the past, arrest the eye of the churchman's imagination, and serve to bind his heart to the system with which they are so naturally associated. The fall of that ancient institute, accordingly, he would regard as one of the greatest calamities. It would be the disappearance of the most venerable

and beautiful of all the objects belonging to our history. It would be as putting an end to those monuments of other days, which are allied the most nearly with all our better recollections and feelings. It would be, moreover, to bring down the ministers of religion from their proper state of rank and opulence, to the level of the dependant, the needy, and the despised; and to place the rural districts, and even the towns and cities of our country, in such a state of spiritual destitution as must soon reduce them to a condition little short of the lowest rudeness and heathenism.

Now we do not question that there are many persons whose impressions with regard to the church of England are really to this effect, and we admit it to be every way natural that such persons should be zealous churchmen. We admit, also, that the opponents of churchmen do not always endeavour, so much as they should, to place themselves in imagination under those powerful influences which serve, in the case of multitudes of well-meaning persons, to foster so strong an attachment to the interests of our national church.

But suppose it should be found that there are views which may be taken of the history and character of that church quite other than those on which the attention of churchmen is generally fixed — views which may seem to justify a repugnance to the church-

establishment principle in the case of one man, as much as the preceding views may be thought to warrant attachment to it in the case of another. Shall the candour which is ceded in the case of the churchman, who acts gravely and devoutly upon his convictions in regard to the wise and religious on this question, be denied to the dissenter who in pursuing a different course is acting no less gravely or devoutly, according to his principles, in relation to the same subject? The one regards our church establishment with favour, and to the Lord he so regards it; the other does not so regard it, and to the Lord he does not so regard it. Both are equally Christians, equally intent on one object—to do the will of their Lord; but their course is thus different, as the result of their different impressions in regard to the nature of that will on this subject.

That we may be equally good men, and still differ thus upon this point, is so clearly a fact, that the man who should hesitate to admit it, must be either an imbecile or a bigot in such a degree as to be insensible to reasoning in any form. Why, then, should difference on this ground be allowed to put Christians so strangely asunder? If maintained with that regard to social order which every sober and virtuous member of society will be careful to observe, and with the spirit proper to the Christian, we see not why the law of the apostle in regard to the differences concerning meats

and days among the primitive Christians should not be applicable to this difference of judgment, even when carried out with much earnestness and zeal. The spirit of that law is, that no supposed error in judgment or practice, not inconsistent with personal piety, and the ends of the Christian fellowship, should be used as a plea for disunion. But contrary to this rule, it is demanded from the dissenter, as the condition of his Christian recognition, that he should forego his objection to ecclesiastical establishments, or at least that he should abstain from acting in relation to such institutes in any way that may be deemed unfriendly. But surely the dissenter might just as reasonably take the same ground, and refuse to acknowledge the piety of the episcopalian, so long as he shall retain his principles as a churchman, and endeavour to uphold them in the world. Each is fully persuaded that his own views are those of the scriptures, and the concession necessary to concord is as much on the one side as the other. Were our episcopalian brethren less the disciples of statesmen, and more the disciples of St. Paul, we think they could not fail to see these things in this light. We ask no favour from them, we only pray that they will concede to us what we readily concede to them—freedom of opinion, and freedom of utterance and action in its favour.

But it will perhaps be deemed incredible, that a mind of integrity and piety should see reasons for being dissatisfied with the church of England at all

so cogent as those which seem to require that she should be regarded with a truly filial affection. The persons who so think are as little accustomed to place themselves in the circumstances of dissenters, as dissenters are accustomed to place themselves in the circumstances of churchmen. Both classes live too much in a world of their own, each being little sensible to the nature of the influences which are constantly affecting the thoughts and habits of the other.

In reply to the incredulity of the churchman on this subject, and to the preceding representation in regard to the history and character of our national church as viewed by churchmen, the dissenter would be prepared to express himself much as follows:—

"I admit that your church is not without its "attraction as a section of antiquities; but as a re- "ligious institute, the defects and evils which mark "its early history are to me very lamentable. In "the middle age, it was an improvement on the "paganism which it served to supersede or preclude, "and it possessed at times its devout men; but, as a "whole, its moral and religious aspect has always pre- "sented to me much more to deplore than to admire. "Speaking generally, it perpetuated ignorance, in "place of imparting knowledge; it substituted the "dregs of a debasing superstition, in place of the "elevating power of an enlightened piety; it taught "men to put confidence in priestly arts, instead of "seeking to become right-minded towards God. Its

" aim was to awe and subdue the human spirit in the " case of the many, and by that means to subserve " the opulence and power of the privileged few who " reigned over them. All these things, and more to " the same effect, I bring to the test of reason, " humanity, and Holy Scripture; and when I so " do, I find in them a painful drawback from those " poetic exhibitions of the church as existing in that " age, which are sometimes made to pass before us " in our lighter and graver literature.

" Even the grace and splendour of her pageants, " and the science and magnificence of her edifices, " fail to interest my natural taste as they might have " done; inasmuch as I cannot forbear to mark the " deep wrong which was perpetrated in great part by " their means upon the moral nature of the men of " those times. Those shows and mummeries were " the gewgaws which served to beguile men into a " perpetual childhood. The beautiful edifices through " which they passed were the signs of skill in the " priest, but of skill put forth in that form that the " priest might reign by fear, and bring his votaries to " the dust before him. Like the colossal piles of " Egypt, they were the impressive tokens of the " power of a great priest-caste, which then reigned " among us in the manner of a theocracy. Men " gazed on those structures as on the monuments of " a dominion which destiny must surely have set up, " and the boldest were scared from the thought of

" resistance. In this sense, the glory of that church " was her shame. It demonstrated her power to do " good, and her want of the inclination. Her chosen " office was to prevent light rather than to diffuse it; " and to give men up to delusion in any form, rather " than to lead them to the truth. I admit the pic- " turesque, but I want the passion for human culture. " I confess to the aptness of the materials as worked " up in romance; but I want the signs of the moral, " the devout, the aim to elevate humanity, the saving " power of religion on the spirits of men!

" Concerning the spirit which animated this sys- " tem, I see proof enough in what happened when " men began to oppose it, and when those who had " so long kept the key of knowledge were loudly " called upon to give that hidden treasure to the " people. For this cause I see the bones of Wycliffe " taken from their grave, and declared infamous; " his followers harassed, imprisoned, punished, com- " mitted to the flames. Next comes the Reforma- " tion, and with it the scenes which give to protes- " tantism in England her company of martyrs. In " the wrongs of those holy men, in their fiery ordeal, " I see the strength of the grasp with which the " middle-age church retained her power, and the " end for which it was retained. In this manner " does it tell me, that it not only loved darkness in " an age of darkness, but that it had chosen darkness " for its own sake, and in preference to light. Its

" intent is to make the past—the dark, depraved, and " wretched past—continuous; and for that object it " is prepared to inflict any measure of wrong upon " the present.

" After a while, I see this persecuted protestantism " become ascendant. But now popery has its mar- " tyrs; independency, too, has its martyrs; puritanism " abounds in its confessors. Men refuse to acknow- " ledge the spiritual supremacy of the crown, and " they die in consequence of that refusal. I see " catholics thus die; I see independents thus die. " What transubstantiation had been to the protes- " tant, this new article of faith becomes to both " papists and protestants. The church of Elizabeth, " strong on the side of liberty abroad, evinced little " sympathy with it at home. That church had some- " thing of the picturesque about her, in common with " her predecessor of the middle age, but the strong lines " of her portraiture are pride, ambition, tyranny—a " lofty passion for dominion. Elizabeth herself may " have preferred protestantism to popery, but she " preferred her own power to either; and her ruling " churchmen were after her own heart. Hence the " domestic policy of the Anglican church in that " age, tended to distress the intelligent and devout, " especially among the clergy, much more than to " teach the ignorant or reform the vicious. The most " efficient preachers were always objects of jealousy " to their superiors; and as the result, we see the

" mass of the people untaught, dissolute, or left in a " state of mere feudal worldliness. It is true, the " signs of a grave and manly piety were not wholly " wanting; but those on whom they were seen were " counted as a sect, and as such were frowned upon, " proscribed, persecuted.

" But with the accession of the house of Stuart " came the grand struggle. I now see the Anglican " church, the proud fabric of Elizabeth, brought to " the dust by a strong hand—the hand of an op- " pressed and indignant people. That church had " counted forbearance a weakness, and toleration a " crime. She risked all upon that policy, and she " paid the penalty.

" With the Restoration comes the return of her " power, and with it the return of the spirit which " she had always displayed. She resumed that " power under a solemn pledge to leniency and tole- " ration; and she not only denied both, but denied " them in the face of the reproach which charged her " with adding treachery to spoliation, and fraud to " tyranny. It has been the work of nearly two cen- " turies to bring back to her pale the amount of piety " and ministerial ability which were then excluded " from it. Her policy through all this interval has " been to cling to the arbitrary in the past, and to " put her strong discountenance upon its opposite. " The friends of liberty have always had to lay their " account with her opposition when endeavouring

" to expand the principles of freedom. Her con-
" cessions in this way have always come late, re-
" luctantly, and with a bad grace.

" More than this—the church which has always
" taken her place thus on the side of the servile, and
" as the antagonist of the free, has tended, in the
" case of multitudes, to generate infidelity rather
" than religion. The infidelity of France was de-
" rived from England, and the infidelity of England
" pointed to the worldly, the corrupt, and the vicious
" among our clergy, as to the strong argument in its
" favour. In France, the abettors of the same system
" adopted the same policy. Every false religion has
" been a state institute; and if the false and the true
" are to bear, in this respect, the same complexion,
" and are to be supported by the same means, it
" should not be accounted strange if some men evince
" a proneness to suspect that they are of the same
" origin. They agree in bestowing rank, opulence,
" and power, on their respective priesthoods; and if
" along with this kind of bounty the same result is
" seen to follow in both cases, is it wonderful that
" men, seeing the fruit to be alike, are sometimes
" found regarding the trees as being also alike? You
" may tell me that this conclusion is not legitimate.
" But there are causes which must always render
" it highly probable that men will adopt such conclu-
" sions. You may tell me of the service done to re-
" ligion in the eyes of the worldly by vesting it with

" these forms of worldly patronage. But the case " does not end there. I must look beyond that,—to " the positive injury which is done to religion when " it is made to wear, in this manner, the aspect of " a mere engine of state policy, and when its aim " would seem to be, not so much to instruct and " elevate a people, as to render them submissive, and " to put honour upon a priesthood.

" Such, beyond question, was the complexion of the " established church in England for a long period " subsequent to 1660. In those times men no more " expected religion in churchmen than in statesmen. " There were of course exceptions, but as a rule, the " vocation of the two classes was equally a worship " of place and emolument. The educated classes " saw this, and despising the ministers of religion, " they passed, by too easy a process, to a rejection of " religion itself. This mischief has never ceased to " work among us. It affects the mass of the people " now, as well as the educated. Nothing damages " religion so much, even with the worldly, as world- " liness under the mask of religion. But all this, " and more, flows naturally from the system of the " church of England. It is in the nature of that " system, that it should recognise a multitude of men " as ministers of religion, who have no religion. It " is natural, in consequence, that these men should " be, in the manner explained, as a stumbling-block " in the path of our common Christianity; and that

" they should not only fail to do the work which they " take upon them office to do, but that, having the " whole land divided among them, they should operate " very widely as a strong impediment in the way of " those who would do it in their stead; so as to cause " myriads of the people to be doomed to the condition " of the blind following the blind. All these things I " see in the working of the institute of an established " church, and their effect is to confirm me in my " attachment to the principles which are opposed to " all such modes of attempting to uphold religion in " the world—principles which I derive, as I think, " from the nature of Christianity, and from the direct " or indirect instructions of the New Testament.

" Be it observed, then, that I do not profess myself " insensible to the charms of that remote antiquity, " of those social recollections, or of those intellectual " and devout remembrances, which give so much of " the imposing to the church of England when viewed " under certain aspects. But these pictures, be it " remembered, while they belong to the history of " that church, do not present her whole history. " They do not portray her whole character. They " are rather as a veil, that must be drawn aside if the " reality is indeed to be seen. They say nothing of her " sins of omission. Nothing of her many positive de- " linquencies. All that is truly venerable in her many " associations I trust I can sincerely venerate. But " I am never to forget, that this creation of the state

" is not the great and the beautiful that has come " down to us from the Creator. To the work of man I " can give its proper homage, but I must reserve my " deeper reverence for the work of God. Of the " proportioned, the ornate, the impressive, in the ap- " paratus of religion, I can be observant, and if found " really to subserve religion, I can do it reverence, " and, for its work's sake, could fix a strong love upon " it. But it may prove to be an apparatus of another " order. It may have served to give power to " churchmen, while having little connexion with in- " telligence and sanctity in the church. It may " have put the scenic in the place of the moral; the " institutional in the place of the spiritual; the grace of " a mere pageant, in the stead of the beauties of holiness. " It may have forced our poor nature down to the " mockeries and littleness of earth, in place of raising " it to the realities and greatness of heaven. Such " systems are as the sepulchres which were garnished " outwardly, but within were full of all uncleanness. " They are as graves which appear not. Their beauty " is a meretricious beauty, and their power to fascinate " is only so much reason why their embrace should " be the more rejected. They promise, but they " perform not. Their way, to the multitudes who " confide in them, is not the way of life.

" This proneness to lose sight of the all-surpassing " greatness and beauty of religion itself, in the wor- " ship which is paid to the visible forms and machi-

" nery connected with it; and this consequent sub-
" stitution of a frivolous and treacherous formalism, in
" the place of a rational and pure devotion, has been
" the great sin of Romanism, and has been so much
" the fault of the church of England as to leave to the
" elements of historical or poetical interest attaching
" to her, but little power to awaken, in many minds,
" either admiration or sympathy."

Now the question which should arise here, is not whether every one of the points touched upon in the preceding paragraphs has been touched upon in a manner wholly free from partiality or excess. Our business in this place is with a matter of fact. It is, then, no less true, that the views just now expressed, are, in substance, entertained by dissenters, than that the previous views on the same subject are in substance entertained by churchmen. And the conclusion which we maintain as following from these facts is—that with these different views, the dissenter may be, at least, both as honest, and as much influenced by considerations of piety, in coming to his conclusion against the church of England, as is the churchman in coming to his conclusion in her favour. It may perhaps be easy to shew, on both sides, that the matters at issue are not looked at so comprehensively and fully as they might be. It may be that the men of either party very rarely take in all the points of the case, assigning to each its due place, and nothing more. But fault of this nature is inseparable from the popular

mind in respect to all questions in any degree complex. It springs from natural as much as from moral infirmity. It results from want of capacity, as much as from other causes. In this case, it cannot be made to inculpate the dissenter more than the churchman.

But if thus much is admitted, it must follow that a man may express himself desirous of seeing our ecclesiastical establishment at an end, and in so expressing himself only give utterance to the conviction of a truly honest judgment, and to the desire of a sincerely devout heart. Should such a man in consequence publish to this effect from the press, should he speak to this effect from the platform, and should he petition to this effect before the legislature, I know not on what ground it is, either in morals or religion, that the person so doing is to be proscribed and denounced after the fashion which now prevails. If to carry out dissenting principles is to become the antagonist of the church, to carry out church principles is to become the antagonist of dissent. If it be made the condition of friendship, on the one hand, that a man should not seek the ascendancy of his own principles, then the demand, on the other hand might be, with equal justice, to the same effect. The voluntary, in this case, only does as the churchman; and the call upon forbearance is at least as strong in the former case as in the latter.

But the great difference between ourselves and our episcopalian brethren is, that they virtually demand

an abandonment of public principle on our part, while we do not make any such demand upon them. It is not the dissenter who renounces fellowship with the churchman, but the churchman who renounces fellowship with the dissenter. The dissenter has to bear "the spoiling of his goods," and it is the churchman who inflicts that spoliation upon him; yet, strange to say, the complaint of bad treatment, and the consequent schism in regard to all fellowship, proceed much more from the man who inflicts the injury than from the man who endures it!

The Rev. Hugh M'Neile is a zealous churchman, and the Rev. John Burnet is a zealous dissenter. Now it is surely conceivable that these gentlemen should meet in the character of antagonists to-day, in regard to matters concerning which they are at issue; and as friends the next day, in regard to matters of much greater moment, concerning which they are agreed. Mr. Burnet, I feel assured, would rejoice that it should be so, and would scorn the thought of renouncing friendship with Mr. M'Neile, because it is the resolve of that gentleman to be zealous and active in the cause of his principles as the friend of church establishments. But these terms of amity, worthy at once of the man and the Christian, find no reciprocation from Mr. M'Neile. To become conspicuous as the opponent of an established church, is the forfeiture of all friendly recognition in that quarter.

Both these gentlemen are, in this respect, as representatives of their respective parties.

In England, baptists and pædobaptists, presbyterians and independents, all have their differences. Still they all have their occasions on which they can be one, and they always live as brethren. How does it happen that it cannot be thus with men who disagree on the one question of church establishments? The only answer is, that the worldly comes in with that one question, as it never can do with the others.

While admitting, therefore, that dissenters may not have been faultless, we must insist that the sin of schism,—the severance of Christian affection and intercourse,—rests much less with them than with their opponents, inasmuch as the fault of dissension must always lie in the greatest degree upon those who insist on the unreasonable as the condition of amity. It is in vain to say that the objection taken is not to conscientious and pious dissenters, but to political dissenters—as the phrase is. Every man, let his conscientiousness, his piety, his regard to the orderly and the constitutional, be what they may, is branded with that name—a name intended to make him odious—as surely as he shall presume to commit himself in the public eye in the cause of his principles as a dissenter.

We never dream of telling pious churchmen, that they can have no piety, if they also have zeal for their church. But it is the practice of churchmen, even of

some of the best among them, to be telling us daily, that we cannot be men of piety, if we have also a zeal for dissent. We might have hoped that the absurdity which characterizes this injustice would have sufficed to deter men of sense, to say nothing of men of probity, from descending to be parties to it. But it often happens, that what the weak do from prejudice, the more sagacious tacitly encourage from policy.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIXTURE OF POLITICS WITH RELIGION, AND THE OPINION OF ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE CONCERNING THE UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

The hardship of the case, adverted to at the close of the last chapter, is, that the meddling of dissenters with politics is made to be matter of necessity, and that the necessity is laid upon them by the very persons who turn it against them as their great reproach. If the sketch given in some preceding pages, as regards the manner in which the religious and political have been necessarily blended in our history, is correct, it is plain that so long as our institutions with respect to religion shall retain their present complexion, intervals

must continue to recur, in which churchmen and dissenters will become liable to the charge of being much more political than may be thought to comport with the character of religious men. If this is an evil, its origin is not difficult to discover. Every ecclesiastical establishment is an avowed attempt to ally the political with the religious. If we suppose the one half of a nation to adhere to this establishment, as resting upon the sound in worldly politics, and the other half to dissent from it, as resting upon the unsound, how can it happen otherwise, than that the disputes between these parties should be as much political as religious. As there is an alliance between the political and the religious in every established church, it is unavoidable that the conduct of those who dissent from such churches will be influenced by considerations that will be at once political and religious. Dissenters, accordingly, are political, not in the first instance, but simply because they are constrained to dissent from a political institute called an established church. It is not the dissenter, in consequence, who brings politics into religion, but his opponent. The earnest wish of the dissenter is to see religion separated from every such adjunct, and to see the peer and the populace alike employed in providing for the religious instruction of the country, without seeking help of worldly politicians in any way. But the struggle of the churchman is directed toward a strictly opposite result. Thus the dissenter is political by accident, because

the churchman is political upon principle. It is the upholding of this mixed state of things among churchmen, which creates the necessity for a mixed opposition to it among dissenters. It is, we repeat, somewhat hard, that politics should be thus forced upon us, and that our endeavour to deal with these religious politics, in the manner of religious politicians, should be made the theme of so much reproach.

But on this whole subject, I am disposed to transfer to these pages a considerable extract from the work intitled, "Democracy in America," by Alexis de Tocqueville. On matters affecting the state and prospects of modern society, it has been the good fortune of Tocqueville to be commended by men of the most opposite political opinions, as one of the most profound thinkers of the age. An author who has obtained praise of this order from such authorities as Sir Robert Peel, and "Blackwood's Magazine," if found leaning toward the doctrine of English dissenters in regard to the question of the union of church and state, will not be suspected of doing so under any influence apart from the suggestion of facts, and the tendencies of a wise reflection.

"Upon my arrival in the United States," says this author, "the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had

almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other, but in America I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country. My desire to discover the causes of this phenomenon increased from day to day. In order to satisfy it, I questioned the members of all the different sects; and I more especially sought the society of the clergy, who are the depositaries of the different persuasions, and who are more especially interested in their duration. As a member of the Roman-catholic church, I was more particularly brought into contact with several of its priests, with whom I become intimately acquainted. To each of these men I expressed my astonishment, and I explained my doubts: I found that they differed upon matters of detail alone; and that they mainly attributed the powerful dominion of religion in their country to the separation of church and state. I do not hesitate to affirm that during my stay in America, I did not meet with a single individual, of the clergy or of the laity, who was not of the same opinion upon this point.

"This led me to examine more attentively than I had hitherto done, the station which the American clergy occupy in political society. I learned with surprise that they filled no public appointments; not one of them is to be met with in the administration, and they are not even represented in the legislative

assemblies. In several states, the law excludes them from political life; public opinion in all. And when I came to inquire into the prevailing spirit of the clergy, I found that most of its members seemed to retire of their own accord from the exercise of power, and that they made it the pride of their profession to abstain from politics.

"I heard them inveigh against ambition and deceit, under whatever political opinions these vices might chance to lurk; but I learned from their discourses, that men are not guilty in the eye of God for any opinions concerning political government, which they may profess with sincerity, any more than they are for their mistakes in building a house or in driving a furrow. I perceived that these ministers of the gospel eschewed all parties, with the anxiety attendant upon personal interest. These facts convinced me that what I had been told was true; and it then became my object to investigate their causes, and to inquire how it happened that the real authority of religion was increased by a state of things which diminished its apparent force. These causes did not long escape my researches.

"The short space of threescore years can never content the imagination of man; nor can the imperfect joys of this world satisfy his heart. Man, above all created beings, displays a natural contempt of existence, and yet a boundless desire to exist; he scorns life, but he dreads annihilation. These different

feelings incessantly urge his soul to the contemplation of a future state, and religion directs his musings thither. Religion, then, is simply another form of hope, and it is no less natural to the human heart than hope itself. Men cannot abandon their religious faith without a kind of aberration of intellect, and a sort of violent distortion of their true natures; but they are invincibly brought back to more pious sentiments; for unbelief is an accident, and faith is the only permanent state of mankind. If we only consider religious institutions in a purely human point of view, they may be said to derive an inexhaustible element of strength from man himself, since they belong to one of the constituent principles of human nature.

"I am aware that at certain times religion may strengthen this influence, which originates in itself, by the artificial power of the laws, and by the support of those temporal institutions which direct society. Religions intimately united to the governments of the earth have been known to exercise a sovereign authority derived from the twofold source of terror and of faith; but when a religion contracts an alliance of this nature, I do not hesitate to affirm that it commits the same error as a man who should sacrifice his future to his present welfare; and in obtaining a power to which it has no claim, it risks that authority which is rightfully its own. When a religion founds its empire upon the desire of immortality, which lives in

every human heart, it may aspire to universal dominion; but when it connects itself with a government, it must necessarily adopt maxims which are only applicable to certain nations. Thus, in forming an alliance with a political power, religion augments its authority over a few, and forfeits the hope of reigning over all.

"As long as a religion rests upon those sentiments which are the consolation of all affliction, it may attract the affections of mankind; but if it be mixed up with the bitter passions of the world, it may be constrained to defend allies whom its interests, and not the principle of love, have given to it; or to repel as antagonists men who are still attached to its own spirit, however opposed they may be to the powers to which it is allied. The church cannot share the temporal power of the state without being the object of a portion of that animosity which the latter excites.

"The political powers which seem to be most firmly established have frequently no better guarantee for their duration than the opinions of a generation, the interests of the time, or the life of an individual. A law may modify the social condition, which seems to be most fixed and determinate; and with the social condition everything else must change. The powers of society are more or less fugitive, like the years which we spend upon the earth; they succeed each other with rapidity, like the fleeting cares of life;

and no government has ever yet been founded upon an invariable disposition of the human heart, or upon an imperishable interest.

"As long as a religion is sustained by those feelings, propensities, and passions, which are found to occur under the same forms at all the different periods of history, it may defy the efforts of time, or at least it can only be destroyed by another religion. But when religion clings to the interests of the world, it becomes almost as fragile a thing as the powers of earth. It is the only one of them all which can hope for immortality; but if it be connected with ephemeral authority, it shares their fortunes, and may fall with those transient passions which supported them for a day. The alliance which religion contracts with political powers must needs be onerous to itself; since it does not require their assistance to live, and by giving them its assistance it may be exposed to decay.

"The danger which I have just pointed out always exists, but it is not always equally visible. In some ages governments seem to be imperishable, in others the existence of society appears to be more precarious than the life of man. Some constitutions plunge the citizens into a lethargic somnolence, and others rouse them to feverish excitement. When governments appear to be so strong, and laws so stable, men do not perceive the dangers which may accrue from a union of church and state. When governments dis-

play so much weakness, and laws so much inconstancy, the danger is self-evident, but it is no longer possible to avoid it; to be effectual, measures must be taken to discover its approach.

"In proportion as a nation assumes a democratic condition of society, and as communities display democratic propensities, it becomes more and more dangerous to connect religion with political institutions; for the time is coming when authority will be banded from hand to hand; when political theories will succeed each other, and when men, laws, and constitutions, will disappear, or be modified from day to day, and this not for a season only, but unceasingly. Agitation and mutability are inherent in the nature of democratic republics, just as stagnation and inertness are the law of absolute monarchies.

"If the Americans, who change the head of the government once in four years, who elect new legislators every two years, and renew the provincial officers every twelvemonth; if the Americans, who have abandoned the political world to the attempts of innovators, had not placed religion beyond their reach, where could it abide in the ebb and flow of human opinions? Where would that respect which belongs to it be paid, amidst the struggles of faction? and what would become of its immortality, in the midst of perpetual decay? The American clergy were the first to perceive this truth, and to act in conformity with it. They saw that they must renounce their religious

influence if they were to strive for political power; and they chose to give up the support of the state, rather than to share its vicissitudes.

"In America, religion is perhaps less powerful than it has been at certain periods in the history of certain peoples; but its influence is more lasting. It restricts itself to its own resources, but of those none can deprive it; its circle is limited to certain principles, but those principles are entirely its own, and under its undisputed control.

"On every side in Europe we hear voices complaining of the absence of religious faith, and inquiring the means of restoring to religion some remnant of its pristine authority. It seems to me that we must first attentively consider what ought to be *the natural state* of men with regard to religion at the present time; and when we know what we have to hope and to fear, we may discern the end to which our efforts ought to be directed.

"The two great dangers which threaten the existence of religions are schism and indifference. In ages of fervent devotion, men sometimes abandon their religion, but they only shake it off in order to adopt another. Their faith changes the objects to which it is directed, but it suffers no decline. The old religion then excites enthusiastic attachment or bitter enmity in either party; some leave it with anger, others cling to it with increased devotedness, and although persuasions differ, irreligion is unknown.

Such, however, is not the case when a religious belief is secretly undermined by doctrines which may be termed negative, since they deny the truth of our religion, without affirming that of any other. Prodigious revolutions then take place in the human mind, without the apparent co-operation of the passions of man, and almost without his knowledge. Men lose the objects of their fondest hopes, as if through forgetfulness. They are carried away by an imperceptible current which they have not the courage to stem; but which they follow with regret, since it bears them from a faith they love, to a scepticism that plunges them into despair.

" In ages which answer to this description, men desert their religious opinions from lukewarmness, rather than from dislike; they do not reject them, but the sentiments by which they were once fostered disappear. But if the unbeliever does not admit religion to be true, he still considers it useful. Regarding religious institutions in a human point of view, he acknowledges their influence upon manners and legislation. He admits that they may serve to make men live in peace with one another, and to prepare them gently for the hour of death. He regrets the faith which he has lost; and as he is deprived of a treasure which he has learned to estimate at its full value, he scruples to take it from those who still possess it.

" On the other hand, those who continue to believe

are not afraid openly to avow their faith. They look upon those who do not share their persuasions as more worthy of pity than opposition; and they are aware, that to acquire the esteem of the unbelieving, they are not obliged to follow their example. They are hostile to no one in the world; and as they do not consider the society in which they live as an arena in which religion is bound to face its thousand deadly foes, they love their contemporaries whilst they condemn their weaknesses and lament their errors.

"As those who do not believe conceal their incredulity, and as those who believe display their faith, public opinion pronounces itself in favour of religion; love, support, and honour are bestowed upon it, and it is only by searching the human soul that we can detect the wounds which it has received. The mass of mankind, who are never without the feeling of religion, do not perceive anything at variance with the established faith. The instinctive desire of a future life brings the crowd about the altar, and opens the hearts of men to the precepts and consolations of religion.

"But this picture is not applicable to us; for there are men amongst us who have ceased to believe in Christianity, without adopting any other religion; others, who are in the perplexities of doubt, and who already affect not to believe; and others, again, who are afraid to avow that Christian faith which they still cherish in secret.

" Amidst these lukewarm partisans and ardent antagonists, a small number of believers exists, who are ready to brave all obstacles, and to scorn all dangers, in defence of their faith. They have done violence to human weakness in order to rise superior to public opinion. Excited by the effort they have made, they scarcely know where to stop; and as they know that the first use which the French made of independence was to attack religion, they look upon their contemporaries with dread, and they recoil in alarm from the liberty which their fellow-citizens are seeking to obtain. As unbelief appears to them to be a novelty, they comprise all that is new in one indiscriminate animosity. They are at war with their age and country, and they look upon every opinion which is put forth there as the necessary enemy of the faith.

" Such is not the natural state of men with regard to religion at the present day; and some extraordinary or incidental cause must be at work in France, to prevent the human mind from following its original propensities, and to drive it beyond the limits at which it ought naturally to stop.

" I am intimately convinced that this extraordinary and incidental cause is *the close connexion of politics and religion.* The unbelievers of Europe attack the Christians as their political opponents, rather than as their religious adversaries. They hate the Christian religion as the opinion of a party, much more than as an error of unbelief; and they reject the clergy less

because they are the representatives of Divinity than because they are the allies of authority.

"In Europe, Christianity has been intimately united to the powers of the earth. Those powers are now in decay, and it is, as it were, buried under their ruins. The living body of religion has been bound down to the dead corpse of superannuated polity; cut but the bonds which restrain it, and that which is alive will rise once more. I know not what could restore the Christian church of Europe to the energy of its earlier days—that power belongs to God alone; but it may be the effect of human policy to leave the faith in the full exercise of the strength which it still retains."

These profound thoughts deserve something more than a hasty perusal from the reader. They will repay the best attention he can bestow upon them. It is in this manner that the doctrine of a despised sect is making its way to a place among the elaborate conclusions of philosophy, and the most sagacious maxims of cabinets. Even in such places it begins to be suspected that the severance of religion from politics is a change which, instead of being fatal to its existence, may be to it as life from the dead, and probably the only change that can hold out the prospect of its recovering, in many quarters, the power which has so manifestly departed from it. Its alliance with the state, which has been so common to it through the past, may not be consistent with the

destiny assigned to it in the future. The condition of society, which seemed to require that it should be taken under such guardianship, is fast giving place to another, which seems to say, no less distinctly, that the interval during which such guardianship might have been expedient is approaching its close, and that the history of religion in the time to come, is to be that of the self-sustained and the free.

Society is advancing rapidly beyond that state in which the community does nothing, and the government does everything. It is approaching every day more nearly toward the state in which the community governs through its rulers, much more than it is governed by them. But every step in this course, is an advance toward the point at which religion, in common with many things beside, naturally passes from the hands of cabinets and senates, to those of the people, and may be safely left to the care of the general intelligence and feeling. Among ourselves, this course of things is in visible and rapid progress; and in nothing more than in the manner and degree in which the forethought, cost, and supervision, that have respect to religion, are ceasing to be among the cares of statesmen, and becoming the work of the community. May a gracious Providence continue to direct this transition, that it may be brought to its completion naturally, constitutionally, safely, to the great good of our common Christianity, and of our common country!

Then, when religion shall cease to be an affair of politics, it may be expected that the ministers of religion will cease to be politicians, and not till then.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE SLOWNESS OF RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT, WITH ITS ANALOGIES IN NATURE AND PROVIDENCE.

That the change so earnestly desired by many, in the relations subsisting between politics and religion, will come, seems to be the prognostication of Providence, no less than of revelation. But there is little reason to suppose that so momentous a transition will be completed suddenly. It is on this point that not a few minds among us have betrayed the want of that more patient consideration, and of those larger views in relation to the progress of society, which are so necessary as means of regulating sound expectation on subjects of this nature. We have witnessed the signs of change, and we still witness them; but these indications have not been such at any moment as to warrant the kind of anticipation which appears to have been founded upon them. No man who has studied the past in our history, or looked broadly on

the present, has been much disappointed by recent movements in regard to our public affairs. Institutions which have survived the revolutions of a thousand winters may themselves change, and may pass utterly away; but, in general, it will be by slow degrees. Their fall at last may indeed be somewhat abrupt and violent, but it will be the effect of a long chain of causes predisposing matters to such an issue. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as great effects from little causes. There is always a certain adequateness between the producing and the produced, either visible or latent, near or remote. It was thus with the crusades, the reformation, and the French revolution. Peter the Hermit, Luther, Mirabeau, may have done much, but concurring circumstances did immeasurably more.

In this respect there is a beautiful and instructive analogy, between the history of the natural and moral world, and the history of revealed truth. Our impatience of delay, which is so natural an effect of our thoughtlessness, and of our other infirmities, is constantly rebuked by the great facts of the divine economy in nature, and providence, and religion. These are all different departments of the divine operation, but as they are all pervaded by the same mind, we expect to trace in them the movement of the same hand. It is, in this respect, as we might anticipate, we find that God is everywhere, and that he is everywhere the same God.

One of the most obvious characteristics in the divine manner of proceeding in relation to the natural world, consists in the complete absence of anything like precipitation or hurry. Every change has its steps, its stages, its progression. In this manner, we have reason to believe, the substance of this earth came into its state of fitness to become the abode of man. Change after change passed, in ceaseless, but slow succession upon it, until the last, which was to give to it the appointed maturity, came and was perfected. In those solitary processes, a thousand years was with the Creator as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

Since then, the seasons have never ceased to perform their quiet and measured course. The winter does not come at once, nor the summer; the spring and the autumn have their place between them, and these come almost imperceptibly, and so retire. Each season follows upon the path of its fellow, but all move considerately and slowly, and in a manner which no power of man can disturb. It is the same with day and night. How gentle is the falling of the darkness—how tranquil and stately is the progress of the light!

As it is with the earth, so is it with all its products, and its living things. In the vegetable kingdom, we see the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, all succeeding each other according to a law which is obeyed everywhere. In the animal kingdom, there is

the same budding of existence, followed by the same slow transit from the tenderness of youth toward the state of maturity. Seasons, indeed, may vary. Harvests may not be alike abundant. Living things may not see their full age. In all these respects there is contingency, as well as certainty—enough of certainty to make prominent the law of the divine procedure, and enough of contingency to admonish us of our dependence. There is slowness to demand patience, fluctuation to exercise faith, and certainty to give confidence to hope. Hence "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain."

In perfect agreement with these laws in the natural world, are the great facts in the moral world. Nearly six thousand years have passed since the world became the residence of man. But until within the last three or four centuries, the greater part of the earth was not even brought under the eye of discovery. It has required two thousand years to bring our own country from its state of barbarism, to its present condition of social improvement. It has required nearly six thousand years to bring the world generally into possession of its present measure of civilization. Some men profess to believe that the chief end of man was meant to consist in the enjoyments of civilized life. It is for such persons to explain how it has happened that so long an interval should have passed, and that men

should still have realized this supposed end of their being but so partially and imperfectly. Upon this theory, the Creator in the system of deism is fully as slow in conferring his benefits, as the Creator in the system of revelation. There is assuredly some progress made in this respect; but in the case both of separate nations, and of the species at large, how slow and how fluctuating has it been! The favourable has advanced only by little and little; the adverse has frequently broken in upon its path; and if events which seemed the most unpropitious have been found at last among the means of progress, a series of ages has often been required to bring these secrets of Providence to light.

The history of revealed truth, is strictly in accordance, in these respects, with the history of everything good in connexion with humanity. The announcement of a special economy, as the theme of a special revelation, was coeval with the fall of man. But how limited were the discoveries concerning the remedial purposes of the Most High in the early ages of the world! The space from Adam to Moses was more extended, by nearly seven centuries, than the space between the Advent and our own time. But in what a state of pupilage, with regard to religious knowledge, were even good men kept through all that period. Some fifteen centuries again passed between the age of Moses and that of the Apostles. During this period also, we see the greater part of men employed

in turning the truth of God into a lie. The rude institutes of the patriarchal times, are succeeded by the age of Solomon and all his glory. But the world is still overspread with religious darkness, and the church, a feeble remnant at best, affords, for the most part, small evidence of enlightenment.

After so long a delay, we might have expected that the coming of Christ would be followed by an immediate and universal diffusion of his religion. But how different was its history. It is true it did make its way through the provinces of the Roman empire, and, at length, to the palaces and thrones of the Cæsars. But how partial was its saving influence even over the nations which professed to adopt it; and how soon was it corrupted, so as to be little preferable to the paganism which it had superseded.

When the Reformation came, it was natural that men should say—The time, the set time to favour Zion has come! But after about a century of conflict, we see the one-half of Europe giving its preference to the new faith, the other half continuing its adherence to the old; and from that age to the present, there has been little change in the relative posture of the two great parties. Superstition, indeed, has lost much ground within the last century, but it has not been, as I fear, from the progress of protestantism, so much as from the force of the new power—infidelity.

We know not the purposes that are to be subserved by this method of proceeding. Important results,

such as the Divine Mind alone can fully comprehend, are, no doubt, involved in processes so vast, so protracted, and so costly. The work of grace is sometimes compared to a building, and the inspired writers anticipate its completion as the perfecting of the great work of deity. In proportion to the extent, and weight, and meditated duration of a building, are the care and labour bestowed on its foundation. For aught we know, this long trial of truth in the world, may consist of little more than laying the foundation upon which that great spiritual structure is to rise which Jehovah will perfect in his time. For aught we know, the space before the coming of Christ was meant to demonstrate, by means of fact—by way of extended experiment, in addition to the testimony of Holy Writ, that it is not in the power of a fallen creature's intellect, if left to itself, to discover truth at all adequate to the exigency of its condition. For anything we know, also, men have been permitted, since revelation has been perfected, to reject its evidence, and to corrupt its substance, that by means of fact, and by extended experiment here also, it might be made plain, that it is not in the power of a fallen creature's heart, if left to itself, to make a saving use of revelation, even when it is set forth—and set forth, attested in a manner that ought to be convincing, and as consisting of truths that ought to be felt as wonderfully adapted to our capabilities and wants. It is reasonable to suppose, that there are conclusions to come forth

from these mysterious facts, which will minister a hallowed influence to other worlds, and to created being through eternity. The dependence of a fallen creature's intellect on the teaching of a Divine Revelation, for finding its way back to truth; and the dependence of a fallen creature's heart on grace from the same source, for finding its way back to goodness, may be taught by these awful experiments so much more clearly and memorably; and these lessons themselves, may be of so much importance in relation to the purposes of the Eternal, that it may be expedient and wise, that this end should be accomplished even by means of such cost and magnitude. Of this we may be assured, if our world is ever to become religious, the foundation of its piety must be laid in a deep conviction and feeling of the two great truths which the history of the divine dispensations has served, in this manner, to bring before us in a form so certain and impressive.

But whatever of uncertainty there may be in the above speculation, it is plain that there is much in the providence of God to reprove the impatience with which we often seek to realize our schemes of social and religious improvement. The character of society is not to be changed by a single effort, nor in a single age. Nor are churches to be purified by any such summary method. Old countries, like old men, unlearn their early prepossessions very reluctantly. In regard to institutions, habits, and usages,

it is commonly the work of ages to displace, what it has been the work of ages to mould and establish. Great changes of this nature, always demand much time, and much effort. The causes which produce them are sure to be many and weighty, though some may be much more immediate and conspicuous than others. In such cases, what is done suddenly, is seldom done permanently. On the contrary, premature change may be generally accounted as service done to the power which it has been meant to subvert. At such times, the flowing waters have been dammed up, in place of being drained off into new channels; and have been repressed to-day, only to break out with greater force to-morrow. In short, every new order of things which is not made to rest upon national character, must be brought in by violence, and must be perpetuated by the same means. It is worse than useless to attempt the placing of new public institutions in the room of the old, without a corresponding change in public feeling and opinion. The nation in which such a scheme should succeed must necessarily be divided into two classes—the oppressors and the oppressed. Institutions, we know, may be better than the people who have the working of them, and they may be worse; but if both are to exist long together, there must be a real and a strong affinity between them. It is not grateful to the sanguine to be reminded of truths of this nature; but they are not the less deserving of consideration on that account. We

must improve human character, if we would improve human society. Men never become possessed of good institutions, except as they rise in a good measure toward the level of deserving them.

But this method of seeking human improvement is obscure, laborious, and slow. The much more agreeable mode of proceeding is to regard institutions as carrying a sort of magic power along with them, and to conclude that if these standards may once be set up, the work will be done. To be thus employed, is to labour as upon the house-top, and to revel amidst the scenes of an immediate, though an imaginary triumph. It is not pleasing to regard ourselves as humble links in an extended chain of operations. It would be much more gratifying to do some great thing at once and completely, than to be lost, after this manner, in a crowd or series of agencies, each being as nothing, compared with the great and slowly-moving process in which the whole are required to be engaged. We enter into the labours of others, but we are anxious to bring our own to some conclusion; and our eagerness to succeed, and our discontent under failure, we ascribe without hesitation to feelings altogether praiseworthy. It does not occur to us to inquire, how much of this feeling may have resulted from undue notions of self-importance, and other equally questionable influences. If our object is distinction among men, such impediments will disturb us greatly. If our aim is to stand approved of God, they will affect

us comparatively little. God is constantly teaching men that those who serve him must be humble; that they must learn to distinguish between their own self-will, and the will of their Maker; and that they must often be content to seem to labour in vain, and to be forgotten, in doing his pleasure.

These observations are applicable to the spirit and circumstances of the controversy between churchmen and dissenters in this country. Our national institutions have been subject to modification and change, and some of them to extinction; but they have always taken their new aspect as they took the old one—by degrees; and the gradual manner in which they came into being, is the manner in which such of them as have disappeared have ceased to be. This course of things has followed naturally from the fact, that improvement in the character of our people, has always been the precursor, and the main cause of improvement in our polity. The cause, in this case, could not be stimulated beyond a certain rate of movement, and the effect has moved only in the same proportion. At present, attachment to the church of England is an element of our national character, affecting a large proportion of our people, and existing in marked alliance with the rank and opulence of the realm. But a feeling alien from the claims of that church, and more or less allied with religious institutions of another description, has come to be an element of our national character no less obvious, and

hardly less powerful. To put an end to the church of England, or to put an end to protestant dissent, in such a state of opinion and feeling, is not possible, except by means that would raise one of these parties to the place of absolute master over the other, and be subversive of all liberty. In either case, the feeling and strength of the party which might seem to be losing ground, would prompt them to revolt against the power above them; and that power, to keep its ascendancy, would of necessity become a tyranny.

Matters of such import are not to be decided by bare majorities. In regard to such questions, the principle of adjustment is the only principle of social equity. That the church of England, with not more than half the population professing adherence to her, should continue to make her demands upon the whole, as though the whole were still included in her communion, is in every view preposterous. But that the half of the community who are dissenters, should call upon the other half, with all its preponderance of rank and wealth, to forego, on the ground of that fact, the principle of an established church in every form, is, in my humble judgment, hardly less unreasonable. In such a state of things, an endowed church should know how to adapt her pretensions to her circumstances. But, on both sides, a large measure of concession and forbearance must be considered due, so long as the balance, from opposite views and impressions, shall be so nearly equal.

It may seem a tedious thing to be obliged to wait until a much greater number of churchmen become converts to dissenting principles before we expect to see any great change in our ecclesiastical affairs. But I must confess that this course appears to me to be the only natural and safe one; and a course in which we should, as Christians, be content to labour, though in so doing we may have to bequeath the work unfinished to our children. The churchman, on the other hand, will find himself shut up, often no doubt very much to his annoyance, to the same slow and patient manner of proceeding. The time has come, in which no man can fail to perceive that the principle of an established church is not more rooted among us than is the principle of dissent. The latter principle, indeed, may be said to be much stronger than the former, inasmuch as it harmonizes with the probabilities of the future, while the former rests for the most part on the usages of the past. Hence, while it may be well to caution the abettors of ecclesiastical reformation against indulging expectations which will probably end in disappointment, there is no want of encouragement to abound in effort with a view to improvement. We see the changes in favour of our principles which are passing rapidly over the face of the world and of the church. God is manifestly doing his own work after his own manner. Our vocation is, at once to labour and to wait. In the present aspect of our affairs there is much to check

presumption, but there is also much to give buoyancy to hope. Reason and religion should alike dispose us to submit our own will, as to the times and seasons, to the indications of the will of the Omniscient. In what manner we may best employ ourselves with this view, at the present juncture, will be the subject of inquiry in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PRACTICE OF ENGLISH CONGREGATIONALISTS.

THERE is a large class of persons in this country who regard every form of popular power with misgiving. It is to be expected that such parties will look with little favour on congregationalism. To minds of this order our principles appear to be precisely that thing in the church, which they would above all things deprecate in the state. In the judgment of these students of human nature, every community, viewed at large, is a species of monster, constantly needing the curb, and never to be trusted. We assure them that our churches are not constituted of persons taken indiscriminately from society, but of such as become

Christians; and that the equality of our brotherhood is of a nature to leave ample space for the influence of rank and wealth, and especially for the influence of eminence in intelligence and moral worth. But it is of little avail, in such cases, that we thus explain our principles, and endeavour to guard them against misconstruction. Our churches are still accounted as a sort of rude commonwealth. Objection, in consequence, is still made, arising in many instances from nothing better than worldly vanity or pride; in others, from the force of prejudice in favour of what is ancient; or from an impression that everything with which the people in general have somewhat to do, must necessarily work disorderly, vulgarly, badly.

Very much of this kind of objection is, no doubt, insincere. It may not often appear in that light, even to those who indulge in it, and still it may be of that character. We have frequently seen, that episcopalians who could dwell on such topics with much emphasis, while remaining within the pale of the established church, have no sooner withdrawn from that communion, than it has been found that the lowest democracy in dissent has not been low enough for them. The history of the sect known by the name of the Plymouth Brethren, supplies some instructive matter in this shape. So far, it seems, are those genteel church-going people from objecting now to an ecclesiastical government in the hands of a Christian brotherhood, that they have set up the government of

the brethren to the exclusion of any government by a pastorate, or a ministry. Independency, in place of being too popular in its forms of administration, has not proved to be popular enough, and the humblest and the highest take their place in this new communion, according to the law of a more rigid equality than has ever been known among us. But there is some shrewdness in this policy. Fanaticism is never clear-sighted enough to be wise, but its eyes are always sufficiently open to be cunning. The dislike to congregationalism in this case, it seems, was not so much because it was not true, as because it was not fashionable. It has appeared proper to these parties to withdraw from the established church, but in the hope of avoiding the obscurity or reproach of taking their place with any existing body of dissenters, they have run even the principles of independency to seed. The object intended by this course of proceeding, has been in some sense realized. These persons have ceased to be churchmen, and they have managed to escape the humiliation of being lost in the crowd of dissenters. They have assumed a new religious profession; but, on the whole, they lose nothing in the way of social reputation by the change. Their old friends will bear with them, so long as they assail the principles of dissent as well as the established church; and so long as their labours tend to damage our cause by exhibiting it in caricature. Men too often bring into the church the passions that were natural to

them in the world. Hence the vanity of the religionist is too often little else than the vanity of the worldling under another name.

Still, a large portion of the education, wealth, and station of the country is not in alliance either with the political views before mentioned, or with these idle excesses of the Plymouth brotherhood. In the esteem of this better class, the popular power in England has been the great means by which our liberties have been realized, matured, and perpetuated. But even upon these persons, to whom our principles should have commended themselves strongly, we have made little comparative impression. Such men are often as little dissenters as any class of their opponents. We assist them in the furtherance of their public principles, and they assist us in the preservation of our religious liberties, but only so far do we act together. Many of those parties have an interest, direct or indirect, in the property of the established church. But that circumstance is by no means sufficient wholly to explain the fact adverted to. Something there must be, either in our system, or in our mode of administering it, not a little repugnant to the tastes and usages which obtain in the educated and higher classes of society, or the public principles of many such persons would be found disposing them to sympathize with the spirit of our polity much more frequently.

One cause of this state of things, so far as it is affected by the character of dissenting ministers, may,

no doubt, be found in our pride, acted upon as it has been by the pride of the higher classes. It is not more in the nature of violence to produce violence, than of pride to provoke pride. Let this passion be offensively evinced by one party, and it will soon become no less observable in the party against which it is directed, and the positions of both will be taken accordingly. The gradations of society in this old and wealthy country are very nicely marked. Each class values itself not a little on the things which are considered as giving to it the precise position which it holds. But intelligence, virtue, and piety, do not conform themselves to this ascending scale. Not a few who fill a comparatively humble place in social life, are fully capable of analysing the pretensions of those above them, so as to discover that they often rest on very frivolous matters. Strong natural sense, which is bestowed on men without respect of persons, is quite equal to the conducting of a process of this nature, and thus of producing a powerful reaction of pride against pride. Scorn is not an easy thing to bear in any circumstances, but it is particularly irritating when it comes from people without any real capacity or culture, and simply because accident has placed them in certain connexions, and given them familiarity with certain trivial mannerisms which obtain in such connexions. This description does not, of course, apply universally to the classes intended; but it does apply to them very largely, and, in ge-

neral, in a special manner to the persons who make themselves conspicuous by their contempt of all religious professions beside their own.

But let the real or imaginary refinements, upon which these people so highly value themselves, be as frivolous as they may, it is the business of the Christian, and especially of the Christian minister, to endeavour to reclaim men from their follies, and not to confirm them in them. We may know how to look on the small tastes, the small doings, and the small talk of those persons, so as to smile, as we perceive that even adult people can account themselves so great on the ground of things which are really so little. But this is not the only connexion in which we have to bear with human weakness. The poor have their infirmities in common with the rich. Ignorance has its conceits, no less than this conventional kind of knowledge. It is not more our duty to study, in order to conciliate the minds of men, in the lower classes, than in the higher. We applaud the missionary who becomes himself half a barbarian, that he might win the barbarous; but why should this principle of action be deemed applicable to the scale which descends to the barbarous, and not to that which ascends to the civilized? Is it harder to rise to the tastes of the man of refinement, than to go down to the tastes of the man of the woods? Is it not in the power of circumstances to make the one line of conduct as much our duty as the other?

In regard to what is not in itself sinful, we should always be ready to conform in lesser things for the sake of the greater. No matter how insignificant these things may appear to be, our estimate of them should be according to the nature of the great things to which they may be preliminary and subservient. Whatever may be necessary to usefulness in respect to a large portion of society, should have its place in the list of our indispensable acquisitions. It is an easy matter to despise such persons on account of the undue importance which they attach to the things in which they excel; but so long as we thus do, we must lay our account with being despised in return. Nor should we forget that we are no more at liberty, in such cases, to return scorn for scorn, than to return railing for railing. We are not allowed to separate ourselves from all sympathy with such people, because they have separated themselves from all sympathy with us. That would be to return evil for evil, in place of overcoming evil with good. Let the want of just views in the upper classes concerning the nature of religion, be as great as we suppose it to be; and let the conceit of superior knowledge on that subject, be, at the same time, as prevalent as we suppose it to be, —in these facts we only find so much strong reason why we should endeavour to obtain a hearing in such quarters, and be concerned to be employed in doing what we may toward the softening of prejudice by means of better instruction.

But we have men among us, I fear, who never thought of making the slightest effort toward qualifying themselves for usefulness in such connexions; men who even make a boast of the repugnance of their manners to all such association. Such persons have their reward. The sin, in their case, is with deliberation, and the penalty is certain. We see in the history of this form of selfishness, that, in the progress of life, every man makes his own society, and finds his own place. The laws of society are reciprocal; and if we know not how to consult the tastes of other men, we must not expect that attention will be paid to our own. Natural ability may do much, but it is the will of Providence that we should find as much to be depending on manner as on mind, the former being much more within every man's power than the latter. An agreeable presence and address, are a more certain passport to general society, than profound learning, or unusual talent.

Nor is proficiency in this respect so superficial a thing as some men suppose. Nature may do a good deal toward it; but in the case of those who excel, art and study have done more. It is true that it has respect almost exclusively to little things, but these little things are in constant occurrence, and demand a constant attention. In time, indeed, art in this respect will become as nature; but only as the effect of study, effort, and habit. Young men cannot be too seriously admonished, that in human life the small

things are always as wheels to the great. It is not many of our ministers, I trust, who need this kind of caution. It would have been well for the social position of congregationalism if it had never been needed.

Everything now said with respect to the importance of personal demeanour in the intercourse of society, must apply eminently to the pulpit. It has been permitted to me, during some years past, to commend evangelical truth to many persons whose station in society, or whose position in connexion with science and literature, would have been regarded by religious people as likely to have given them a strong repugnance to such truth. But the result of my experience is, a conviction that the exception which would be taken to our ministry by such classes, if they could be brought generally into connexion with it, would not be to the matter of our preaching, so much as to the manner of it.

In this connexion, however, I use the term "manner" in its largest sense — as embracing the whole method of presenting instruction, and not merely the exterior mode of address, or the style of expression. Religious truth and religious duty, as commended to the higher class of minds, require to be set forth with discrimination; and, to obviate difficulty, must be made to rest, as far as may be, on the ground of our own consciousness, in common with the word of God. But this requires knowledge, study, and self-culture.

To dogmatize in the endless iteration of certain texts, and certain common-places, is much more easy. For such a manner of teaching, the most untaught are often found to be fully competent. But it is not possible that these signs of the absence of culture should fail of being at once perceived by a cultivated mind. In such case, it is not unnatural that we should ascribe the neglect of our instructions to a feeling of enmity against the truth. It would be very humiliating to suppose that it has resulted from the low estimate which such persons have been obliged to form concerning our own pretensions as expounders of the truth. The unholiness natural to fallen men, is necessarily repugnant to the holiness natural to revealed truth; but it may well be suspected that we often impute to the depravity of our hearers, effects which are more fairly attributable to our own feebleness and faults. We know that the conversion of the soul is the work of the Spirit of God. It is not to be realized by the genius or labour of man. But God works by means; and, in general, by means which partake of a visible adaptation to their end; and it is the law of his kingdom in this respect, that as men sow so they shall reap. Men of disciplined habits of thought, may descend, in their manner of inculcating truth, to the capacity of the humblest; but men devoid of those habits, can never place themselves in a position to secure the confidence of those who possess them. Knowledge may adapt itself to the state of

ignorance, but the uncultivated can never become as guides to men of understanding. It is true there are many things of which a preacher may be ignorant without loss; but he must be capable of handling his own subject, with the precision, compass, and freedom of a workman not needing to be ashamed, if he does not mean to be put to shame.

These observations relate strictly to the manner or form in which the doctrines and duties of the gospel should be presented, considered simply as the matter of our teaching. Our effort should be to exhibit them clearly, and fully, and separately from everything that does not properly belong to them; and to place them in such connexion with evidence and reason, as may cause them to carry with them the force of the reasonable. In this manner men of capacity and education will think on such subjects, and in this manner they will expect us to preach concerning them.

But more than this will be demanded. The best mode of exhibiting a topic, considered purely in its substance, belongs exclusively to the intellect. Language and utterance belong more to the province of taste; in which the simple and rigid conclusions of the understanding are often variously modified by more flexible influences. But in regard both to language and to mode of address, the demand made upon us by the educated is a reasonable one. It is, simply, that we should be natural. It is that we should

be careful to speak to them in terms which they can understand, in place of suffering our meaning to lie concealed beneath a multitude of unintelligible phrases; and that our utterance should be that of men who speak, and not that of men who sing. Nearly all our popular preachers are in a good degree exempt from fault in these respects. But this is more than can be said in respect to many of our brethren; and, in almost every instance, the degree in which they have failed as preachers, is the degree in which they have been wanting in the command of a natural language and of a natural manner.

Without going the length of a distinguished Essayist, who would not seem to leave to theology any sort of nomenclature, it ought not assuredly to be supposed that the citation of a text, or the use of a phrase, will be deemed sufficient to solve a problem in morals, or to separate a great theological truth from difficulty. Our appeal is ever to the Bible; but the lessons set forth there admit of being explained in ordinary speech. Men of taste require no more of us than that our language, when we discourse to them upon religion, may be such as we should use in addressing them on any other subject; the Scriptures being appealed to, and appealed to largely, as a text-book, and as our final authority. The objection is not to the use of a scriptural phraseology, but to such a use of it as serves to form the habit of uttering words without meaning; and to prevent the explanation of

the meaning intended, even when there is a meaning,—to the great loss of those who seek religious instruction, and who have no wish to be bewildered with terms and expressions which to them are all of doubtful import. It is the effect of education to simplify our tastes. We may begin our processes in mental improvement with some tendency to depart from nature, but we end in returning to it. It is the sign of some maturity in piety, as well as in taste, when we are willing to be divorced both from the cabalistic and the tawdry in religion. We greatly mistake if we suppose that either of these things can avail us when addressing minds of unusual discernment.

With regard to the effect of a good natural elocution, we have many examples of men who fill some of the most respectable positions in our ministry, mainly by means of a felicity which belongs to them in that respect. Neither their capacity nor their acquirements are at all above mediocrity. They are men of piety, and men of character; but it is the fact that they possess an agreeable presence, and a natural manner of expressing themselves, that has enabled them to make a good use of their limited resources, so that they succeed—succeed eminently. The sermons which are listened to with much interest from the lips of such preachers, would be attended by a feeling of painful weariness as heard from some men, who would not only set them to a sort of tune, but to a tune which must necessarily operate as a

species of torture, from its being made up of false time, small compass, and bad melody.

With regard to all these faults—faults respecting the mode of presenting the substance of our teaching, the language in which we present it, and the elocution we bring to our office, our friends the evangelical clergy, if I mistake not, are much more deficient than dissenting ministers. But these defects all have place among ourselves, and to an extent which considerably affects the character of our ministry, and greatly limits our usefulness. It must be permitted me, therefore, strongly to repeat—that the demand made upon us by minds of education is simply that we should be natural. The objection of such persons is not always to the truth we preach, but often in a much greater degree to our want of care and judgment in the mode of placing it before them. Their complaint is not that we address them on scriptural subjects in the language of scripture, but that we do not take care to make ourselves well understood by addressing them also in their own language. The demand in such quarters is not that we should be men of great genius or great learning, but that we should be men of a grave and natural demeanour and utterance in our intercourse with society, and that we should take that same unartificial manner with us into the pulpit.

In the above observations I suppose it to be distinctly understood that no discipline in regard either

to mind or manner will be of any avail in the absence of a real piety. Without deep sympathy with the spiritual designs of the gospel, the gifts of nature and the results of study will take the form of so much mere worldly artifice. What we need is, that the wisdom which is careful to adapt the means to the end, may be laid under contribution in a spirit which may harmonize with the nature of revealed truth—in a spirit of humility, dependence, and fervent devotion. We should be above all things men of God; but we should be concerned, as such, to be found wise in our generation—wise to win souls.

In respect to the classes of persons adverted to in the preceding remarks, we are perhaps more at fault in matters of church discipline, than in our preaching. It is an essential principle of independency, that each church is responsible for the purity of its own communion. The church at Corinth, was addressed by Paul as being thus responsible in the matter of the "wicked person." The seven churches of Asia, are addressed by our Lord in language which cannot be otherwise understood. But the New Testament, while so plain in its instructions on this point, leaves the whole question, concerning the mode or form of proceeding in regard to the admission of candidates for communion, without any specific provision. That the church should have some ground on which to believe that the persons desirous of being admitted to membership with it are pious persons is manifest;

but it is left to the great law of Christian benevolence and sympathy to suggest, that the manner in which such knowledge may be obtained, so as to expose the feeling of the candidate to the least possible cost, is that which should in each case be adopted.

Widely different from this strictly Christian method of proceeding has been the practice of too many professed independents. The one fixed species of ordeal, to which our churches, or more frequently perhaps our deacons, have been disposed to subject all persons desirous of uniting with us, has operated in not a few connexions as though devised by some special foe to our body, for the purpose of letting all the ignorance and coarseness of society into our churches, and precluding all its intelligence and delicacy from them. In some cases it has been the rule that all candidates for church-fellowship, whether male or female, should make their appearance before the church, for the purpose of stating the ground on which they hope that they are Christians, being liable, at the same time, to answer any interrogations which the brotherhood at large might be disposed to put to them, for the purpose of eliciting the required information. In some churches, the parties are required to communicate statements to the same effect in writing; and in others, the deacons erect themselves into a necessary tribunal for the examination of such cases.

But concerning each of these methods of proceeding, if made to be indispensable, I do not scruple to speak

as so much invention on the part of independents, and as no part of independency rightly understood. Men, in their inconsiderateness, or in their wish to indulge in some of the petty forms of authority, may give to such practices the fixedness and importance of law; but when conformity to expedients of this nature is made to be imperative, I do not merely say of them that they are no part of the law of Christ, I must condemn them as contrary to that law. The church is empowered by that law to preserve her purity of fellowship, but it is at the same time enjoined, that the church should employ herself in relation to this object, in common with every other, in the spirit of candour, forbearance, meekness, and affection,—regulating her course in regard to the admission of members to her privileges, by the principle of avoiding, in the case of persons desirous of such admission, all unnecessary pain or difficulty. Even the practice of requiring candidates to make their appearance at the church-meeting at the time when their names are approved, though very seemly and good in itself, I would rather be understood to recommend than enforce.

In no connexion are our feelings more sensitive, or more unlike, than in relation to this subject. The sort of public recognition of our Christian profession which usually takes place at such times, may be most grateful to some minds, and most painful to others: and the feeling of piety and of Christian affection may

be fully as strong in the latter case as in the former. In such matters we should be slow to arraign motives. Not unfrequently, the feeling of difficulty in reference to our usages in this respect, which I have heard imputed to the worst motives, I have known to proceed from the best. We have no right to insist that our own feelings should be, in this manner, as a law to the feelings of other people, so as to conclude that persons are necessarily to blame, if a course of proceeding which is pleasing to us, happens to be painful to them. Our larger churches have generally a sufficient number of wise men in them to discountenance these petty assumptions, and to prevent the mischief to which they would lead. But many of our people have still to learn, in this respect, how to walk in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. We should not do anything to confound the distinction between the church and the world. But we sin against Christ, against his church, and against humanity, when we presume to set up our own devices in the manner of laws, so as to cause minds to remain as though in the world, which might otherwise be among the visible ornaments of the church. While resolved not to open the doors of the church to the worldly, we should be careful that we do not close them against Christians. If the timid and susceptible, and persons with the peculiar feelings often induced by education and station, are to find their place among us more

frequently, it must be in part as the effect of a wiser and more Christian-like adjustment of our practice in this respect to the feeling of society.

Is there not also much room for improvement, as regards our custom of restricting the ministerial and pastoral offices in our large churches so commonly to one person? If it be not true, as alleged by some, that in the primitive times no church was deemed properly constituted without a plurality of pastors, it is a remarkable fact, that the usage of that age in this respect, so far as we have been made incidentally acquainted with it, is found to be uniformly of that order. Of course, it does not follow because these precedents all happen to look one way, that they were designed to constitute a law. Had that been intended, the law would have been declared. Were we more fully informed concerning the customs of those times, we should possibly become acquainted with facts which would shew that though a plurality of ministers, for the purposes of ruling and teaching, was very common in the churches of that age, the general practice on this point was not invariable. But while this possibility should suffice, in the absence of more direct instruction, to prevent our insisting that the practice which obtained in some churches, was meant to be as a law to all, the existence of such a practice in all the churches whose usage in this respect has become known to us, is a remarkable fact, and enough

to justify suspicion as to the wisdom of our own prevalent usage.

In general, we restrict the oversight of our churches to one man; and whatever variety of gifts may belong to our pastors, we have one fixed system of duties to which they must be alike conformed. Is not this against nature? Can it be reasonably expected that it should work well? Picture to your mind a respectable dissenting church, capable of securing the services of one of our most able ministers. It has such a minister. He is expected to preach three times every week, from year to year, and from one seven years to another, on the same general subject, before the same people, and always more or less with a new force and freshness of matter and illustration. He is not only the one preacher, he is the one pastor, and is expected to know his people, to visit them—all of them, however numerous his charge, rich and poor, in sickness and in health. In proportion as such a man is capable of preaching effectually at home, are the calls made upon him to preach from home; in proportion as he is capable of giving a wise impulse to the efforts of his own people in the cause of religion, education, and charity, is the claim made upon him to give portions of his time and thought in aid of the same objects as prosecuted in other forms, or upon a larger scale, elsewhere. The more his charge is found to exceed his utmost power of oversight, the

more loud are the calls of the public, if he will listen to them, that would divert his attention from it. Of such a man it is further expected that he should be a scholar; that his habits should be such as to enable him to retain his acquisitions, and to keep his mind generally up to the level of the intelligence around him. If need be, he will be expected to shew that he can make use of his acquisitions in the way of authorship, and in a manner not to be discreditable to the educated who recognise him as their teacher. In the train of all this, comes the domestic character of this minister. He is a husband and a father; he has duties of a social, moral, and religious character to discharge toward his own household. He must owe no man anything. His house must be the home of the orderly, the creditable, the Christian-like. The contrary of this would be felt as a disgrace and a calamity.

Now, I am not aware that there is anything exaggerated in this representation. No man, perhaps, on having all these points distinctly put to him, would be prepared deliberately to say, that it is reasonable to expect all this from any pastor. But the working of our system, is such as to cause many a pastor to feel, that service to something like this amount, is in effect regarded as incumbent upon him. If wanting in respect to any of these things, he has those about him who will be observant, and complain. He finds that his efficiency as a preacher, is not allowed to make amends for his defects as a pastor; and he well

knows that his assiduity as a pastor, would not be found to compensate for his ineffectiveness as a public teacher. He is left at liberty to serve the public, but he knows that his so doing must not be pleaded in excuse of any neglect in regard to supposed duty toward his church, his congregation, or his household. He may cultivate the habits of a student, and may shew skill in using the press in the cause of religion and humanity; but these things, peculiar as they may be in a great measure to himself, must not be thought of as a reason for his not doing every other thing just in the manner in which every one else does it.

In this manner do we insist that our pastors shall be good at everything, as though for the purpose of preventing their being excellent in anything. The gifts bestowed upon them by the Head of the Church differ greatly from each other. But our custom is, to do what in us lies toward making each man the exact counterpart of his fellows, by rigidly prescribing the same round of service to them all, and by taking care to require that so much shall be done, as to leave to no man the possibility of doing anything well. It ought not to require any elaborate reasoning to satisfy us that this course of proceeding is most unnatural, and that the loss and mischief of it must be very great. The disposition of one man is toward reading and meditation; while that of another is toward action, and an immediate agency in public affairs. One is distinguished by an aptness to teach; another by the

power to rule well, or to speak the word in season to him that is weary. Why should this perpetual diversity in the gifts of God, be counted by our system as nothing; or rather, why should our system be so administered, as to seem to say that this variety of endowment is an evil to be repressed, and not a good to be used in the exercise of a Christian wisdom? Our manner is, to tell such men that it matters not what their particular aptitudes may be; if they take their place among us, they must be content to become the same men of all-work with their brethren. Many bow their neck to this yoke very reluctantly. Some are strong enough to evade it. But resistance, in the present state of things, is attended with much that is painful, in common with submission.

In what manner may we hope to see reform in this particular brought about, without bringing other evils along with it? In our smaller churches, where the support of more than one minister is impracticable, much might be done, if the people generally could be taught to be more considerate in their demands on the time of a minister, in all those cases in which there is reason to believe that it is well employed when left at his disposal. The more intelligent part of the congregation might do much to promote such consideration among the less reflecting, by uniformly putting their discountenance on that form of religious selfishness, which knows not how to submit to loss, even in the shape of attention from a minister, for the

public good. It is too much to expect that the comparatively untaught and unthinking will become wise of themselves in such matters; and there is often a feeling of delicacy, which prevents a minister from saying all that he might say on a point relating to his personal feelings; but men of sense and character always have their influence over the less intelligent about them, and they should employ that influence in the protection of a minister who is endeavouring to serve God after his own manner, and who, in so doing, is manifestly serving him with his best.

In churches which are capable of supporting more than one minister, the great remedy would seem to be a co-pastor, or an assistant minister. Every one knows that the prejudice against this expedient is very strong amongst congregationalists. Sometimes this repugnance rests mainly with the people, sometimes with the minister. In the case of ministers and people, the apprehension seems to be that favouritism and discord would probably result from such an arrangement. But if we do not possess sufficient wisdom and self-government to provide against such evils, it is indeed time we should beseech the Head of the Church to bestow upon us the improvement necessary to that end. Instances may no doubt be adduced, in which such conjoint authority or labour has not been found to work harmoniously; but in other instances the result has been in every way pleasing; and my deep conviction is, that in order to

its being generally successful, nothing more is needed than that some of our leading churches should resolve to adopt it, and to make it succeed. To speak of one man as being the pastor of a church including four, six, or eight hundred members, and of a congregation making much more than double that number of persons, is assuredly preposterous. The pastoral duty of such a minister must necessarily be left in much, very much the greater part, undone; and be devolved, if performed in any shape, on a number of deacons, who thus become co-pastors in every respect except that they may not be preachers. In such a case, how much more effectually might a popular preacher be aided by an assistant minister of judicious pastoral habits. Surely there are many good men who might be highly useful in this latter form, who are not competent to sustain an interest as preachers if left to rest wholly upon their ability in that capacity. In many cases, how much of advantage might result to the students in our colleges, if they were encouraged to pass the first year or two after leaving their studies, in the discharge of the limited duties of assistant minister with some experienced pastor, and in connexion with some well ordered church. Many of our young ministers feel greatly the want of some transition connexion of this kind; and we may be sure that those among them who feel their need of it the least, need it the most. It is not necessary that such arrangements should be made otherwise than from

year to year, and they might surely be so made in other respects, as to prove highly advantageous both to the youth and age of our ministry, as well as to our churches.

My own charge is not of such an extent as to make it strictly necessary, on that account, that I should myself act upon this counsel which I thus venture to give to others, nor is there anything in my years or state of health to impose such an obligation upon me. But I have been at some pains to prevail on my people to make an experiment of this kind; it having been my practice for now three times seven years to live a good deal in defiance of our system in this respect, attending carefully to the sick and afflicted of my flock, and to others as I have had opportunity, but apportioning my time to duties according to my conscience, and according to such aptitude as God may have given me to serve him in some ways more than in others.

We see, at this moment, some of our best men, not only drooping, but coming prematurely to the end of their course, from the manifest want of such lightening of the burden which has pressed upon them as might have been realized by some arrangement of the nature which I now take upon me to press on the attention of my brethren, and on the attention of the churches. Nor is this all: the system which compels even our best men to be so constantly engaged in public services, and to so great an extent in the discharge of comparatively petty duties, dooms even *their* mind to

a much lower state of culture than is expedient, and causes them to leave the world without bequeathing to the literature of our churches and of our common country those works of erudition, genius, and piety, which might serve to give to the eminent spirits of our own time no unhonoured place with the great fathers of nonconformity. My fear is, that the chief impediments in the way of improvement in this respect are jealousy and selfishness:—jealousy, on the part of ministers, who allow themselves to be disturbed with the idea of possible ministerial rivalry; and selfishness, on the part of our churches, who are bent on securing as much personal benefit as possible from a favourite minister. Bear with me in this plain speaking—it is the language of an earnest affection, and not of unkindness. My mind cannot escape from the conviction that we greatly need reform in this respect; and I am constrained, accordingly, to urge it, and to pray for it.

If there has ever been a period in which this better husbandry of the higher order of ability among us has been important, that period is the present. Romanism is availing itself of the press in a degree unprecedented since the age of the Reformation. Oxford, and the church of England, have become imbued, to an alarming extent, with the worst principles and tendencies of the papal system. Be it remembered, too, that the controversy which is thus forced upon us, in place of being the superficial, or purely absurd thing, which many persons consider it to be, is one having its root

in all science and in all learning. Judging from present appearances, it is not from episcopalians that any effectual resistance to those corrupt forms of Christianity can be expected; and if the conflict on the side of genuine protestantism should be found to devolve mainly upon congregationalists and presbyterians, are we in a condition to sustain such responsibilities? My impression is, that our confidence on this point should be small, until the improved notions among our churches, in regard to the education proper to our ministers, shall have become much more improved; and until we shall have become ashamed of the usage which obliges our best men to be so much men of action as to be almost strangers to meditative labour, and to devote so much of their time to the discharge of a multitude of ordinary duties, as to be of necessity only very partially competent to the more weighty duties that may devolve upon them.

May I venture to touch on one other topic, even more tender, perhaps, than the former—viz., the discountenance often shewn by our ministers to meditated attempts with a view to increase the number of our chapels in towns, where, in the judgment of nearly all persons except themselves, the extent of the population has been such as to render efforts of that kind highly expedient. Through deference to feelings of this nature, some of our large cities have been almost lost to independency, the ground, upon which we have not deemed it proper to enter, being

soon taken possession of by the established church, or by other sects. Time has thus been made to shew, that the objections which have been allowed to paralyse our purposes, in such instances, were as wanting in policy as in magnanimity. We know that one interest having strength, is better than two without strength. But it must not be supposed that fault in this shape is obviated by a saying of that sort. As a denomination, we must improve in this respect, if we do not mean to suffer from such deficiency in the future, even more than we have suffered from it in the past.

But concerned as we are that our unendowed Christianity should be found in alliance with everything which may contribute to its social reputation and power, it must be plain that the great vocation of congregationalism in these kingdoms, is at present, and is likely long to be, to the mass of the people. We need that our best talent should be employed more than it has been in the way most natural to it. But we need also that our general talent should be more cultivated, with a view to adaptation to the precise complexion of mind with which we have to deal in the middle, but especially in the lower or working classes of society. We must not expect to fill our proper place, in connexion with general society, without learning, and the usual accompaniments of learning; but as little must we expect to produce a salutary impression on the humbler classes of the community,

without studying to understand the special influences to which their minds are exposed, and care to adapt our matter and mode of instruction to the nature of those influences.

The popular mind to which methodism addressed itself, a century ago, is no longer the popular mind of England. The preaching which produced such effects then, was adapted to those times, but would be greatly wanting in adaptation to our own. It commended itself to a people who believed that they were sent into the world to be obedient—obedient to their betters, obedient to the laws, and to Christianity, in some sort, as being a part of those laws. But the modern preacher has another kind of world about him. He has to begin, unhappily, so far as it respects great numbers, at the beginning, by making plain the credibility of the gospel; and if successful on that point, he has to work his way toward his ultimate object, amidst the questionings of minds which know little of submission to authority in any form, and which are rather tutored to pride themselves in a spirit of opposition, to almost everything which happens to be received and established. Speaking generally, these men have little of the submission, and as little of the dullness which belonged to the same class a century since.

It should never be forgotten that the Christian preacher is not now the only preacher. The press has become the rival of the pulpit. Every class has

its literature; every factory loft has become a species of reading room; and the lower we descend in our analysis of the literary products of the age, the more stimulating and deleterious do we find them. The man of the pulpit, who is not deeply alive to the force of this antagonism of the press, is not fit for his vocation. Can a preacher hope to minister effectually to minds thus diseased without some closeness of study, in order to understand a malady in its nature so peculiar, so complex, so deeply seated, and fed so constantly from so many sources? The impassioned appeals of early methodism, and the formal essay of the parish minister, would be alike without effect on such minds. Nor is the preaching of evangelical divines, whether in the established church or among ourselves, so wisely adjusted to this end as it might be. The great requisite is, under God, that we should know our subject well—the evidence and reason of it; that, as the effect of our familiarity with it, we should be capable of making it plain, and of giving it force; and of doing this in such language as men of education may approve, and which no man may fail to understand.

Of course our general ministry must not be allowed to lose its suitableness to our usual auditory, for the sake of the classes alluded to; but it is, at the same time, important that the truth should be often so presented as to obviate the objections of such minds, and that our own people should be made familiar with

the best mode of meeting such difficulties, though they may never have occurred as difficulties to their own mind. The design of pulpit instruction is to fit men for enjoyment, by fitting them for usefulness. Perhaps one of the best modes in which our pastors might endeavour to benefit the working classes, would be to obtain the loan of some public building, not appropriated strictly to religious meetings, for the purpose of delivering short courses of lectures especially to those classes.

THE END.

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