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Abbott, James.

A history of the Romish and
English hierarchies

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A HISTORY
OF THE
ROMAN & ENGLISH HIERARCHIES,
&c. &c.

A HISTORY

OF THE

ROMAN AND ENGLISH HIERARCHIES;

WITH

AN EXAMINATION

OF THE

ASSUMPTIONS, ABUSES, AND INTOLERANCE

OF

EPISCOPACY;

PROVING THE

Necessity of a Reformed English Church.



BY JAMES ABBOTT, A.B.

(LATE FELLOW-COMMONER)

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

“ Persecution for diversity of opinions, however ridiculous and absurd they may be, is contrary to every principle of sound policy and civil freedom. The names and subordination of the clergy, the posture of devotion, the materials and colour of the ministers' garment, the joining in a known or unknown form of prayer, and other matters of the same kind, must be left to the option of every man's private judgment.”—BLACKSTONE.

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TO HER MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

QUEEN ADELAIDE,

ROYAL CONSORT TO HIS MAJESTY WILLIAM THE FOURTH,
KING OF ENGLAND, &c. &c. &c.

MADAM,

WHEN I contemplate and admire Christianity, in its genuine simplicity and power, unconnected with fanaticism and corruption, and compare it with the cool and formal religion of the present day, professed by the great and noble of the earth, I cannot but anticipate the assurance, with which sages and prophets have consoled us—that these times shall have an end, that a new order of things shall arise, and that the blessings of the Gospel shall, ere long, call forth the

mighty and powerful to the sacred and lofty measures of adoration and praise; when the prediction of the Prophet Isaiah, that “Kings shall be nursing fathers, and Queens nursing mothers” to the true Church of God, shall be fulfilled; and the gladtidings of the Gospel of Christ shall be heard throughout the land.—With this glorious prospect before me, I present to your Majesty this Book, believing that your Majesty estimates things, not by the factitious claims of rank and wealth, but by the standard of reason and rectitude. I feel assured that TRUTH desires nothing more than a fair, impartial hearing; and believe that no one is more likely to procure this for her than your Majesty, whom all your subjects allow to be familiar with her in her retirement.

May the name of Queen Adelaide adorn the page of history, not only with those social

virtues which are eminently your Majesty's, but also with those Christian virtues which will live when crowns and sceptres shall cease; and which are the pledges of a kingdom that will never end—a throne incorruptible and effulgent! That this may be your Majesty's inheritance, is the sincere prayer of,

Madam,

Your Majesty's

Faithful and loyal Subject,

JAMES ABBOTT.

REFORMED ENGLISH CHURCH,
Cannon-street Road,
St. George's, East.

September 14th, 1831.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN submitting to the public the following pages, which are designed to trace out and expose the various abuses and usurpations which exist in the Established Church of England, it will be expected that I should give some account of the origin of an undertaking which some may regard as rash, profitless, or absurd. That the efforts of a private individual to redress public grievances must be limited in their more immediate effect, I am well aware; and also, that such endeavours incur the risk of misrepresented motives, personal suffering, and angry reprobation. But it is impossible, as is observed by Dr. Johnson, to determine the limits of inquiry, or to foresee the consequences which discovery may produce. It is, indeed, evident, that public attention, in the first instance, must be roused to general activity by individual exertion, however fatal or inconvenient it may be to him by whom it is first made. I pretend not, however, to have discovered any thing before radically unknown, but to disclose facts which accident or the artifice of those who are implicated may have concealed from the public view, and to deduce such inferences as would suggest themselves to an ordinary and unbiassed judgment.

As a portion of my personal history is connected with the present undertaking, I must present the reader with a brief sketch of the events in which it originated.

I was educated in the principles and faith of the Established Church, and designed to be numbered amongst her clergy. But, from my earliest acquaintance with her mode of government, I considered it to be incompatible with the precepts of the gospel, and subversive of that religious liberty which, as Christians, we ought to profess. I have continued in her communion, however, and endeavoured to enter her ministry, being actuated by the desire of a union between myself and her members, which I regarded as the best means of aiding an intended effort to produce a reform of her manifold corruptions and abuses. During the last fifteen years, I have perceived that a very material alteration in her government was demanded by common sense and common honesty ; and thence I have been endeavouring to qualify myself for the execution of the present undertaking.

To me, titles, dignities, and riches have never appeared as the chief good, or even as essentially constituent of the happiness of the life of man. I have considered them, when weighed with honesty and a good conscience, as dust in the balance. The influence which I also observed them to exercise upon clerical conduct, and the spirit of domination and insolence which their possession generated in prelatival characters, convinced me that their ex-

istence in any church must be a source of certain and positive evil. Hence I have conceived that all honour is disgraceful, and all profit vile, which are the result of mean compliances with corrupt systems ; and that obsequious submissions to corrupt and despotical men is a base desertion of the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My general sentiments on the state and corruptions of the church were published in 1821 ; but as they met with much opposition from the clergy, I was induced to withdraw them from public notice till a more favourable period should arrive. At this time, I came into possession of a Chapel at Davington, in Kent. I repaired the dilapidated edifice, and preached in it for twelve months, to large and respectable audiences. But the fact of my not being episcopally ordained, as well as the large congregations which attended, excited the jealousy of the neighbouring clergy and the Archbishop of Canterbury. I was therefore induced to discontinue preaching, and to enter the University of Cambridge, preparatory to receiving episcopal ordination. I subsequently, in a letter addressed to an eminent American Divine, disclosed my intention of attempting a reform in the government of the Episcopal Church. After the lapse of several years, spent in the requisite studies, and having received the necessary testimonials from the College to which I belonged, I applied, in 1830, to the Bishop of Norwich, for the rite of ordination. Strange to say, however, he brought into the field against me

the secretary of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, and who had been my opponent, in 1821, for my resistance, during the late Queen's trial, to the tyranny of his former patron, Dr. Sutton. The fact of my having preached without episcopal ordination had been recorded by that prelate, a caution was issued against my being admitted into the church, and the Bishop thence refused me admission into holy orders. This, after much inquiry and correspondence with the Bishop of Norwich, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and their secretaries, I discovered to be the cause of my application being rejected. Several letters having passed between me and Dr. Howley on this subject, in which his Grace was dark and mysterious, I was resolved to close the subject, and for this purpose I wrote the following letter to the Archbishop.

*Brayndale House, Norwich,
Sept. 17, 1830.*

MY LORD,

After all the explanation I have given to your Grace, relative to my connexion with Davington, ten years ago, and after having taken my degree at Cambridge, I beg simply to know if I am to be precluded from episcopal ordination? It may be proper, here, to pause.

It is not for my own sake that I wish your Grace to consider the responsibility of your situation. But I do request your Grace to beware, lest you indulge any emotion of resentment. If I am refused ordination, or treated contemptuously by

your Grace, my case will be delivered to the world, and will not be able to be recalled. The conspiracy against an innocent man cannot alter facts, nor refute arguments ; and I pray that your Grace will not furnish me with materials against yourself. It has been well said, that an honest man, like the true religion, appeals to the understanding, or modestly confides in the internal evidence of his conscience. The impostor employs force instead of argument—imposes silence where he cannot convince. I will only add, Ὁμιμα δ᾿ἄκνης καθορᾶ πάντα τὰ γιγνόμενα.

I am, my Lord,

Your Grace's obedient, faithful Servant,

JAMES ABBOTT.

P.S. I must again beg the favour of your Grace to forward me the five original documents in your Grace's possession. J. A.

To the most Reverend
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

The following is his Grace's letter, in return :—

Dorer, Oct. 20th, 1830.

SIR,

In answer to your question respecting ordination, I have only to say, that whenever I shall be referred to by any bishop, it will be my duty to inform him of the circumstances which occasioned a caution to be issued by the late Archbishop.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient, humble Servant,

W. CANTUAR.

To JAMES ABBOTT, Esq.
Bracondale House, Norfolk.

On receiving this letter from his Grace, I committed the whole of the correspondence, which consisted of forty-three letters, to press ; and the following November, having occasion to visit London, I called on Dr. Howley. His Grace received me courteously, but answered me with extreme caution ; indeed, after using my best endeavours, for upwards of half an hour, to obtain some satisfaction, I could obtain no other reply than—" I have no wish to interfere against you, Mr. Abbott. I must attend to my official duties. If a bishop apply to me, I must inform him, that there appears in the books of my predecessor a caution to the bishops, not to ordain you without reference to him. I can say no more."—I delicately pointed out to his Grace the absurdity of such a subterfuge, and the impossibility of applying to a dead man ; and begged to know, if an archbishop had nothing more than his official duty to perform, and if he thought my conduct, in any one instance, deserved the treatment I received ? " I can make you no other reply than I have done, Mr. Abbott," said his Grace. Finding it useless to altercate, I left the Archbishop, who absolutely refused to look at my printed documents against his predecessor, the Bishop of Norwich, and his clergy.

There was so much in this interview repugnant to my principles, that I resolved never to seek episcopal ordination out of the diocese of Norwich. A liberal mind must reprobate the conduct of Dr. Howley, who would evade every argument, and

prevent all discussion and inquiry, that might tend to clear and justify me in opposing the spirit of intolerance and the persecution of his predecessor, and also a bishop who ought long before to have been superannuated. Let it be remembered, that it is the duty of a bishop to endeavour to reclaim, rather than to punish. The scourge and the inquisition ought never to supply the place of justice or of argument. Archbishop Sutton chose the former, without using one effort towards effecting the latter. His Grace never hinted to me an objection to my assisting in the duties of Davington; but, like a despot of the dark and tyrannical ages of the ancient decemviri, or the later Roman emperors, breathing revenge for performing what in my conscience I considered a duty, he issued an edict which was calculated to blast my character and reputation, and which led me into difficulties and embarrassments from which I am but just extricated; and which his successor, with the mildness and complacency of a Nerva, renewed.* Thus a second

* Tillemont, discussing the antiquity of Christian churches, informs us that none were erected till the peace of Alexander Severus;† and Mr. Moyle says, not till the peace of Gallienus.‡ Till this period, we find the Christians held their assemblies in private houses and sequestered places. And though Christ and his apostles were allowed to preach in the Jewish synagogue,

† *Memoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. iii, part 2, pp. 68—72.

‡ Vol. i. pp. 378—398.

persecution was commenced, after the revolution of ten years, by another Christian bishop, who unblushingly tells us he derives his claims of office from Jesus Christ, though he tyrannizes over a mind he cannot subdue.

I must confess that, during my correspondence with the bishops, I felt more for their character, than interest for episcopal ordination, for I never thought this essential to the usefulness of a minister of Christ. Indeed, I have always considered it to be a scriptural doctrine, that the work of preaching is not so peculiarly confined to ordained ministers, but that others also, gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit, and called by the providence of God, may publicly, ordinarily, and regularly perform it. “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”* If a man’s liberty and sentiments be from God, he

such is the vast and mighty stride of intellectual greatness in Christian morals, that a man who presumes to follow the example of his Divine Master and the humble fishermen of Galilee, by expounding the Scripture, even amidst the ruins of a monastery or convent, not under episcopal jurisdiction, is persecuted, not by a Jewish or pagan magistrate, but by conciliatory, charitable, and Christian—(or should I not rather say, by arrogant, courtly, and inexorable?) prelates.

* 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

has a divine right to make them known to others.* However, to satisfy myself fully upon the inconsistency of the conduct of the hierarchy of the church, the same month I drew up, and sent the annexed letter to the King :—

To the King's most excellent Majesty.

SIRE,

I, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subject, Bachelor of Arts, of Queen's College, Cambridge, and resident of Bracondale House, in the County of Norwich, in accordance with your Majesty's paternal regard for the rights and immunities of every individual subject in your Majesty's dominions, approach your Majesty, with esteem and filial affection, to lay before your Majesty my grievances, and the flagrant motives and infractions of duty with which bishops and archbishops sometimes discharge their functions.

The question, Sire, is one in which the religious liberties of your Majesty's faithful subjects are deeply involved ; and should my case invoke the generous sentiments and sympathy of your Majesty, or be instrumental in obtaining emancipation from arbitrary power, that patriotic spirit of independence, which can appreciate the liberties of my

* In 1562, an Act was passed, entitled " For Reformation of Disorders in the Ministers of the Church," (13 Eliz. cap. 12,) in which the Parliament admits of ordination by presbyters, without a bishop.

fellow-countrymen, would not shrink from the purchase, though I were to fall the victim to episcopal tyranny.

In 1821, I came into possession of part of a conventual chapel called Davington church, in Kent. This chapel had been built partly under the same roof with a priory, founded by Faulk, A.D. 1153, for twenty-four French nuns,* to whom, among other lands, he gave the manor of Davington, for their support and maintenance.† Their whole income amounted to no more than 2*l.* 13*s.* 10*d.* In the reign of Edward III. the poverty of the prioress and nuns was so great, and though the members were reduced to sixteen, they were obliged to present a petition to the king, representing their incapability of meeting his dues.‡ The priory afterwards became so insignificant, that, in the reign of Henry VIII., there was neither prioress nor nuns in it, so that it became escheated to the crown.§

The manor, Sire, was afterwards sold, with all its buildings, and has for centuries been in possession of laymen. || In 1625, Richard Milles was permitted to preach in the chapel, by the king's letters patent.¶ In 1700, the estate fell, for a short period, into the hands of a clergyman, named

* Tan. Mon. p. 215.

† Somn. Cant. p. 133.

‡ Southouse Mon. p. 147. § Jacob's Hist. of Fav. p. 114.

|| Rym. Fœd. vol. xviii. p. 647.

¶ Rot. Esch. ejus. an. pt. 5., also Hastead, pages 130, 661.

Sherwin, who occasionally performed service in the remaining part of the chapel.* Religious duties have since been permitted, at the will and pleasure of the owner of the estate, as may be seen from a register kept by the late impropiators; to which, in 1822, I affixed my signature as clerk, curate, and incumbent.† The chapel has never been subject to the control or jurisdiction of any Protestant bishop, archdeacon, or other ordinary.‡

For seven years previous to my possession of this chapel, no service had been performed in it. The building was hastening rapidly to ruins, and was used as a workshop, and for the timber and

* Philpot, p. 180.

† It is the disposition of some men to confine the sense of a word by their own narrow views, to suit their bigoted notions, and to answer their interested purpose. It may therefore be necessary, from a remark lately made to me, relative to these signatures, to direct the attention of those high churchmen, who so bountifully exercise that “charity which thinketh no evil,” to Todd’s Johnson, for the definition of these terms. If such charitable gentlemen choose the authority of a lawyer in preference to a lexicographer, they may turn to “Blackstone’s Commentaries,” for the term clerk—vol. i. b. i. chap. 11. They will there find that the term is not confined to a minister or teacher in orders, as their limited minds conceive. The terms were used in strict adaptation to their true import, and in conformity to my character, as lessee of the property, and as assistant minister or curate to the impropiator, to whom the freehold of the chapel belonged.

‡ Hasted and Ect. Thes.

materials of the farm, to which the remaining part of the priory is now appropriated.

I, your Majesty's dutiful subject, called on the late Archbishop (Sutton), and informed him of my intention to restore the building for divine service; and I left the palace, with the impression that I should be ordained by his Grace.

I expended several hundred pounds in repairing this church; but, unhappily, about this time I unintentionally offended his Grace, and the neighbouring clergy, by successfully advocating the cause of the persecuted Queen Caroline. Party spirit grew high, and I was peremptorily refused ordination, on the ground (as the Archbishop said) of the building's not being within the pale of the Establishment. I made my case known to the Bishop of Norwich, who also refused to ordain me on Davington.

Having spent my property on this building, and finding, in Eusebius Pamphilius, that the primitive bishops—Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctystus, Bishop of Cæsarea—commended Origen for preaching and expounding in the church, before he was ordained to the ministry;* and as it was a natural conclusion of the mind of your Majesty's faithful petitioner, as well as a position of infallible truth, that where there is no law there is no transgres-

* Euseb. b. vi. c. 19.

sion, I immediately took the oaths of allegiance, as a clerk or teacher, required by the "Toleration Act," to qualify myself legally to assist in the religious duties of this place. I read parts of Rogers's "Lectures on the Church Liturgy," every Sunday evening, for a year, to the most crowded and respectable auditories ever before or since witnessed in that neighbourhood; but, unfortunately, to the great envy and annoyance of the surrounding clergy. This induced me to desist, and to write to the Archbishop, stating, that I was aware how extremely easy it was for men to mistake my motives and to misrepresent my design; that I felt sorry to give any occasion to let my good be evil spoken of; and as I had desisted from taking any part of the duties, and intended to obtain a degree at Cambridge, I begged to know if, with my degree and episcopal ordination, I could re-attend Davington church, without incurring his Grace's displeasure. The copy of this letter, and his Grace's answer, with several honourable testimonials of high respectability, given me on leaving Kent, are now in my possession.

I beg further humbly to state to your Majesty, that on the receipt of this letter I immediately sold my interest in the church, but, unfortunately, to an unprincipled clergyman, from whom I never obtained a shilling. The loss of this property obliged me to withdraw my name from the boards of my College. I was soon after, in 1824, re-

spectably introduced to his Grace the Archbishop of York, under whose eye I lived till 1827, when his Grace recommended me to return to Cambridge to complete my Terms, and condescended to write me the following letter, dated Feb. 13:—

“ SIR,

“ On receiving from you the intelligence of your having taken your degree at Cambridge, I shall have great pleasure in endeavouring to obtain for you a nomination to a curacy in this diocese.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient humble servant,

“ E. EBOR.

“ To JAMES ABBOTT, Esq.

“ Sneaton Hall.”

I, your Majesty's petitioner, was received back to my old college, and the Head Tutor (Mr. King), to whom the whole affair of my former connexion with Davington was known, in a letter, dated February 13th, 1827, to Colonel Wilson, late Member for York, writes—“ I think it but just to Mr. Abbott to observe, that his conduct in college, during 1822 and 1823, was highly proper and decorous; and that I always considered the conduct of his enemies, in pursuing him and hunting him down, as harsh and uncalled for.”

I obtained my degree last year, and have sent to

the Bishop of Norwich my college testimonials, with all papers required of candidates for holy orders. Without troubling your Majesty with a detail of circumstances, as vexatious as unjust, which I have experienced; it is with unfeigned sorrow that necessity obliges me to inform your Majesty that the late Archbishop, ten years ago, sent to the several bishops, without informing me, cautioning them not to ordain me without reference to himself. This reference is now impossible, his Grace being dead. The Bishop of Norwich states, that he cannot ordain me unless the present Archbishop of his diocese removes this caution or caveat, which his Grace does not appear willing to do, without the authority of your Majesty.

I, therefore, earnestly invoke your Majesty, as head of the church, and father of your people, graciously to consider my prayer, to remove this hindrance to my obtaining episcopal ordination; in order that your Majesty's Royal prerogative may secure to me the privileges and rights of a denizen and of a British graduate.

Sire,

I have the honour, with dutiful respect,
to subscribe myself,

Your Majesty's

Obedient, faithful, and loyal Petitioner,

JAMES ABBOTT.

Bracondale House, Norwich,
November 27th, 1830.

The following is Lord Melbourne's reply :—

“ *Whitehall, 29th December, 1830.*

“ SIR,

“ I am directed by Lord Melbourne to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th instant, and to inform you that his Lordship cannot advise the King to give any command for controlling the judgment of a bishop on the subject of ordination to holy orders.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient humble Servant,

“ S. M. PHILLIPS.

“ JAMES ABBOTT, ESQ.

“ Bracondale House, Norwich.”

Before I make any remark on this letter, I will give the substance of the Act of Supremacy, with a few quotations from Judge Blackstone :—

26 HENRY VIII. CAP. 1.

“ Albeit, the king's Majesty justly and rightly is, and ought to be, supreme head of the Church of England, and is so recognised by the clergy of this realm ; yet, nevertheless, for conformation and corroboration thereof, and increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, &c. be it enacted by the authority of this present parliament, that the King, our Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed, *the only supreme head, on*

earth, of the Church of England, and shall have and enjoy annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm, as well as the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, immunities, profits, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the said church belonging and appertaining; and that our Sovereign Lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, contempts, and enormities whatsoever they be, which, by any manner of spiritual authority or jurisdiction, ought or may be lawfully reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, and increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the convention of peace, unity, and tranquillity of this realm, any usage, custom, foreign law, foreign authority, presumption, or any thing or things to the contrary notwithstanding."*

Now, what am I to understand by this Act? That the king is not *supreme head of the Church of*

* Though papists repudiate the oath of supremacy, as inconsistent with their allegiance to the pope, every loyal protestant may conscientiously take it, with the explication, that no more is intended than that his Majesty, under God, has the sovereignty and rule over all persons born in his dominions, either ecclesiastical or temporal, so as no foreign power has, or ought to have, any superiority over them. In this sense, and no other, I willingly take it.

England; that he has not *power and authority to visit, repress, and redress errors*; that it is not his duty to *order, correct, restrain, and amend all abuses, contempts, and enormities whatsoever*? It would seem that this is Lord Melbourne's view of it.— Let us see what opinion Judge Blackstone entertains on this matter:—

“The king is,” he says, “considered by the laws of England, as the head and supreme governor of the national church. To enter into the reasons upon which this prerogative is founded, is matter rather of divinity than of law. I shall, therefore, only observe, that, by statute 26 Hen. VIII. c. 1. it is enacted, that the king shall be reputed the only supreme head, on earth, of the Church of England, and shall have annexed to the imperial crown of this realm, as well as the title and style thereof, as all jurisdictions, authorities, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the church appertaining. And another statute of the same purport was made, 1 Eliz. c. 1.

“In virtue of this authority, the king convenes, prorogues, restrains, regulates, and dissolves all ecclesiastical synods or convocations.

“From this prerogative also, of being head of the church, arises the king's right of nomination to vacant bishoprics, and certain other ecclesiastical preferments.

“As head of the church, the king is likewise the DERNIER RESORT in all ecclesiastical causes; an

appeal lying ultimately to him in Chancery from the sentence of every ecclesiastical judge.”*

What will Lord Melbourne say to this ?

Let us further see what the learned lawyer says on the duty of a king :—

“The principal duty of a king,” says the judge, “is to govern his people according to law. *Nec regibus infinita aut libera potestas*, was the constitution of our German ancestors on the continent.† And this is not only consonant to the principles of nature, of liberty, of reason, and of society; but has always been esteemed an express part of the common law of England.

“The king of England must rule his people according to the decrees of the laws thereof. But, to obviate all doubts and difficulties concerning this matter, it is expressly declared by statute 12 and 13 Wil. III. c. 2. ‘that the laws of England are the birthright of the people thereof; and all the kings and queens, who shall ascend the throne of this realm, ought to administer the government of the same according to the said laws; and all their officers and ministers [mark this, Lord Melbourne,] ought to serve them respectively, according to the same: and therefore all the laws and statutes of this realm, for securing the established religion, and *the rights and liberties of the people thereof*, and all other laws and statutes of the same now in force, are ratified and confirmed accordingly.”

* Blackstone, vol. i. b. i. c. 7. † Tac. de mor. Germ. c. 7.

A question asked of the king by the bishop, in administering the coronation oath, is—"Will you, to your power, cause law and justice, in mercy, to be executed in all your judgments?" The king answers—"I will; so help me, God."*

Again, Blackstone tells us—"Justice is not derived from the king, as from his *free gift*; but he is the steward of the public, to dispense it to whom it is *due*. He is not the spring, but the reservoir, from whence right and equity are conducted, by a thousand channels, to every individual. The original power of judicature by the fundamental principles of society, is lodged in the society at large; but as it would be impracticable to render complete justice to every individual by the people in their collective capacity, therefore every nation has committed that power to certain select magistrates, who, with more ease and expedition, can hear and determine complaints: and in England, this authority has immemorially been exercised by the king, or his substitutes."†

I now ask any man of common sense, who is not wholly destitute of a feeling of respect for the laws of his country, if the responsible situation of Secretary of State ought to be filled by a man so indifferent to his duty, or ignorant of those laws and institutions which justice demands him to execute and observe, as Lord Melbourne has shewn him-

* Blackstone, vol. i. b. i. c. 6.

† Blackstone, vol. i. b. i. c. 7.

self to be in his conduct towards me? How am I to reconcile the treatment I have experienced with the principles of candour and rectitude? I sent a petition for Lord Melbourne, as Secretary of State, to present to his Majesty. It is required of his Lordship, as a servant of the King and people, to execute with fidelity the duties of his office. My request was for a legal right; it was to remove a grievance, and to reform an abuse, which could not be effected in any other way, without entering into a ruinous Court of Chancery.

Lord Melbourne, I have reason to believe, did not present my petition to his Majesty; nor did he condescend to answer me, till after a month had elapsed, when I sent him a second letter on the subject. To this the note above given, dated Whitehall, is his Lordship's reply.

Justice, liberty, and happiness, are the charters of God and nature, which no mortal, however elevated by conquest or inheritance, can annul or violate without impiety. Every king, and every minister, therefore, who will not advance the national right of every individual subject to their control, is a despot.

“Not even the high-anointed hand of Heaven
Can authorize oppression, give a law
For lawless power, wed faith to violation,
On reason build misrule, or justly bind
Allegiance to injustice.”

I now leave Lord Melbourne, and his character, to my readers.* I consider the affair as closed, and shall give myself no further trouble in a matter so indifferent to the interests of the Church of Christ. So far, I have done what I considered to be my duty, and feel relieved from the shackles in which I have been long held. It appears to be the will of God that I should no longer be ensnared, with a vain desire to submit to the government of the Church of England, till her discipline shall be amended by the legislature, or be united and bound to an authority founded in popery and spiritual slavery; but that I should at once come forward as the advocate of spiritual emancipation, freed from the spirit of temporizing, which so powerfully possessed many of the bishops in the reign of Edward VI., that after having complied with the impositions of

* Since writing the above, I find that a petition has been sent to the King, by Mr. Arnold, a speculator in theatrical property, on the right of the patent theatres; which the Lord Chancellor of England deemed to be of sufficient importance to demand more than ordinary consideration. It appeared also to his Majesty, that genius and taste, intellectual improvement, and, above all, morality, might be benefited or injured by the result of the inquiry. His Majesty was, therefore, graciously pleased to permit the discussion to be carried on in public, to the end that more satisfaction might be afforded to all who had an interest in the question. This fact, of a private individual petitioning the King, in support of the stage, is of too glaring a nature to need comment!

Henry VIII., they were desirous of bringing others under the same yoke, and of keeping up an alliance with the Church of Rome, lest they should lose the uninterrupted succession of their office from the apostles.

Having lately had some leisure hours, I resolved to examine, more minutely than I had hitherto done, the ground on which the authority of bishops rested. I felt that whatever might be urged by them, in support of their dogmas and usurpation, it was certain that the great and eternal laws of truth and justice could not be violated with impunity. The violation may answer some sordid and temporary purpose, but in the end it must prove injurious, if not fatal, to those who are guilty of it.

In the prosecution of my object, I have examined Eusebius, Socrates, Evigarius, and the writings of several of the Fathers and reformers of the Church. I have also consulted Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, Strype's Annals, Neal's Puritans, Pierce's Vindication, Burnett's History of the Reformation, Clarendon's History, Fuller's Worthies, Mosheim and Collyer's Ecclesiastical Histories, Clark and Fox's Martyrs, Rapin, Hume, Gibbon, and Blackstone's Commentaries; as well as Le Clerk, Usher, Selden, and Robinson, and others of less note. From various books I have taken whatever subjects suited my purpose, and from the above-mentioned writers I have frequently borrowed with advantage. Whenever I have found their

sentiments express my own ideas more clearly than my ability could represent them, I have made use of their language in preference to my own. Indeed, the reader may look upon the work as a compilation from others, rather than as a new work emanating from me.

I have first endeavoured to prove the origin and gradual advance of papal tyranny in England ; and then shewn that in the early ages of the Christian Church, there were only bishops or presbyters, and deacons ; that bishops and presbyters, in the primitive Church, were synonymous, or of one degree ; that there were many bishops in one town ; that no bishop's authority extended beyond one city ; that the bishops could ordain no minister, without the consent of the presbyters and Church ; that they could confirm no children, but in their own parish ; that they possessed but one living each, and served the cure ; and that they dealt in no civil government by any established authority.* I have also shewn the unscriptural power of English bishops, that they have no authority on which to establish their power in the Church ; and that archdeacons, deans, and other officials are antichristian dignitaries. I have given the history of fast days, and the history of tithes, with a comparative view of the wealth consumed by the clergy. I have shewn the innovations made on Chris-

* See Collyer's Church History, p. 543.

tian doctrines and discipline, and that the Church has no right, founded on the authority of Christ, or his apostles, to impose rites or ceremonies on the conscience of any man ; and that the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England are the remnants of popery and the filaments of antichrist. I have closed, with a scheme for the reduction of episcopacy, and the plan for a reformed Church. In doing this, I have followed the dictates of my own judgment and conscience. The principle of duty is the highest law in the soul, and he who invades this freedom in man, aims the deadliest blow at his honour and happiness.

My anxious desire is, to use my humble endeavours to promote the cause of Christ, and to defend, to the best of my ability, the simplicity of that gospel, which He himself came to establish. With this view, I have assembled a church in London, called the REFORMED ENGLISH CHURCH, and intend, with the assistance of Divine Providence, to support the pure doctrines of Christ.

I am fully aware that my conduct will give offence to those who are possessed of power and patronage ; but I am ready to bear patiently the proud man's contumely, and the censure of the sycophant, whose preferment depends on the prostitution of knowledge and conscience. During the short period of my sojourn with my fellow-creatures, I will continue, by the Divine assistance, to strike at the bonds of slavish despotism, without paying court

to any individual or party. My efforts may appear trifling and inconsiderable to the eye of clerical pride ; but be it remembered, that if what appears little be despised, nothing great can be obtained. All that is great was at first little, and rose to its present bulk by gradual accessions and accumulated labours.

With these remarks, I leave the following pages to my reader. Having been drawn up amidst my family and professional duties, as a tutor, I do not presume that they will obtain the approbation of all who may peruse them ; for, to conclude in the words of Dr. Johnson, he that has much to do, will do something wrong, and of that wrong must suffer the consequences. If it were possible that he should always act rightly, yet, when such numbers are to judge of his conduct, the bad will censure and obstruct him by malevolence ; and the good, sometimes, by mistake.

HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH HIERARCHY,
&c.

CHAP. I.

THE ORIGIN AND GRADUAL ADVANCE OF PAPAL TYRANNY
IN ENGLAND.

IT will be admitted, that all power, superiority, and distinction in society, must be derived, either from the positive institutions of God, or from the mutual agreement of men; whoever, therefore, exercises any authority over others, their goods, or possessions, must support his pretension by such proof as the nature of the claim requires; and such proof should be examined with the utmost jealousy, when the claims have reference to the spiritual and eternal happiness of mankind.

It is a severe circumstance which attends those who oppose received opinions, that they must not only contend against popular prejudices and notions long cherished, and against the interests and passions of great numbers of artful and combining men, but also against the weight and force of public authority. The labouring oar, too,

will always lie upon them. They must disprove what has no proof to support it, and bring argument upon argument, to maintain propositions which are really self-evident. A bare idea of the possibility that they may be mistaken, will be deemed equal to a full conviction that they are so ; and sometimes the clearest demonstration of their case, will be called only carnal and human reasoning, not to be used about spiritual things. Even when the irrefragable strength of their reasoning forces consent, they will have no thanks for their pains ; but will be often esteemed officious and factious, and be said to disturb points already settled, if, by chance, they should escape the censure of promoting the cause of infidelity.

However, be the consequences what they may, the claims in the popish and popishly-affected clergy are so enormous, the consequences of them so fatal to real Christianity, and the arguments pretended to be brought from reason and authority for their support, so weak and contemptible, the whole design and current of the gospel being directly against them, that I shall do my utmost totally to demolish the tottering building of anti-christ, and also to shew, that it has no foundation in common sense, or in the scriptures of divine truth.

It has been justly observed by Blackstone, that religious principles, which, when genuine and pure, have an evident tendency to make their professors better citizens, as well as better men, have, when

become perverted and erroneous, been usually subversive of civil government, and been made both the cloak and the instrument of every pernicious design that can be harboured in the heart of man. The unbounded authority that was exercised by the Druids in the west, under the influence of pagan superstition, and the terrible ravages committed by the Saracens in the east, to propagate the religion of Mahomet, both witness to the truth of that ancient universal observation, that in all ages, and in all countries, civil and ecclesiastical tyranny are mutually productive of each other. It is the glory of the true church of Christ, that she inculcates due obedience to lawful authority, and is, in her principles and practice, unquestionably loyal, in compliance with the divine command, "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King."

The faithful ministers of Christ, holy in their doctrines, and aiming to keep a conscience void of offence, are also moderate in their ambition, and entertain just notions of the ties of society, and

of the rights of civil government. As in matters of faith and morality, so in matters of church discipline and church government, they acknowledge no guide to have authority over their consciences, but the scriptures ; though some acknowledge that the king may make laws, for the good ordaining of the churches within his dominions, and that the churches ought not to be disobedient, unless they find such laws contrary to the word of God ; and even in such cases, they are not to resist, but peaceably to refuse obedience, and submit to the punishment, if mercy cannot be obtained.

The horrid devastations arising from fanaticism, in the various ages of the world, the effects of which have been mere madness, or of zeal that was nearly allied to it, though violent and tumultuous, were but of a short duration ; whereas the progress of the papal policy, long actuated by the steady counsels of successive pontiffs, took deeper root, and was at length, in some places with difficulty, in others never yet extirpated. For the truth of this, we might refer to the black intrigues of the Jesuits, formerly triumphant over Christendom, but since universally abandoned, even by the Roman Catholic powers themselves : but the subject of the present chapter is, to consider the vast strides which were formerly made in this kingdom by the popish clergy ; how nearly they arrived to effect their grand design ; some few of the means they

made use of for establishing their plan; and how almost all of these have been defeated, or converted to better purposes, by the vigour and wisdom of our ancestors.

The ancient British church, by whomsoever planted, was a stranger to the bishop of Rome, and all his pretended authority. The pagan Saxon invaders having driven the professors of Christianity to the remotest corners of our island, their own conversion was afterwards effected by Augustin, the monk, and other missionaries from the court of Rome. This naturally introduced some few of the papal corruptions, in point of faith and doctrine; but we read of no civil authority claimed by the pope in these kingdoms, till the era of the Norman conquest; when the then reigning pontiff, having favoured Duke William in his projected invasion, by blessing his host, and consecrating his banners, he took that opportunity also of establishing his spiritual encroachments; and was even permitted to do so, by the policy of the conqueror, in order more effectually to humble the Saxon clergy, and aggrandize his Norman prelates, who, being bred abroad in the doctrine and practice of slavery, had contracted a reverence and regard for it, and took a pleasure in rivetting the chains of a free-born people.

The most stable foundation of legal and rational government, is a due subordination of rank, and a gradual scale of authority; and though tyranny

itself is most surely supported by a regular gradation of despotism, rising from the slave to the sultan, yet, however, with this difference, that the measure of obedience in the one, is grounded on the principles of society, and is extended no further than reason and necessity will warrant ; in the other it is limited, only by absolute will and pleasure of the reigning monarch, without permitting the inferior to examine the title upon which it is founded. To enslave the consciences and minds of the people the more effectually, the Roman clergy themselves paid the most implicit obedience to their own superiors or prelates ; and they, in their turns, were as blindly devoted to the will of the sovereign pontiff, whose decisions they held to be infallible, and his authority co-extensive with the Christian world. Hence his legates *a latere* were introduced into every kingdom of Europe ; his bulls and decretal epistles became the rule both of faith and discipline ; his judgment was the final resort in all cases of doubt or difficulty ; his decrees were enforced by anathemas and spiritual censures ; he dethroned even kings that were refractory, and denied to whole kingdoms, when undutiful, the exercise of Christian ordinances, and the benefits of the gospel of Christ.

But though his being spiritual head of the church was a thing of great sound, and of greater authority, among men of conscience and piety, yet the court of Rome was fully apprised that,

among the bulk of mankind, power cannot be maintained without property; therefore its attention began very early to be rivetted upon every method that promised pecuniary advantage. The doctrine of purgatory was introduced, and with it the purchase of masses to redeem the souls of the deceased. New-fangled offences were created, and indulgences were sold to the wealthy for liberty to sin without danger. The canon law took cognizance of crimes, enjoined penance *pro salute animæ*, and commuted that penance for money. Non-residence and pluralities among the clergy, and marriages among the laity related within the seventh degree, were strictly prohibited by canon; but dispensations were seldom denied to those who could afford to buy them. In short, all the wealth of Christendom was gradually drained, by a thousand channels, into the coffers of the holy see.

The establishment also of the feudal system in most of the governments of Europe, whereby the lands of all private proprietors were declared to be holden of the prince, gave a hint to the Court of Rome for usurping a similar authority over all the preferments of the church. This began first in Italy, and gradually spread itself to England. The pope became a feudal lord, and all ordinary patrons were to hold their right of patronage under this universal superior. Estates held by feudal tenure, being originally gratuitous donations, were at that time denominated *beneficia*; their very name, as

well as constitution, was borrowed, and the care of the souls of a parish thence came to be denominated, a Benefice. Lay fees were conferred by investiture or delivery of corporal possession, and spiritual benefices, which at first were universally donative, now received, in like manner, a spiritual investiture by institution from the bishop, and induction under his authority. As lands escheated to the lord in defect of a legal tenant, so benefices lapsed to the bishop upon non-presentation by the patron, in the nature of a spiritual escheat. The annual tenths collected from the clergy were equivalent to the feudal render or rent reserved upon a grant; the oath of canonical obedience was copied from the oath of fealty, required from the vassal to his superior; and the *primer seisins* of our military tenures, whereby the first profits of an heir's estate were cruelly extorted by his lord, gave birth to as cruel an exaction of first-fruits from the beneficed clergy. The occasional aids and tallages levied by the prince on his vassals, gave a handle to the pope to levy, by the means of his legates *a latere*, Peter-pence and other exactions.

At length the holy father went a step beyond any example of either emperor or feudal lord. He reserved to himself, by his own apostolical authority,* the presentation to all benefices which became vacant while the incumbent was attending the Court of Rome, upon any occasion, either on his

* Extrav. l. 3. t. 2. c. 13.

journey thither, or on his way back ; and further, such also as became vacant by his promotion to a bishopric or abbey : *etiamsi ad illa personæ consueverint et debuerint per electionem aut quemvis alium modum assumi*. And this last, the canonists declared was no detriment at all to the patron, being only like the change of a life, in a feudal estate by the lord. Dispensations, to avoid these vacancies, begat the doctrine of *commendams* ; and papal provisions were the previous nomination to such benefices, by a kind of anticipation, before they became actually void ; though afterwards indiscriminately applied to any right of patronage exerted or usurped by the pope. In consequence of this, the best livings were filled by Italian and other foreign clergy, equally unskilled and adverse to the laws and constitution of England. The very nomination to bishoprics, which was considered a prerogative of the crown, was wrested from King Henry I., and afterwards from his successor King John, and seemingly, indeed, conferred on the chapters belonging to each see ; but, by means of the frequent appeals to Rome, through the intricacy of the laws which regulated canonical elections, was eventually vested in the pope. To sum up this head with a transaction most unparalleled and astonishing in its kind, Pope Innocent III. had, at length, the effrontery to demand, and King John had the meanness to consent to a resignation of his crown to the pope, by which England was to

become, for ever, the patrimony of St. Peter ; and the dastardly monarch re-accepted his sceptre from the hands of the papal legate, to hold, as the vassal of the holy see, at the annual rent of a thousand marks.

Another engine set on foot, or, at least, greatly improved by the Court of Rome, was a masterpiece of papal policy. Not content with the ample provision of tithes which the law of the land had given to the parochial clergy, they endeavoured to grasp at the lands and inheritances of the kingdom, and, had not the legislature withstood them, they would, by this time, have probably been masters of every foot of ground in the kingdom. To this end they introduced the monks of the Benedictine and other orders, men of sour and austere religion, separated from the world and its concerns by a vow of perpetual celibacy ; yet fascinating the minds of the people by pretences to extraordinary sanctity, while their whole aim was to aggrandize the power and extend the influence of their grand superior the Pope. As in those times of civil tumult great rapines and violence were daily committed by overgrown lords and their adherents, the people were taught to believe, that founding a monastery a little before their deaths would atone for a life of incontinence, disorder, and bloodshed. Hence innumerable abbeys and religious houses were built within a century after the conquest, and endowed, not only with the tithes of parishes, which were extorted

from the secular clergy, but also with lands, manors, lordships, and extensive baronies. The doctrine inculcated was, that whatever was so given to the monks and friars, or purchased by them, was consecrated to God himself, and that to alienate or take it away was no less than the sin of sacrilege.

Had I time, I might here have enlarged upon other contrivances, which will occur to the recollection of the reader, set on foot by the Court of Rome, for effecting an entire exemption of its clergy from any intercourse with the civil magistrate ; such as the separation of the ecclesiastical court from the temporal ; the appointment of its judges by merely spiritual authority, without any interposition from the crown ; the exclusive jurisdiction it claimed over all ecclesiastical persons and causes ; and the *privilegium clericale*, or benefit of clergy, which delivered all episcopally ordained clerks from any trial or punishment except before their own tribunal. But I shall only observe, at present, that notwithstanding this plan of pontifical power was so deeply laid, and so indefatigably pursued by the unwearied politics of the Court of Rome through a long succession of ages ; notwithstanding it was polished and improved by the united endeavours of a body of men, who engrossed all the learning of Europe for centuries together ; notwithstanding it was firmly and resolutely executed by persons the best calculated for establishing tyranny and despotism, being unconnected

with their fellow-subjects, and totally indifferent to what might befall that posterity to which they bore no endearing relation, and being fired with a bigoted enthusiasm, which prevailed, not only among the weak and simple, but even among those of the best natural and acquired endowments; yet it vanished into nothing when the eyes of the people were a little enlightened, and they set themselves with vigour to oppose it. So vain and ridiculous is the attempt to live in society without acknowledging the obligations which it lays us under, and to affect an entire independence of that civil state which protects us in all our rights, when the laws are properly and duly administered.

CHAP. II.

THE PROGRESSIVE POWER AND USURPATION OF BISHOPS.

BISHOPS or Presbyters, are two appellations which originally designated the same office and the same order of persons. The one appellation may have denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care; the other may have indicated their age, or rather have been expressive of their experience and wisdom.

Clemens Alexandrinus informs us, that James, the brother of Christ, was, after the ascension, chosen bishop of Jerusalem, by the apostles, Peter, James, and John; and Eusebius tells us, that Peter was first seven years bishop of Antioch, and that seven other years he remained about Jerusalem and the eastern region, and became bishop of Rome, A. D. 44. and continued there twenty-five years. We also read in the introduction of the Apocalypse, that bishops, in St. John's time, were instituted under the title of angels, in the seven cities of Asia; and we know, that since the time of Tertullian, who

flourished at the beginning of the third century, *nulla ecclesia sine episcopo*, has been a fact, as well as a maxim.

Without entering into the various causes which, at first, might have induced the Christians to appoint from among their presbyters an ecclesiastical governor, it is certain, that the lofty title of bishop soon began, in some churches, to raise itself above the humble appellation of presbyter; notwithstanding that the latter was considered to be the most natural distinction, the former was appropriated to the dignity of the president, who continued for some ages to perform the duties of his first imposed functions.

It is certain, that the pious and humble presbyters, who were first dignified with the episcopal title, could not possess, and would have rejected the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of an English prelate. The original jurisdiction of bishops consisted in the pastoral duties and discipline of the church, in the superintendency of ecclesiastical affairs generally, in the appointment of ministers, and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. Their powers were exercised with the advice and consent of the assembly of Christians. They were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people.

Such was the simplicity of the primitive constitution of the church, by which Christians were governed more than a hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent church, and although the most distant of these maintained a mutual, as well as friendly intercourse, by letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme or legislative assembly. As the number of the faithful increased, they thought they discovered the advantages which might result from a closer union of their interests.

We find that towards the close of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the institution of provincial synods, and it was soon established as a custom, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province, at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of the distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a listening multitude. Their decrees, which were styled canons, regulated every important point of faith and discipline. The institution of synods was so well regulated for private ambition and for public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which naturally communicated their respective proceedings, and the catholic church soon assumed a form

and acquired the strength of a great federative republic.*

The legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils; and many of the bishops having thrown off their primitive simplicity for secular authority, obtained by their alliance a much greater share of executive and arbitrary power. Thus, being connected with a view to their worldly interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigour, the original rights of the presbyters and people. It is evident that the prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied by scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. Many bishops had now taken upon themselves the exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character, and thus invaded the freedom both of presbyterian and popular elections; but in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters or the wishes of the people, taking care, however, to inculcate the merit of such a voluntary condescension.

Though the bishop still acknowledged the su-

* See Tertullian de Jejunii. chap. 13, where the African mentions it as a recent and foreign institution. The coalition of the Christian churches is very ably explained by Mosheim, p. 164—170.

preme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren, yet in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from his *flock* the same implicit obedience, as if the favourite metaphor had been *literally* applicable to himself, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than his sheep. This obedience is proved from the whole tenor of Cyprian's conduct, of his doctrine, and of his epistles ;* it was not imposed, however, without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The usurped power of the bishops was in many places very zealously opposed by the presbyters, but their Christian spirit and patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism ; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labours of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian and the bishops of our day, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the Christian virtues adapted only to the character of the faithful minister of Christ.

The equality of the presbyters and bishops being destroyed, the same causes which effected this, introduced among the latter a pre-eminence of rank, and thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as, in the spring and autumn, they met in provincial synod, the differences of personal merit and reputation

* Le Clerc, in a short *Life of Cyprian*, *Bibliothèque Universelle*, tom. xii. p. 207—378, has laid him open with great freedom and accuracy.

were very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. The office of perpetual president in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishop of the principal city; and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of metropolitans and primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their episcopal brethren, the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the presbyters.*

It was not long before an emulation of pre-eminence and power prevailed among the metropolitans themselves, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honours and advantages of the city over which he presided, the numbers and opulence of the Christians who were subject to his pastoral care, the saints and martyrs who had arisen among them, and the purity (in good faith) with which they preserved the tradition of doctrine and discipline, as transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops, from the apostle, or the apostolic discipline, to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed.

It was now easy to foresee that Rome would soon claim the obedience of the provinces. The society of Christians bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire, and the Roman church was the greatest, the most numerous, and in regard to the west, the most ancient of all the Christian esta-

* See Dupin *Antiquæ Eccles. Disciplin.* p. 19, 20.

blishments, many of which had received their religion from the labours of her missionaries. Instead of one apostolic founder, which was the utmost boast of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the banks of the Tiber were supposed to have been honoured with the preaching and martyrdom of the two most eminent among the apostles, and the bishops of Rome claimed the inheritance of whatever prerogative was attributed either to the person or office of St. Peter. The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association, for such was their very accurate expression, in the Christian aristocracy. But the power of a monarch was rejected by them with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal dominion. Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman pontiff; and connecting his own cause with that of the eastern bishops, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia.* If this war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were indeed their only weapons; but these, during

* See the sharp epistle from Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, to Stephen, bishop of Rome, ap. Cyprian. Epistol. 75.

the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion.*

It may not perhaps be thought a digression from the subject, to observe, that the consequences of excommunication were of a temporal, as well as of a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of his part of the oblations of the faithful; the ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved; he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and, as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. It appears from Dupin, that the heaviest denunciation rested against him who had the temerity to fall under the inexpiable guilt of calumniating a bishop.

The success of ecclesiastical power gave birth to the memorable distinction of the laity and of the clergy, † which had been unknown to the Greek and Roman churches. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their activity was generally united to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire.

* Concerning this dispute of the re-baptism of heretics, see the epistles of Cyprian, and the 7th book of Eusebius.

† For the origin of these terms, see Mosheim, p. 141; and Spanheim, *Hist. Eccles.* p. 633.

The bishops were destitute of any temporal force, and were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate ; but they realized, according to the beautiful illustration of Hume, what Archimedes so much desired to have found, another world, on which they fixed their machinery, and were thus enabled to move this at their pleasure.

The community of goods, which at first was adopted in the primitive church, was gradually abolished, having been corrupted and abused by the selfishness of the bishops. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by them, and, in their periodical assemblies, every Christian, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund.* Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused by the bishops, but it was diligently inculcated that in the article of tithes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation; and that since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of liberality,† and to acquire some merit by resigning

* See Justin Martyr, Apolog. Major, c. 89; also Tertullian, Apolog. c. 39.

† See Irenæus ad Hæres, c. 27, 34; Origen in Num. Homen.; Cyprian de Unitat. Eccles. Constitut. Apostol. c. 34, 35, with

a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself.

The deacon was no longer the appointed steward of the church. The bishop had usurped full power over the stock, and the funds were entrusted to his care without account or control. The presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the dependent order of deacons was now solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical property. Justin and Tertullian, in their Apologies, inform us of the purposes to which the revenue of the church was applied, and the intention for which it was originally bestowed. A decent portion was given for the bishops, the presbyters, and the deacons; and a sufficient sum was allotted for the expenses of the public worship. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, and to alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion. We find under the reign of Theodosius, that the ancient and illus-

the notes of Cotelerius. The Constitutions introduce this divine precept, by declaring that priests are as much above kings, as the soul is above the body. Among the titheable articles they enumerate corn, wine, oil, &c. On this subject consult Prideaux's "Hist. of Tithes," and "Fra Paolo Delle Materie Beneficarie;" two writers of a very different character.

trious church of Antioch consisted of one hundred thousand persons, three thousand of whom were supported from the public offerings.*

We here see that the revenue of the church consisted solely in alms, and of these alms, the bishops, presbyters, and deacons had only a share ; but that share the bishops have at last converted—I had almost said, feloniously—into *the whole* ; thus deceiving the donors, and robbing the poor. The bishops, whenever they have been left to take what wealth and power they pleased, have seldom thought the whole too much ; nor do I remember an instance where they owned that they had sufficient. They have engrossed the whole of some countries ; of others, the greatest and best parts ; and as much as they could of all. Where they have the soil, they have the power ; and where they have both, they have proved unmerciful landlords, and oppressive magistrates. Look back on the fine continent of Italy, where bishops and priests have rioted and tyrannized, and there the laity will be seen in poverty. Ought not the laity of England to take warning ? Is it not unnatural and monstrous for laymen to concur with the bishops and clergy in their exorbitant claims ? Beside, should not the laity learn from them, to take care of themselves ? The wealth the clergy possess, they derived, and do derive, from the laity ; with the power they seek and assume, they would bind and govern the world.

* Chrysostom. Opera, tom. 7, p. 658, 810.

Is it natural, or just, or wise, in the laity, to impoverish themselves, to fatten and enrich bishops and priests—to forge their own chains, to exalt their own creatures and pensioners, into tyrants and taskmasters? Who can forget the insolence and tyranny of Archbishop Laud, the amazing height of power which he usurped, or his aspiring views to raise the clergy above the laity and the law? Who can forget his saucy declaration, that *he hoped to see the time when ne'er a Jack Gentlemen in England, should dare to be covered before the meanest priest?* Do we not know many bishops in the present day, who think, and wish, and design as he did; men who adore and extol this usurping arch-priest, this prosecutor and tyrant, this instrument and prompter of oppression?

The man who contends for the usurped power and authority of the church, is always esteemed and supported by the high priesthood, though he should be unsound both in faith and morals. Should not this be a rule and an example to the laity, and ought they not to prize, and protect, and encourage every man who asserts the rights and privileges of Englishmen? It is equally right and honourable to esteem and support any clergyman who is bold and candid enough to maintain the interest and independency of the laity against the intolerance of prelates. It is foolish, ungrateful, dishonest, and even cruel, to revile such men; to abuse and weaken friends is to join with enemies,

who would enthral and bring us under their blind guidance. Where the clergy are opulent, are not the people poor? Where they have power, are not the people slaves? Have we not seen it thus in Spain and in Italy? Are such teachers Christians? No: their teaching is false; their doctrines impieties; and their lives unholy. Christianity would undo them; this they have banished, and, in its stead, have erected the priesthood. "Every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely."

This is the effect of usurped power and wealth in bishops, which have proved a curse upon religion and the world; as if the Almighty from thence intended to convince mankind how pernicious and destructive they are to his church and people, and to warn all nations against encouraging and supporting them—"that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared."

CHAP. III.

THE INQUISITION; AND PROGRESSIVE POWER AND USURPATION
OF BISHOPS, CONTINUED.

GREAT power and revenues in the church hierarchy have not only produced and multiplied every mischief formerly known in the world, but also produced evils so new and terrible as even the pagan world never before knew. These are persecutions, torments, and death, for conscience and opinion; wars and national massacres, for religion; with that mighty compendium of all that is horrid, treacherous, and cruel upon earth, the execrable tribunal of the Inquisition. Paganism had nothing so shocking and horrible, not even human sacrifices, which were comparatively few, occasional and stated, as to be compared to this. The Inquisition was a continual human slaughter-house; and in it men, myriads of men, have been immolated, after tedious tortures in dark and frightful dungeons, after unrelenting racks and tortures, with every species of treachery, misery, and terror; and all this suffering was inflicted for their sincerity and

piety in worshipping God in the way which their consciences dictated to be the most correct.

The Inquisition was nothing more than the highest improvement of persecution. It began with the same spirit which the late Dr. Sutton manifested towards myself, and which the present Archbishop Howley tolerates; with such negative penalties and tests, it ends in fires and halters. I will enumerate a few of the many cases for which men were subjected to the Inquisition, and it will appear, that they are such that no man, who in the least exercises his faculties, or practises common charity towards his fellow-creatures, or even has common commerce with the world, could avoid. If he had heard a heretic preach or pray, never mind if he were the best and wisest preacher upon earth, if he differed from the extravagancies of the high church;—if, being excommunicated, he sued not for absolution;—if a heretic were his friend, never mind if he were a Bacon, a Newton, or a Locke;—if he did any act of kindness for a heretic, visited him, shewed him pity by assisting him or giving him counsel;—if he suspected the truth of the false legends and forged miracles of the priests, —if he declared his indifference to meats or to days;—if he interpreted Scripture according to his own, and to common sense;—if he concealed any heresy, or spared father, mother, wife, or child,—he was for these, or for any one of these causes, and for any one of a thousand others, liable to the

unparalleled cruelty of the Inquisition. Let me add, that by heresy was meant every conscientious, honest, rational, and benevolent opinion, differing from the senseless, narrow, barbarous whim and grimace of an ignorant and bigotted priest.

As a proof of the expeditious havoc such a tribunal must make in a country, Cardinal Turquemeda, the first Inquisitor-general in Spain, even in the infancy of the Inquisition, brought a hundred thousand persons into it, in the short period of fourteen years ; of these, six thousand were burnt alive. Observe, too, that when such persons are seized, all that they have is also seized, and their families left to starve, or sent thither also, if they shew pity, or afford assistance.

Let me ask :—Can the merciful God, who sent his meek and compassionate Son to lay down his life for men, have any thing to do with such a church, or with such hellish instruments and butchers, impudently calling themselves HOLY, and their scene of butchery, THE HOLY OFFICE? Wisely did our first reformers disown her being a church. But, alas ! Archbishop Laud and his followers have since laboured to restore her credit ; they have contended for her being a true church, and even derived themselves from her. Yes, they have strenuously endeavoured to shew themselves worthy of her kindred and descent, by assuming her pride and cruelty. And the page of modern

history exhibits their numerous imprisonments, excessive fines, whippings, dismemberings, and other barbarities, to their own infamy, to the dishonour of Protestants, and to the shame of England. In order to ensnare a man into this dungeon of iniquity, they would travel countries, and cross seas, to become acquainted with him ; they would court, caress, and flatter him ; treat him, make him presents, lend him money, administer to his pleasures, apparently admire and adopt his opinions, rail at the church, curse his persecutors and the Inquisition, and swear to him an eternal friendship. All this was done with a black and murderous purpose, to seize him in a proper place, and to carry him off to the fires and racks of the infernal tribunal. Where the interests of the high church are concerned, villany changes its nature, and becomes meritorious, and the blackest perfidy and even perjury is esteemed and practised as good policy. The pope's legate, at the head of a crusade against the Albigenses, entrapped their protector and general, the Count de Beziers, solemnly swore not to injure him, and then seized and imprisoned him !

Let me further add, that blasphemy, or any outrageous language and defiance offered to Almighty God was not punishable nor cognizable by the Inquisition. The great crime and pursuit with them was heresy—opposition to the trade and false opinions of mercenary priests. Thus,

any profane wretch might blaspheme God without fear of the Inquisitors, provided he blasphemed like a good churchman, and said nothing against the priests or their church; but if heresy were mixed with his blasphemy, he could not hope to escape. Remarkable and shocking were the hypocrisy and profaneness of these Inquisitors; for after having long starved in their horrid dungeons the wretched offender; after having long terrified, misused and tortured him, they at last delivered him over to the secular arm, and had the solemn assurance *to beseech the civil magistrate, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, not to hurt his life or limb.* Yet would they excommunicate the civil magistrate if he did not burn him alive. Such were the terrible hypocrisy and tremendous power of the high church bishops and clergy.

I am far from thinking that what I have said concerning the Inquisition will be lost upon my readers. That terrible part of popery, or indeed any other part of popery, of which all is terrible, is too little known in England. For some time after the Reformation, a due horror was kept up among the people, by our preachers against the church of Rome; and it was done like Protestants who knew their duty: the clergy who omit it are unworthy of their office, and know little of the simplicity and power of the Gospel of Christ.

It is a painful reflection, that soon after the Reformation, the bishops and clergy of England

began to contend for dominion and wealth. They found that they could not consistently rail at the church of Rome, and yet follow her example. Their style at last became so far altered, that instead of painting and reviling her as “an old withered harlot, the mother of abominations and whoredoms, and drunk with the blood of the saints,” it became fashionable to defend her; indeed, to praise her, and even to punish such as exposed her. Among her friends were Archbishop Laud and his adherents. It is true, that he and some few of the same character, wrote against some parts of popery; but what avails a bishop’s writing against papists, if at the same time he is introducing and practising popery at home? Dr. Howley should know, that not only cruelty and severity for opinion, but that all authority assumed over conscience and the soul, which was so abundantly done in my case by his predecessor Dr. Sutton, and supported by himself, is popery, by whatever name his Grace may please to call it. It was natural for Archbishop Laud, who was acting as pope himself, to deny the power of the other pope, at least here in his jurisdiction. As to the bare notions, the ceremonies, the grimaces, and mumery of popery, they are of little consequence, beyond the evils which they introduce to preserve the power of priestcraft, by creating and continuing delusions among the people.

Laud and his adherents were notorious perse-

cutors. Let all bishops take warning from the detestation in which his persecuting character is held; and let them remember that all persecution, in every degree, even the smallest, is popery and an advance towards the Inquisition. I have already shewn that negative penalties are the first degree, so death and burning is the last and highest; all the steps are but natural gradations following the first degree and introducing the last; for the smaller implies the necessity of a greater where the former fails, and consequently of the greatest of all, which is the Inquisition.

It was not at all remarkable that Laud and his associates were charged with being Papists, when they openly introduced and exerted all the terrible parts of popery—church power and persecution; and thus established church tyranny in England, and an Inquisition. It was thus that his bloody court was established, and the same claims and practices will always introduce and establish it. Madam de Motteville, in the “Memoirs of Anne of Austria,” says expressly, upon the authority of the Queen of King Charles the First, that *Laud was a good Catholic in his heart*. It is certain that he brought into the English church what was most terrible in popery, its power and cruelty, with not a few of its fooleries and superstitions, the sad effects of which are keenly felt by every real Christian at the present day. Whoever, then, is a tyrant and a persecutor, is

a Papist, in the only sense of the word about which English Protestants and English freemen are concerned.

Let those bishops who claim power to control conscience and opinion, consider this, though they may have hitherto neglected it. Let, also, those inferior clergy and laymen, over whom such power is claimed, consider it, and look upon the bishops who claim it as I do ; that is, as enemies and deceivers, who would seduce them, in order to enslave them. How would any Englishman, any Protestant, who dares own his opinion, regard the Inquisition ? Most certainly he would abhor it ! Let him then abhor and oppose the ways and practices which lead to it. It is supported solely by the power of a corrupt clergy, which never has, and never can, produce any good. Dominion over thoughts and notions is in itself a monster, the greatest of all monsters ; it must be supported by monstrous means, even by priests wielding of directing the civil sword. Oh, hypocrisy ! profound and execrable,—the pretended followers of the humble Jesus, treading upon the necks of his disciples, engrossing their wealth, and spilling their blood !

Is any man fond of his liberty, and of examining all opinions, which is his natural right ;—would he worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without being subject to the insolent rebuke and control of a haughty bishop ;—would

he be exempt from vexatious suits and prosecutions, from clerical curses, followed with civil punishments, and, as they say, with damnation ;—would he preserve his conscience, his person, his time, his property, and all that is dear to him?—he must, then, oppose all arbitrary power in bishops, as being utterly repugnant to whatever is dear to man and to society in general. I never knew or heard of any clerical body that ever possessed power, without using it perniciously ; or that *could* persecute, and did not persecute. Those carnal men who have argued and inveighed the most against persecution, when suffering under it, exercised it afterwards, whenever they obtained the rod in their own hands, without shame or remorse. Thus the Catholics acted against the Arians, and the Arians, in their turn, against the Catholics ; both complaining bitterly against persecution, and yet both vehement persecutors.

St. Athanasius could at one time argue, that the devil uses violence because he has a bad cause, and has not the truth on his side. Christ, on the contrary, uses only exhortations, because his cause is good. “If any man,” says the Saviour, “will be my disciple, let him follow me.” He forces no man to follow him ; nor does he enter a house by force where he is shut out. Whence the Father observes, that a persecuting sect could not be of God. So argue all the orthodox upon every occasion, and I think very truly. St. Hilary urges the same argu-

ment to an Arian emperor and persecutor, and for this very reason denies the Arians to be the true church. But the orthodox, when they were predominant, changed their tone, and never were there more merciless persecutors, oppressors, and butchers, than they. Hence their own reasoning has been frequently turned upon them, and the heretics have charged them in their turn, as being none of Christ's flock, because they had renounced his spirit, and exercised force and cruelty. The Donatists particularly taunted them upon this unchristian inconsistency.

No reasoning could ever restrain churchmen, orthodox or heterodox, when they were invested with power, or with the direction of power, from using it violently. The Presbyterians justly exclaimed against the violence and tyranny of Laud and his brethren for harassing, imprisoning, fining, and persecuting them; and even driving them from their native homes, to seek peace and shelter and the quiet worship of God, in the woods of America. He had converted the high commission court into an Inquisition; indeed, every bishop's court was become an Inquisition; and many of the best churchmen were silenced, fined, and even deprived, for adhering honestly to the doctrines of the Reformation, to primitive strictness of manners, and to the observation of the sabbath.

Did the Presbyterians afterwards—these very Presbyterians, who had thus groaned and smarted

under persecution, and bitterly complained of its injustice and fury—exercise charity and forbearance towards others, who dissented from them, when they became masters of ecclesiastical rule? No! never was a more bitter and intolerant race, or more rigorous exactors of conformity. Every man who differed from them was an enemy to the state, an innovator, forsooth, whom it behoved the state to suppress. They had forgotten that Laud had brought the same charge against them but a little before, and how unmercifully they had been used as public incendiaries, enemies, and innovators. Thus it is, no set of priests fail to draw down, if they can, the anger of the crown upon any man who has merited their's. And thus it was that the monks of St. Denis in France, in the twelfth century, accused the famous Abelard, then amongst them, with being an enemy to the glory and crown of France, only for denying that their founder was Dionysius the Areopagite mentioned in the New Testament. Disaffection to civil authorities is a charge which all domineering priests in the world have ever brought, and will ever bring, against all who offend them, and against all who withdraw from their power, and disown their systems. The Presbyterians, both before and after they attained the predominancy, felt this to be true, and exclaimed against it; but did not forget to reiterate the charge without blushing, as soon as they tasted of dominion.

The churchmen, who had persecuted the Presbyterians without mercy, the moment they found themselves persecuted by parliaments, made heavy outcries against persecution, and preached and wrote for toleration. It was then that Dr. Taylor published his book, entitled, "The Liberty of Prophecy," an excellent book, and one that was extremely applauded by his brethren of the episcopal profession. But, let me ask, did these churchmen, did even Dr. Taylor, after the restoration, act upon his own reasoning and writing for indulgence to dissenters? No! It was the great business of the churchmen, when they had resumed their old seats and revenues, to preach, to write, to solicit severe laws, and to urge the execution of those laws against their Protestant brethren, during a long reign.

All this is strangely inconsistent, as well as strangely unchristian, on both sides. It was also strange madness, as well as wickedness, in the civil power, to gratify the sour and aspiring spirit of the ecclesiastics by plaguing and punishing the people about religion. There is no end of their demands, nor of the unreasonableness of such demands. The high clergy in England, though avowed enemies to toleration, would think it extreme persecution if it were denied to themselves, or their brethren in Scotland. Aye, but we of the church of England are the true church of Christ, says the English episcopalian: and so says Rome of herself, so says Scotland, so

say Geneva, and Greece, and so say all the churches in the world ; and each of them would persecute and abolish all the rest as being false or defective.

This is not the spirit of religion, nor of its Author, but an open departure from truth. It is the spirit of faction and fury which utterly blinds men, and extinguishes peace and charity, without which, men cannot be followers of Christ. Did we not see this spirit of intolerance daily, it would be incredible to what extravagancies religious disputes will carry men. Daniel Tilenus, a learned man and public professor,—I think of divinity,—became so heated in favour of Arminianism in opposition to Calvinism and predestination, that he declared, were he obliged to change his religion, he would turn Turk rather than Calvinist, for he denied that the Calvinists believed in God, but admitted that the Turk did. Grotius, when ambassador for Sweden in France, had two chaplains, the one a Calvinist, the other a Lutheran, who preached by turns. They principally laboured to revile the doctrines of each other, so that their sermons were only invectives. The ambassador, tired and ashamed of the extravagancies of these reverend madmen, begged them to explain the gospel without wounding Christian charity. This good advice neither of them relished. The Lutheran chaplain, particularly, replied, that he must preach what God inspired ; and went on in the old strain. Thus all the ravings of hot-headed divines are fathered upon

God. Grotius at last ordered him either to forbear railing or preaching. The meek preacher turned away in great wrath, and expressed his amazement that a Christian ambassador should shut the mouth of the Holy Ghost. This he thought very severe persecution; and he published his complaints everywhere, that Grotius had shut the mouth of the Holy Ghost; *i. e.*, the mouth of his chaplain.

But to return to the consequences of the usurpation of power and the acquisition of wealth by the bishops and clergy. Opulence and dominion were so foreign from the first preaching of the gospel, so little known to its Author and his disciples, the estimation in which they were held was so trifling, and, indeed, so singularly changed in idea, that all was banished but the names. What can be seen of Christ and his humility, of the apostles and their poverty, in the pomp and pride of mitres, in courtly equipages, in splendid liveries, in a word, in all the fierceness and domination of prelacy? Is any thing of the plainness and simplicity of the gospel to be found in the intricacies of school divinity, or in the endless wranglings and strange distinctions of ecclesiastics? Do the bishops bear any likeness to Christ? Does the ambition of the clergy, their avidity for power and rich churches, for which they have contended with blows, bloodshed, and slaughter, come from Christ, or from the genius of his religion? Were the seditions, tumults, and wars, which followed such ambitious pursuits, the effects

of a Christian or of a clerical spirit? Were not such evils and calamities derived from an insatiable thirst after grandeur and authority? Yes! and the love of power, which under the most hypocritical disguises could insinuate itself into the breasts of men, has descended through all ages of the church, to the more enlightened period of the nineteenth century, as the heirloom to bishops.

CHAP. IV.

THE PROGRESSIVE POWER AND USURPATION OF BISHOPS,
CONCLUDED.

THE clergy of England, as well as of other nations, are always forward to complain of innovations, and of disturbing things that are settled. But pray who have made more innovations than churchmen? Who have more disturbed and changed religion and states by their ambition, their disputes, their turbulent behaviour, and their exorbitant claims? And who are so much given to change? What changes, what violent and lawless changes, were there not wrought by Laud and his brethren in his time, and attempted by men of his spirit ever since? The laity have acted only on the defensive, warding off the attempts and monstrous demands made from time to time by the clergy. What is a great part of ecclesiastical history, but a continual detail and repetition of the efforts of the clergy to govern mankind and to master the world? Is not this an innovation with a witness, a propensity to change, an actual and alarming change? Have

they not been continually attempting to be what they were not, to possess what they did not, still to be richer, and still to be more powerful? Could there be a greater change, than from the almsmen of the people to become lords and princes; from poverty and humility to rise to mitres, and diadems, and dominion? Could such a change, a change so mighty and unnatural, be accomplished without turning the world upside down?

This is something more than *quieta movere*, something more than disturbing things that were settled. Did not Laud actually master and abolish the laws of his country, assert the independence of the clergy of the civil power, and terrify the judges from issuing prohibitions, as they were actually sworn to do? Did the spirit of Laud, for power, independence, and princely revenues, die with the archbishop? No! other bishops have improved upon his scheme, and added, if possible, to his wild and enslaving pretensions. A proof that they were the pretensions of the clergy, at least of the majority, we may remark, that the convocation could never be persuaded to censure them.

Whoever doubts whether the clergy have been the authors of changes in the world of a great and calamitous nature, whether they have themselves changed and degenerated from their patterns and original, need only read history, and compare them with Christ and his apostles. Compare their pretensions, pomp, luxury, and possessions, with the

simplicity, humility, labour, and disinterestedness of the primitive Christians.

The truth is, when the clergy make this complaint, which is very usually done, that it is not safe to disturb things which are established, they only mean to discourage men from disturbing them in their favourite pursuit after power and riches. Whatever is established on the authority of the New Testament, there are but few men to be found with the audacity to disturb. But if the clergy, with a progressively usurped power, make demands which are neither warranted by Christ nor the law of equity, it is right, and our bounden duty, to disturb and even to defeat them.

Such high pretenders to princely rule and opulence are the men who are given to change ; and it is always right and just to oppose usurpation, to redress grievances, to remove nuisances, and to attack fraud, avarice, and nonsense.

It would be endless to adduce particulars. But suppose any assuming clergyman were so extravagant and daring, and had so little regard for conscience and public tranquillity, as to attempt to establish an ecclesiastical tribunal in our colonies abroad, to the terror and affliction of our brethren, many of whom were first driven there by the oppression and barbarity of such courts here, especially in the reign of such a man as Archbishop Laud ; would not such an attempt tend to a bold innovation, and discover a busy, an arrogant, and

a dangerous spirit in such a clergyman? and would he not be a good subject and an honest man who set himself against such a wicked attempt, and exposed its flagrant tendency?

Suppose another clergyman to be such an enemy to the civil Constitution and to the Church of England, or such a deserter from it, as to contend for the independence of the clergy, for their exemption from the civil laws; indeed, for trying a clergyman, when he is to be tried, by a jury of clergymen; would not such a man deserve severe censure and punishment? and would it not be honest and meritorious to defend the laws and repulse this enemy, this innovator, this papist?

Suppose that any other designing priest were found promoting superstition for the ends of authority and gain, abusing the credulity of the people by pretending to transfuse holiness into ground and stone walls, as if earth and stone, or any thing inanimate, were susceptible of sanctity, or their quality to be altered by solemn words; and all this without any colour or warrant from law or gospel, but in opposition to the spirit of both; would not such a crafty priest be a false guide, an innovator, one who relinquished truth and the Protestant religion, to promote error, and to introduce popery and delusion? would not the man who resisted and confuted him be a friend to society, a defender of truth, and a foe to fraud?

Suppose, again, that a bishop, so bent upon ex-

alting churchmen and their revenue, that he encouraged designs and schemes for transferring the whole wealth of a nation by no slow degrees into the coffers of the clergy; would not such a man be a promoter of change, of a universal and melancholy change, and a declared enemy to the laity? And would it not be becoming laymen, nay, incumbent on them, to be upon their guard to secure their estates, and to preserve themselves and posterity from poverty and vassalage?

Suppose, once more, that a clergyman should have the boldness to declare, publicly, that a bishop still continued a true bishop of the Church of Christ, even though he stood convicted of, and was deprived for, the highest and blackest crimes, viz. perjury, disloyalty, conspiracy, treason, and rebellion; would not such a declaration be highly insolent, scandalous, and punishable? And would it not be equally flagrant to tell those who make priests, that they cannot unmake them; that priests are above the law and the laity; that the clergy have a power and designation which laymen cannot take away, though the laity and the law actually create them, and confer upon them the only designation they can have, nay, confer their whole office? Our Constitution does not own or know any character in any subject whatever but what the law bestows; indeed, all the clergy renounce upon oath all power whatsoever but what they derive from hence. An Act of Parliament might,

to-morrow, effectually degrade all the bishops and clergy in Great Britain, and reduce them all to laymen. An Act of Parliament could create immediately so many priests from the laity, without any other title, apparatus, or ceremony. Whoever is declared to be a priest by any society, is a priest to them, and ceases to be one the moment they declare him none. The singular notion of an indelible character is arrant nonsense and true priestcraft; nay, it is the ground-work of all priestcraft. Would it be borne by our parliament, by our assembly of law-makers, to have this indelible character, this root of popery, maintained to their faces? Would it not draw down their indignation and censures upon the bold offender,—I had almost said, deceiver?

I mention these instances as bare possibilities which cannot be tolerated in this free Protestant country; they are common in popish countries, and are a few of the reigning tenets and practices which support popery. How zealous Laud was, and some of his present supporters are, in such practices and tenets, I leave to my reader to determine.

It is frequently painful to learn by experience, and I know no lesson more necessary, nor more revolting, than one from the behaviour of the clergy in the reign of King Charles I. At this period they had become wanton with extravagant power, and used it cruelly in persecuting and op-

pressing their fellow-subjects. Let us, as Englishmen, jealous of our privileges, take care for the future, that those who are set apart for the purposes of holiness be not spoiled by the unnatural possession and exercise of worldly business and authority. It is profaning holy men as they are, to embark them in secular affairs, in the commerce and occupations of laymen and worldlings. As the clergy miserably misled that unhappy prince King Charles I., let us hope it will serve as an unfailling warning to other princes from being led by them.

We may infer, that whenever the clergy leave preaching the gospel, and become courtiers and politicians, they are out of their sphere, and become more wild and extravagant, as well as more wicked, and shameless, and false, than other men, as they did in the reign of Charles I., by promoting and justifying all unlawful and merciless imposition upon the laity. They also contended that we were obliged to undergo all servitude, to be tame and passive slaves to the mere will of the prince, and to obey that will as our only law.

It never could enter into the heart of a layman, that the merciful God authorized iniquity, perjury, perfidiousness, tyranny, and despotism; and that any miserable wretch, filling the office of a priest, who had all these crying sins to answer for, was still sacred, and the vicegerent of Heaven; or that God, who hates wickedness, had forbidden resist-

ance even to remedy the highest and most complicated wickedness ; nay, that he would damn all who had sense and virtue enough to do so.

These positions were monsters, formed by clergymen out of their sphere, and in high repute with Laud and his associates. It was not very natural for the laity to love and reverence such clergymen, or their monstrous positions. "The Lord said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name ; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them ; they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their hearts." It would be prudent to keep all clergymen in future from thus exposing themselves to scorn and ridicule, and from promoting mischief and misery among the laity. Their guilt is infinitely more heinous and aggravated than that of the greatest private sinner, inasmuch as it affects and involves whole nations, and is impiously covered with the veil of religion.

According to this rule, the blackest felon that ever suffered was innocent, in comparison with Laud and those of his leaven. Had Laud consumed his time in debauchery, he could have done but small hurt, compared to what he did as a troubler and a seducer of the world. His morals as a private man did but heighten his credit to do mischief. With what an ill grace must men rebuke private vice and the detail of sins, who themselves vend and commit sins by the gross ! This

is, with a witness, to strain at gnats, and swallow camels. Crimes are to be measured by their consequences. He who persecutes men, or who misleads and enslaves them, is the most guilty of all criminals. Had Laud been a parish priest, and confined himself to the duties of his cure; or, being a bishop, had limited himself to the duties of his function; he, who was a man of learning and of morals, might have been an exemplary and a useful man. But, alas! he and his brethren must rule the court and the nation, in doing which they overturned both, by an excess of tyranny and oppression; and they who raised, or at least increased the storm, which at last swept England, overwhelmed themselves in the public ruin.

These are the men and circumstances proper to be commemorated. From these we are to take our lessons and warnings against a relapse into similar evil days and calamities. If there be any curse still existing from the king's blood, it must justly lie upon the present bishops and their dependents, who approve of the men and measures that first rendered the king arbitrary and oppressive, and from thence unpopular and distrusted by his subjects. Here the evil began, and from hence it was spread, like a train, which on being ignited explodes. Had the archbishop always ruled in the way he proposed when too late, when men were irritated and enraged and full of distrust, there had been no civil war, no conquering army, no

courteous indignity expressed by Dr. Howley, Archbishop of Canterbury, on the subject of Tithes, in the House of Lords, on the 15th of last December, when also another conceited high churchman, Dr. Blomfield, Bishop of London, maintained that no man had a greater right to his estates, than the clergy had to their tithes. I believe that had the clergy been used as the laity have been—treated as slaves, and worried by arbitrary power, and grievous impositions—they had long ago prayed for the annihilation of the order of archbishops and bishops ; or, at least, continued unceasingly in their efforts to obtain a Parliamentary Reform, with a view to sever the church from the state ; that the abuses and corruptions which for centuries have been shielded under the garb of sanctity, might be destroyed ; that the people might religiously enjoy their birthright, no longer annoyed by oaths *ex officio*, and by the united tyranny and usurpation of bishops ; but be able to sit under their own vine and fig-tree, and none make them afraid.

As to those high churchmen who contend that the clergy is a distinct body from the laity, with separate interests and views, they cannot be surprised to find the laity improving the hint and example, and taking care of themselves. It is natural for the people to remember that they alone give and continue to the clergy what they possess, and make them what they are. Bishops have long flourished and domineered ; it is high

time for us to look at these things, to resent such insults, and to mark such insultors. May the people of England awaken from their slumbers, and contend with an unceasing perseverance for their religious liberties and rights, to the condemnation of all the usurpations and extravagant claims of power ; to the abolition of all selfish and popish tenets of English bishops and high churchmen, till they triumph over priestcraft and despotism, the hydra of all our calamities, to enjoy the happy results of an unqualified freedom, and an unrestricted peace !

CHAP. V.

EPISCOPAL POWER AND USURPATION FOUNDED ON THE WEAKNESS
OF HUMAN NATURE.

THERE is not a living creature in the universe which has not some constitutional weakness, or original imbecility coeval with its being ; I mean some inclinations or disgusts, some peculiar desires or fears, that render it an easy prey to other animals, which, from their constitutional sagacity or experience, know how to take advantage of this infirmity. Of this it would be endless to enumerate particulars. My object is only to shew that all the dignity of human nature, and the superiority which the Almighty has given to man above other beings, have not exempted him from imperfections, which probably were left in his nature to put him in remembrance of his mortality, to humble his pride, and to excite his diligence.

The peculiar foible of mankind is superstition, or an intrinsic and panic fear of beings invisible and unknown. It is obvious to every one that there

must be causes in nature for all the good or evil which does, or ever can, happen to us ; and it is impossible for any man so far to divest himself of all concern for his own happiness, as not to be solicitous to know what those causes are ; and since, for the most part, they are so hidden and out of sight that we cannot perceive or discover them by our own endeavours ; since they are immaterial and in their own nature invisible, we are generally ready to take the *ipse dixit* of those men who have the dexterity to make us believe that they know more of the matter than we do ourselves.

To this ignorance and credulity we are indebted for the most grievous frauds and impositions which ever did, or do now, oppress mankind. To these we owe the revelations and visions of enthusiasts, all the forged religions in the world, and the abuses and corruptions of the true one, as well as all the idle and fantastical stories of conjurers and witches, of spirits, apparitions, fairies, demons, hobgoblins, and fortune-tellers ; the belief in dreams, portents, omens, prognostics, and the various sorts of divinations ; all of which, more or less, disturb the greatest part of the world, and have made mankind the dupes and property of knaves and impostors in all ages.

Every thing in the universe is in constant motion, and wherever we move we are surrounded with bodies, every one of which must, in a certain degree, operate on themselves and us ; and it cau-

not be otherwise, that in the variety of actions and events which happen in all nature, but some must appear very extraordinary to those who know not their true causes. Men naturally admire what they cannot comprehend, and seem to do some sort of homage to their understandings in believing whatever is out of their reach to be supernatural.

From hence perpetual advantages have been given, and occasions taken by priests to circumvent and oppress the credulous and unwary. What fraudulent uses have been made of eclipses, meteors, epidemical plagues, inundations, great thunders and lightnings, and amazing prodigies and seeming menaces of nature ! What juggling tricks have been, or may be, practised upon the ignorant with glasses, speaking-trumpets, ventriloquies, echoes, phosphorus, magic-lanterns, mirrors, and innumerable other things ! The Americans were made to believe that paper and letters were spirits, which conveyed men's thoughts from one to another ; and a dancing mare was in the last century burnt for a witch in the inquisition in Portugal !

Nature works by a thousand ways imperceptible to us. The loadstone draws iron to its embrace ; and gold, quicksilver. The sensitive plant shrinks from the touch ; some sort of vegetables attract one another and twine together ; others grow best apart. The treading upon the torpedo affects and gives freezing pain to the whole body ; turkey-cocks and pheasants fly at a red rag ; a rattle-snake

is said to possess a magical power in his eyes that will force a squirrel to run into his mouth ; music will cure the bite of a tarantula ; and the frights and longings of pregnant women will stamp impressions upon the babes in embryo. People in their sleep will walk securely over precipices, and the ridges of houses, where they durst not venture when awake. Lightning will melt a sword without injuring the scabbard.

There is a sympathy and antipathy within us, which we all feel, that baffle and get the better of our best reasonings and philosophy. These are shewn in love, in fear, in hatred, in ambition, and in almost every act of the mind ; but in nothing so much as in superstition. Sometimes we find a secret panic, and at other times a strange and uncommon energy, a feeling of a mighty power within us ; and not being able to account by any deduction of reason, or by any cause of nature, for such sensations, we are easily persuaded to believe them to be supernatural. Hence great philosophers, poets, legislators, illustrious conquerors, and often madmen, have been thought in many ages, by themselves as well as by others, to have been inspired ; and even distempers, such as apoplexies, epilepsies, and trances, have been deemed miraculous.

Nothing strikes so strongly upon our senses as that which causes surprise and admiration. There are few men who are not affected by unusual sounds

and voices, with the groans of others in misery, the solemnity of a coronation or any public show, the pomp of a funeral, the farce of a procession, the power of eloquence, the charms of poetry, the rich and splendid equipage of great men, or the solemn phiz and mien of an enthusiast. Whoever, therefore, can find out the secret of hitting luckily upon this foible and native imbecility in mankind, may govern and lead them as he pleases. Herein has consisted the great skill and success of crafty priests in all ages. They have made use of this power to turn us and wind us to all their purposes, and have built and founded most of their superstitions upon it. They have always adapted their worship rather to catch our passions than convince our minds and enlighten our understandings; all of which I shall prove is directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity and the precepts of the gospel.

For this reason the heathens built their temples in groves, in solitary dark and desert recesses, near or over caverns and grottoes, or in the midst of echoing and resounding rocks, that the hideous and dismal aspect, and often hollow and hoarse bellowing of such places, might strike a solemn awe and religious horror into their votaries, and sometimes help their imaginations to hear voices, and see forms, and so intimidate and prepare them for any stories and impressions which they should think it their interest to make upon them.

The popish priests have admirably aped their predecessors, by building their churches dark and dismal, with figured and painted windows, to let in a false and glimmering light ; the structure arched and contrived in such manner as to resound the voice hollow and shrill ; with private apartments, cemeteries for their saints, pompous inscriptions, whispering places, secret chapels for confessions, masses, dirges, penances, and other devotional exercises. Like the heathen, they also build their temples solemn and magnificent, in antic and uncommon figures, adorn them with silver and gold, rich carpets, curious statues, and images inlaid with jewels. Their priests appear in gaudy vestments and fantastical robes and caps, and perform their worship with music and affected ceremonies ; all which pageantry and farce is calculated and intended to attract the eyes, act upon the passions, amuse, lull, and suspend the understanding, and draw admiration and reverence to those who preside in these fabrics, and attend this pompous adoration. Their bells, also, which call the people together, are contrived to emit such sounds as affect vulgar minds with a sort of superstitious and pleasing melancholy.

I remember visiting a clergyman some years ago at Castle-Eaton Rectory, near Lechlade, in Gloucestershire, and my friend, anxious to interest me, took me to a church two or three miles distant, built, I believe, during the last century ; at least, it

was erected by Protestants. The windows of this church are unusually large, in proportion to the size of the building, and many in number; the whole of them are of richly painted glass, but the subjects of several windows are ridiculous in the extreme. One, in particular, I well recollect. It represents the jaws of hell, with the devil's assistants furnishing materials for the flames, in wheelbarrows and carts; but how will my reader be surprised when I state the nature of the materials!—They were all of one kind, neither wood nor coals—but women! Not a man is to be seen either in the wheelbarrows and carts, or in hell; but figures, in the shape of men, are seen dragging women by the long hair of their heads to the flames. The glass of these windows is said to have been seized in an enemy's prize ship, by one of our ships of war, and brought to England; and the church in question was erected for the express purpose of receiving the glass. Here we have another forbidding and disgusting portrait of our enlightened Protestant bishops, who could apply such materials to the erection of a sanctuary to the God of mercy.

As Christian priests have become more numerous, have received larger revenues and more leisure, so they have greatly improved on the heathens in this art of deceiving; inasmuch that there is scarcely an imperfection or error in human nature which is not adopted into their scheme, and made subser-

vient to their interest. Men of sprightly genius and courage are caught by their ambition, are highly honoured, flattered, and raised up by their general voice to the highest dignities, and then are indulged in all their passions, and gratified by the condescension of dignitaries, who assist them in their ambitious projects. By these arts, those talents which should be nobly employed to free mankind from sacerdotal usurpations, are meanly perverted to support and aggrandize the priestly and antichristian power.

The hierarchy of the Romish church has always found men of violence and impetuous tempers to execute their tyrannical designs, and to take vengeance of their enemies; and the debauched and wicked have been made to buy their peace of Heaven by giving money and lands to the priests. But none contribute so much to advance their system as visionaries and enthusiasts. There are in all countries multitudes of people whom ignorance, pride, conceit, ill habit of body, melancholy and splenetic tempers, unfortunate circumstances, causeless and secret fears, and a panic disposition of mind, have prepared to be the objects, as well as instruments, of delusion. Some of these have been thrust or decoyed into religious houses, or persuaded to lead retired, recluse, and austere lives; to torture and punish themselves with whippings, penances, and fastings, and to walk barefoot, in order to astonish the gaping mul-

titude, and thereby gain reverence to the priesthood for their fancied holiness ; whilst the governing ecclesiastics feast and riot in delicious banquets, ride in state with coach of four and six, attended by numerous servants in costly liveries ; and earth and sea is ransacked, and heaven itself profaned, to maintain their luxury and pride. How closely those men in England calling themselves Protestant and Christian bishops pursue their practices, I shall leave my reader to determine, and hasten to shew, in the next chapter, that this artificial devotion, this mechanical religion, has no existence in Christianity.

CHAP. VI.

EPISCOPAL POWER AND USURPATION INCONSISTENT WITH THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

I CANNOT with my best inquiry discover, that, in the whole Christian religion, there are any new rites or ceremonies appointed, or any new offices erected. Nor in the Gospels, Acts, or Epistles, does any thing like a new institution occur, except that of deacons; which office, by modern Christians of established churches, is quite laid aside, unless it may be said to be revived by virtue of the Act of Queen Elizabeth, which appoints overseers of the poor. For as to the modern ecclesiastical deacon, he has no resemblance to the scripture officer, who was appointed to serve tables, upon complaint of the Grecian widows, who were neglected in the daily administration, which the apostles were not at leisure to attend, because “of the preaching of the word,” and therefore directed the congregation to choose others.*

* Acts, vi.

I shall now inquire how the world came to be blessed with such a long train of spiritual equipage, and see what can be found in the Scriptures to warrant or countenance their present pretensions. It is to be observed, that promulgation is of the essence of a law, which cannot be without plainness and perspicuity. It must not be expressed in doubtful and equivocal terms. It must not depend upon critical learning or different readings; nor receive its explanation from the mysterious gibberish and unintelligible jargon of the schools; but ought to be such, as a plain, open, simple-hearted, sincere man may easily discover amidst the numerous and contradictory schemes of interested ecclesiastics.

Weak and corrupt men may, through ignorance or design, frame and enact laws obscure and unintelligible; but the Almighty cannot intend to mislead his creatures, nor can He be deficient in proper words to express his meaning. Even such human laws as enact penalties, or restrain the natural liberty of mankind, are always construed strictly, and extended no farther than the letter expressly warrants; and it is much more reasonable, that it should be so understood in divine laws, upon which the temporal and eternal happiness of the world depends; not only because of the vast importance of the subject, but as there can be no unwary omission or defect in words chosen by the Holy Ghost. We may therefore

rest assured, that whatever is not expressed in Scripture, in language plain and clear to common understandings, was not intended for our instruction, nor can it become a duty.

With our eyes thus cleared up, we will view those texts and parts of Holy Writ, brought together to support this unwieldy fabric. And here I must anticipate, that my reader will stand amazed, and be at a loss which most to reprobate, the stupidity and acquiescence of the high church laity, or the daring insolence and impiety of their spiritual rulers; that without reason, or the appearance of reason; without Scripture or the colour of Scripture, but directly in defiance of them all, they could be able to form so complete an empire over the bodies and minds of the greatest part of Christendom; rob them of their goods and possessions; make them instruments of their own ruin; induce them to hug their chains, and mortally hate, murder, or ruin every one who would set them free.

But before I enter upon a particular disquisition of the text produced, I would first inquire what benefit can accrue to Christianity by such powers in the Christian clergy. A Roman judge is honourably mentioned by Cicero, for always asking, *cui bono?* for what end or advantage an alleged action was done, by which he could form some judgment whether it was done or not; and if done, who did it. The same is a reasonable proceeding in this case; for though it is no objection to the truth of what

God has said, that it is not agreeable to the sentiments of weak men; yet, whilst it remains a question whether God has said it or not, there cannot be a stronger way of arguing used, than to shew that it is unworthy of the Divine wisdom and goodness, who can say nothing which is trifling and impertinent, or make any ordinances that are useless or mischievous to his creatures.

Nothing can come from God but what is god-like; and, therefore, when any number of men, combining together, dare tell me any thing in his name of no use to religion or virtue, and yet of apparent advantage to themselves or their order, I shall always believe it to be an invention of their own, forged to gratify their ambition and avarice, and shall ever vindicate the Almighty from the imputed calumny.

I would simply ask, of what use is it to religion and virtue, that the clergy should always make one another? Of what importance, whether the imposition of hands be esteemed barely a ceremony, to denote a person appointed to an office, or be taken as the appointment itself? Whether he be chosen by laying on of hands, or by any other ceremony? Will the same person, with the same qualifications, be a better man, a better christian, or an abler divine, if he receive his orders in a direct line from the apostles, through the medium of a popish, high church, or presbyterian priesthood, rather than from the civil magistrate, or from voluntary

societies? Or is it possible to believe that whilst he is administering the offices of religion, and doing the duties of the gospel, the devout Christian people will lose the effects of their piety, and the benefit of Christ's promises, from the defect of any circumstance, or any omission or superfluity in his adoption; things which they could neither prevent nor know? Surely, we have not so learned Christ.

Can we for a moment suppose that Almighty God should make such an establishment of Christianity, as must eventually destroy religion itself; or put it under the sole guidance and direction of a society of men who will have a perpetual interest to overturn or pervert it, and who have ever done so when they had the power?

What can be suggested more absurd, than that our heavenly Father should send his Son to be the great atonement and propitiation for sin, and as a divine exemplar to teach virtue and holiness to men, to manumit and set them free from the superstitions of the Jews, and the idolatries of the Gentiles; who, whilst upon earth, should not only disclaim all power and dominion himself, but suffer an ignominious death, to free mankind from the fetters of a spiritual bondage; and yet subject them to a yoke, the most arbitrary and tyrannical in the world, without redress, and without remedy; where the governors have constant temptations and motives to oppress, and the governed but few means to

resist and oppose? For no less than this are the high-church demands upon us, and the inevitable consequences of their wild and pitiful hypothesis.

If there be an order of men appointed directly by God, and having the government of the church by divine right, in all things which relate to spirituals, *i. e.* in all things wherein their own interest is concerned; if they are to be sole judges of their own powers, and what doctrines they are to teach; if the people are to receive them implicitly, and to submit to their determinations; and if no human authority must control them, all which, as I believe, those whom I write against assert, then it is plain that they are possessed of the most despotic, unlimited, and uncontrollable sovereignty in the universe, and one which must of necessity prove, and actually ever has proved, the most cruel and tyrannical in the exercise.

But if the clergy have not this power, they can have none at all, but that which the civil magistrate or voluntary societies entrust to them; for what is the nature of a power, of which every man is a judge whether he will submit to it or not? Or how can that be said to be divine, which the civil magistrate can control at his pleasure? There can be no medium in nature between another's judging for me, and my judging for myself; if another is to judge for me, I must submit to his determinations, let them be ever so absurd, monstrous, or wicked; but if I have a right to re-examine them,

they can amount to no more than advice, and my own judgment alone must determine my acquiescence.

As I think I have amply proved that it is inconsistent with the goodness of God to entrust to men the powers claimed by the high clergy, so I will attempt to prove as fully, that he has, in fact, given them no authority at all.

Indeed, to speak plainly, the clergy do not pretend to adduce any direct texts to their purpose, expressing particularly the powers given to them, and the persons in whom they are to be vested, as might be reasonably expected in a case so nearly affecting the liberties of mankind, and as was actually done in the Jewish dispensation, where every circumstance relating to divine worship and the priest's office was minutely described. Instead of this, they gather up scattered and disjointed sentences, and place them together to see what may be gained from so inconsistent and incoherent an arrangement. They argue from types, antitypes, parables, metaphors, allegories, allusions, inferences, patterns, resemblances, figures, and shadows. By such means they draw every thing out of every thing.

The Bible is a miscellaneous book, from which crazed and designing men, by references to ancient customs, and twenty other theological systems of reasoning, may always fetch materials to serve their loose or tyrannical purposes. And thus we actually find a hundred different, and many of them almost

contradictory, religions are pretended to be deduced from that book. This is done by joining and disjoining; by various readings; by corrupt or ignorant translations; by far-fetched interpretations; by putting upon words in scripture meanings different from what they signify in any other books; by trifling and knavish distinctions; by metaphysical subtilities; by shifting the significations of words as they have occasion; and by a thousand other dishonest modes of proceeding. If men would be contented to judge of the meaning of the scriptures by the same rules as they do of other writings; if they could be persuaded that the Almighty, when he condescends to make use of human language, intends to be understood, and consequently uses words in their common acceptation; that when he designed to reveal his will to babes and sucklings, *i. e.* to the ignorant and unlearned, he did not chose to do it in riddles, to make way for interpreters, and that the clergy might have a plea for picking the laity's pocket; then I affirm, that the Bible is the plainest, most clear, moral, spiritual, significant, and intelligible book in the world, in all things in which it is essential for a man, who is destined for eternity, to know; and in no part of it more so, than in the subject under consideration, which has been rendered so perplexed and intricate by craft and artifice.

There is nothing in the four gospels to authorise or countenance the union of ecclesiastical and civil

power; for as our Saviour disclaimed all worldly authority, so he gave none. He neither used nor allowed the use of force and violence to coerce and conquer subjects to his kingdom, which he declared was not of this world. As the religion which he taught was not to consist in outward actions and ceremonies, like the worship of the gentiles, but was to reside in the mind, so he chose proper means to attain his end. He knew that the sword might make hypocrites and slaves, but never converts; he therefore instructed his apostles to win men's affections by love and gentleness, to allure them by example, and convince them by the reasonableness of his precepts, and he enabled them to prove their mission by wonders and miracles. All this is directly contrary to the proceedings of Mahomet, whose aim was temporal dominion, and whose religion was imposture. Violence was necessary to propagate both these; for absurdity can in no way be supported but by tyranny, while truth can always defend itself, and desires nothing but a fair examination, and a free and impartial hearing.

Christ takes every occasion to caution his apostles against spiritual pride, and the claiming superiority over others, or over one another. The powers which he gave them were of another kind, such as were suitable to overcome the prejudices of the innocent and well-meaning, though misled, people; and to confound the malice and subtilty of the

governing priesthood, viz. a power against unclean spirits, and to cast them out, to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases, and to raise the dead. Surely we have no protestant bishop or inferior clergyman in England who pretends to these powers.

Our Lord commands his ministers to provide neither silver, nor gold, nor brass, in their pockets ; nor scrip for their journey ; neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staves ; (much less coaches emblazoned with mitres and arms.) I presume few English clergymen desire these restricted powers.

Again, Jesus orders his disciples when they come into any house, to salute it, and if the inmates do not receive them, and hear their words, to depart from that house, and shake off the dust from their feet. The popish clergy are for setting fire to such a house, and for burning and damning every one within it. The protestant priests, not for troubling any house with a call, but for their fees.

The apostles' commission in St. Matthew, was to preach Christ to all nations ; and in St. Mark, to go into all the world and to preach Him to every creature. The Protestant bishops seldom preach at all. Bishop Latimer says, " there is a gap in hell, as wide as from Calais to Dover, full of unpreaching prelates."

Those who believed in the apostles, and were baptized, had the power of casting out devils in

Christ's name, and speaking with new tongues. They could take up serpents ; no deadly thing which they drank could hurt them ; they laid hands upon the sick, and they recovered. Those who support and believe in the high-church priests are the best friends the devil has ; for these clerical gentlemen, instead of casting him out, for the most part bring him in. They can speak sense with no tongue, nor dare venture on any poison but what proceeds from gluttony and drunkenness, with which they give their votaries diseases, instead of recovering them.

The apostles were to be witnesses of all which they had heard or seen, said or done by our Saviour ; and who else could be so ? But the clergy have no other means of knowing Christ, than any layman of equal abilities and equal application ; nor have they, generally speaking, any greater motives or inducement to preach him, except the *hire*, which, as it first suborned their predecessors to betray his person and take away his life, so it has ever since been the occasion of crucifying him anew, by misrepresenting the spirituality of his doctrines, and making them subservient to worldly ambition and interest ; a practice too general and universal to require from me any illustration.

Our Saviour himself appointed the seventy disciples, whom he sent before him two by two in every place where he intended himself to go, and

gave them powers almost equal to the powers of the apostles, even to heal the sick, to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and he declared that nothing should hurt them. He was so far from giving any worldly authority, that he tells them, he sends them forth as lambs among wolves ; that they should carry nothing with them ; whatsoever house they came into, they were to say, peace to that house, and were to eat and drink such things as the people gave them ; for the labourer is worthy of his hire. (It appears that the people were to judge what wages and hire they deserved.) If any persons refused to receive them, they were to go into the streets and shake off the dust of their feet ; which was all the excommunication they were directed to use, and was nothing more but to leave them to God.

Whatever is meant by the figurative and abstruse texts of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sins, it is evidently confined to those to whom it is spoken, and seems to have relation to the other world alone. I would therefore be glad to know, by what rules of construction the powers now claimed by any order of clergy in the world, can be brought from these texts, or in what sense any clergyman can be said to be a successor of the apostles, more than every layman of equal qualifications.

If our Saviour had intended to have conveyed any powers to any man, or set of men, it is im-

possible to believe but that he would have expressed himself in the fullest and most significant words, and have left no doubt as to what those powers were, and to whom they belonged. No statute enacted among weak mortals is penned so loosely, however, as those relied upon by the clergy. What lawyer in Westminster-hall could have found sovereign power in the precept, "feed my sheep"? or in our Saviour's promise to assist the apostles, and certainly all Christians in general, in these words, "I will be with you to the end of the world"?

The priests of Delphos, uttering their oracles, for the most part, in sorry balderdash poetry, gave rise to a jest among the ancients, that Homer could write better verses than Apollo, who inspired him. But surely no Christian man could be found so profane as to give occasion to the suggestion, that the attorney-general can draw up a clearer and more intelligible commission than the apostles!

But, though there is nothing in the gospels to justify or excuse the priestly demands upon the laity, there are many texts expressly against them, in which our Saviour disclaims all authority over men, and forbids his disciples and followers to assume superiority over their brethren, or to censure, judge, or use any one ill, for not receiving, or for opposing them.

In St. Luke, chap. xii. ver. 13., a man desires of our Lord to speak to his brother to divide his in-

heritance with him ; and his answer is, “ Who made me a judge or a divider over you ? ” In St. John, chap. xii. ver. 47, 48, our Saviour declares, if any man hear his words and believes not, that he will not judge him ; for he came not to judge the world, but to save the world ; and in the next verse he leaves him to the judgment of the Father, and tells him what will be his doom. In St. John, chap. xviii. ver. 36, also, Christ was brought before Pilate for speaking treason against Cæsar, and claiming the temporal kingdom of Judea ; but he took that occasion to renounce all earthly sovereignty, by declaring his kingdom not to be of this world, and gave his reason for it, which so satisfied the Roman governor, ever jealous of his master’s authority, that he pronounced him innocent, and would gladly have released him if the Jewish priests would have suffered it.

In St. Matthew, also, chap. vii. ver. 1, 2, 3, Jesus says to his disciples, “ Judge not, lest ye be judged ; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and what measure ye meet shall be measured to you again, &c.” In St. Luke, chap. ix. ver. 53, James and John desired of him that they might command fire from heaven to punish the Samaritans for not receiving him ; to which he was so far from consenting, that he sharply reproveth them for it, and tells them, “ Ye know not what spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy the world, but to save the world.” In the

same chapter, John said to him, “ Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. And Jesus said, forbid him not, for he that is not against us, is for us.” A beautiful and plain precept, for Christians to tolerate one another.

Through the whole 18th chapter of St. Matthew, our Saviour exhorts his disciples to be humble, and to forgive offences. And in the 15th verse, he tells them, “ If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; but if he will not hear thee, take one or two more with thee, &c. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church, or congregation ; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee like a heathen or a publican,” *i. e.* have no more to do with him. In the following verses he shews them what a church is ; *viz.* “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Will an English bishop allow that the presence of Christ shall be effectual to constitute a complete church, though a parson be not of the company ? I leave them to make their own reply.

Indeed, the whole New Testament is a lesson of faith and morality, of humility, humanity, and charity. The sermon upon the mount breathes the most refined ethics ; and we everywhere meet with precepts and cautions against pride and domination. In the 23rd chapter of Matthew our Lord spake to

the multitude, and to his disciples, bidding them not to be called master, "For one," says he, "is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren; but he that is greatest amongst you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." In St. Luke, chap. xx. ver. 46, he warns his disciples to beware of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief places at feasts (Hear, O ye bishops, priests, and deacons!), who devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers.

In St. Luke, chap. xxii. ver. 24, 25, 26, there was a strife among the apostles, which should be the greatest. "And Jesus said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise authority over them; and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest amongst you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve." The same is found in Matthew, chap. xx. ver. 25, 26, 27, and he enforces this precept in the 28th verse, from his own conduct: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Our blessed Lord did not, like others, preach doctrines to his disciples which he refused to practise, but taught them modesty and humility by his own example; for in the 13th chapter of John we

find he washes their feet himself, and bids them wash one another's. Alas! how different is the character and conduct of Christ and his apostles from the proud and lofty spirit of his pretended successors! My readers will be satisfied of this by their own experience, without any further remark of mine.

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CHAP. VII.

BISHOPS AND PRESBYTERS, ORIGINALLY THE SAME ORDER.

ORDINATION to the office of a bishop, did not originally differ from the ordination of a presbyter. No power was conveyed to a bishop, from which presbyters were secluded ; nor was there any qualification required in the office of the one, that was not required in the other. Timothy was not, properly speaking, a bishop. He was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.* We have already shewn, that the original of the order of bishops, was from the presbyters choosing one from among themselves, to be stated president in their assemblies, and this, perhaps, first occurred about the third century. Jerome declares, once and again, that in the days of the apostles, bishops and presbyters were the same ; that as low as his time, the bishops had gained no superior authority, but ordination. And Chrysostom and Theophylact affirm, that while the apostles lived, and for some

* 1 Tim. iv. 14.

ages after, the name of bishops and presbyters were not distinguished.

The authority of that very ancient copy of the Bible, now in the British Museum, sent by Cyrillus, Patriarch of Alexandria, to King Charles I., being all written in capital Greek letters, was vouched and asserted by Sir Simon D'Ewes, a great antiquary, and in this, the postscript to the epistles to Timothy and Titus are only thus :—“ *This first to Timothy, written from Laodicea :—to Titus, from Nicopolis.*” Hence, the critic infers that the styling of Timothy and Titus, first bishops of Ephesus and Crete, were the spurious additions of some eastern bishop or monk, at least five hundred years after Christ.*

It is also clear that presbyters may ordain without a bishop. The author of the Comment on the Ephesians, which goes under the name of St. Ambrose, says that in Egypt the presbyters ordain, if the bishops be not present ; so also does Augustine in the same words ; and the chorepiscopus, who was only a presbyter, had power to impose hands, and to ordain within his precincts, with the bishop's licence. Indeed, further, the presbyters of the city of Alexandria, with the bishop's leave, might ordain, as appears from *Con. Ancyr. Carit.* 3, where it is said, it is not lawful for chorepiscopi to ordain presbyters or deacons ; nor for the presbyters of the city, in another parish, without the bishop's letter ; which evidently implies, that they might do

* See Rushworth, vol. iv. p. 284.

so with the bishop's letter, and perhaps without it, in their own parish.

Firmilianus says of those who rule in the church, whom he calls *seniores et præpositi*, i. e. presbyters as well as bishops, that they had the power of baptizing, and of laying on hands in ordaining.

Archbishop Usher informs us, in his Letter to Dr. Bernard, " I have ever delivered my opinion to be, that *episcopus et presbyter gradu tantum differunt, non ordine*, and consequently, that in places where bishops cannot be had, the ordination by presbyters stands valid ; but the ordination made by such presbyters as have severed themselves from those bishops to whom they have sworn canonical obedience, I cannot excuse from being schismatical. I think that churches which have no bishops are defective in their government ; yet, for the justifying my communion with them whom I do love and honour as true members of the church universal, I do profess, if I were in Holland, I should receive the blessed sacrament at the hands of the Dutch, with the like affection as I should from the hands of the French ministers were I at Charenton." The same bishop, in his answer to Mr. Baxter, informs us, that the king having asked him at the Isle of Wight, whether he found in antiquity that presbyters alone ordained any ? he replied, yes ; and that he could shew his Majesty more, even where presbyters alone successively ordained bishops than otherwise, and instanced, in Jerome's words, (*Epist. ad Evagrium*),

of the presbyters of Alexandria choosing and making their own bishops from the days of Mark till Heraclus and Dionysius.*

That bishops and presbyters were originally the same, was the opinion even of Bancroft himself ; for when Dr. Andrews, Bishop of Ely, moved that the Scotch bishops elect might first be ordained presbyters, in the year 1610, Bancroft replied, there was no need of it, since ordination by presbyters was valid ; upon which the said bishop concurred in their consecration. And yet lower, when the Archbishop of Spalato was in England, he desired bishop Moreton to re-ordain a person who had been ordained beyond sea, that he might be more capable of preferment ; to which the bishop replied, it could not be done but to the scandal of the reformed churches, in which he would have no hand. The same prelate adds, in his *Apol. Cathol.*, that to ordain was the *jus antiquum* of presbyters. To these may be added the testimony of bishop Burnet, whose words are these : “ As for the notion of distinct offices of bishop and presbyter, I confess it is not so clear to me ; and, therefore, since I look upon the sacramental actions as the highest of sacred performances, I cannot but acknowledge that those who are empowered with them, must be of the highest office of the church.”†

It may further be proved from the writings of

* See Baxter's Life, p. 206.

† Vindication of the Church of Scotland, p. 336.

the learned Dr. Reynolds, of Oxford, and others, that only two orders of church officers are of divine appointment, viz. bishops and deacons ; and that the superiority of bishops above presbyters was of human appointment, and did not take place for several centuries after the introduction of the church of Christ. Aerius declares and maintains that, “ there ought to be no difference between a priest and a bishop ;” and though Epiphanius endeavours to disprove this, his arguments are so weak, that even Bellarmine, the popish champion, confesses that the arguments are not agreeable to the text ; and though St. Austin, in his book of heresies, ascribes this opinion to Aerius for one, because it condemned the order of the Romish church and created a schism, yet it is a different thing to say, that by the word of God there is no difference between bishop and presbyter, and to say that it is by the order and custom of the popish church, which is all that St. Austin means. When Harding, the papist, alleged these very witnesses to prove that the opinion of bishops and priests being of the same order, was heresy, our learned bishop Jewel quoted to the contrary, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, and St. Austin himself ; and concluded his answer with these words : “ all these, and other more holy fathers, together with the apostle Paul, for thus saying, by Harding’s advice, must be held for heretics.”

Michael Medina, a man of great repute in the

“ Council of Trent,” adds to the above testimonies, Theodorus, Primarius, Sedulius, Theophylact, with whom agree Oecumenius, the Greek scholiast, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, Gregory, and Gratian. Besides, all that have laboured in reforming the church, for about 800 years, have taught that all pastors, be they entitled bishops or priests, have equal authority and power by God’s word. This was first taught by the Waldenses, next by Marsilius Patavinus, then by Wickliff and his scholars, afterwards by Huss and his followers ; again by Luther, Calvin, Brentius, Bullinger, Musculus ; then by other learned men, as Bradford, Lambert, Jewel, Pilkington, Humphreys, Fulke, and others ; and it is the common judgment of the reformed churches of Helvetia, Savoy, France, Scotland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Low Countries, and now of our own.

Dr. Reynolds, again adverting to Dr. Bancroft’s sermon of January 12th, 1588, in which he maintains that St. Jerome and Calvin had confessed, that bishops have had superiority over presbyters ever since the time of St. Mark the Evangelist, says, as to Dr. Bancroft’s saying that Jerome, and Calvin from him, confessed that bishops have had the same superiority ever since the time of St. Mark the Evangelist, I think him mistaken, because neither Jerome says it, nor does Calvin seem to confess it on his report. Bishops among us may do many other things, besides ordaining and laying on

of hands, which inferior ministers and priests may not ; whereas St. Jerome says, “ what does a bishop except ordination, which a priest does not ? ” meaning that in his time bishops had only that power above priests, which Chrysostom also remarks in Homily II. on 1 Timothy. Nor had they this privilege alone in all places, for in the Council of Carthage it is said, that, “ the priests laid their hands, together with the bishops,* on those who were ordained.” And St. Jerome having proved by scripture, that in the time of the Apostles, bishops and priests were all one, yet grants that afterwards bishops had that peculiar to themselves in some places ; but proves nothing else, so that St. Jerome does not say concerning the superiority in question, that bishops have had it ever since St. Mark’s time. Nor, indeed, does Calvin confess it ; he says, that in old time ministers chose one out of their company in every city, to whom they gave the title of bishop ; yet the bishop was not above them in honour and dignity ; but, as consuls in the senate, propose matters, ask their opinions, direct others by giving advice, by admonishing, by exhorting, and so guide the whole action, and by their authority see that performed which was agreed on by common consent. The same charge had the bishop in the assembly of ministers ; and having shewn from St. Jerome that this was brought in by consent of men, he adds, that, “ it was an ancient order

* See Strype’s Life of Whitgift.

of the church even from St. Mark ;” from whence it is apparent, that the order of the church he mentions, has relation to that in which he affirms that, “the bishop was not so above the rest in honour, as to have rule over them.” It therefore follows, that Calvin does not even appear to acknowledge the report of St. Jerome.

But what is still more to the purpose, the scriptures mention only two orders of offices in the church, viz. bishops and deacons ; Philip. i. 1. “ Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacon *ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις.*” The name, office, and work of a bishop and presbyter are the same ; as in Titus i. 5, 7, &c. “ For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (*πρεσβυτέρους*) in every city, as I had appointed thee. For a bishop (*ἐπίσκοπον*) must be blameless, &c.” Acts xx. 28, &c. “ Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (*ἐπισκόπους*) &c.” 1 Peter v. 1, 2, &c. “ The elders (*πρεσβυτέρους*) which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder (*πρεσβύτερος*) &c.” As the apostles were extraordinary officers, so were Timothy and Titus, viz. evangelists, but neither of them, as before said, are called bishops in scripture, much less were they fixed to Ephesus or Crete, but travelled up and down to establish

churches in several countries. In the same order of officers there was not any one superior to another, —no apostle above an apostle, no presbyter above a presbyter, nor one deacon above another.

The angels of the churches in the Apocalypse are never called bishops, nor is the word used in any of St. John's writings ; he calls himself a presbyter, from whence we perceive the identity of these offices in scripture, and the equality of the officers.

From what has been said, it is clear that the governing of the church belongs to the presbyters as much as to the bishops. This also is the more evident from the two words used in the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistle of St. Peter, ποιμαίνειν and ἐπισκοπεῖν, under the force of which the bishops claim their whole right of government and jurisdiction ; and when the apostle Paul was taking leave of the Ephesian presbyters and bishops, he commits the government of the church, not to Timothy who was then with him, but to the presbyters under the name of bishops made by the Holy Ghost.

Hence it may be fairly concluded, that bishops and presbyters are only two names of the same order. The obscurity of church history, in the times succeeding the apostles, might, indeed, induce the catalogue-makers to take up their succession upon report ; and it is a blemish to their evidence, that the nearer they come to the days of the apostles, the more doubtful and contradictory

are they. Human testimony on church officers ought to be discharged, and the determination be by scripture only. And here we shall find no distinction between bishop and presbyter, and no mention of archbishops, archdeacons, deans, chancellors, and the modern host of officials ; but simply bishops and deacons.

I have already shewn that Timothy and Titus were evangelists, *i. e.* not fixed to one place, but travelling with the apostles, from one country to another, to plant churches. The account of their travels may be sketched from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the epistles of St. Paul. The apostles could no more part with their power of governing than they could with their apostleship. Had they set up bishops in all churches, they had no more parted with their power of governing than in setting up presbyters ; presbyters being called rulers, governors, and bishops. Nor could the apostle be reasonably supposed to commit the government of the church of Ephesus to the presbyters, when he was taking his last farewell of them, and yet reserve the power of governing in ordinary to himself. It would be very unaccountable if there had been two sorts of bishops,—one over presbyters, and the other over the flock,—that there should be no mention, no mark or trace of difference, no distinct method of ordination by which they might be distinguished throughout the whole compass of the New Testament.

To assert, then, that the scriptures assign any particular work or duty to a bishop that is not common to a presbyter, is to affirm without evidence. There is, indeed, a succession in the work of teaching and governing ; but none in commission or office by which the apostles performed them. A succession may be in the same work, but there is not to the commission ; nor can any such scripture be produced to warrant the division of the office of teaching and governing to two persons : it is solely an interested invention of men to obtain the power to themselves.

Let my countrymen remember that to add to the religion of Christ is sinful, and to enforce observance or respect to these additions by penalties, is to exercise a forbidden jurisdiction in the church. It is our duty, therefore, to make a bold and vigorous stand against all usurpation and arbitrary power ; and he who is as tenacious of his religious, as he is of his civil liberty, will oppose both with equal spirit and equal firmness.

CHAP. VIII.

THE UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION OF THE CLERGY REFUTED.

SINCE all the most idle and visionary pretences of the Roman and English high clergy have their ends, and their danger, and therefore should be narrowly watched and vigorously opposed, I shall inquire into the validity of a principal claim of their's ; I mean that of uninterrupted succession. We will endeavour to find whether there is any foundation to support this corner-stone of their authority except in their own imaginations.

A man might reasonably imagine that a doctrine of so much importance to the temporal and eternal state of all mankind, should be expressly laid down, and fully explained in the holy Scriptures, to prevent all possibility of mistake about it. But instead of this, the thing, as far as I remember, is not once mentioned there, nor any thing equivalent to it ; so that we are under a necessity of recurring to the clergy themselves for information. And here, too, we are as much bewildered as

before, for some of them boldly assert it, and others flatly deny it.

Besides, those who hate and damn one another, claim it equally to themselves, and deny it to all others. Those who are successors to the apostles in England, disown their brother successors beyond the Tweed and about the Lake ; and they theirs at Greece and Armenia, as well as every where else. Now, all these who so confidently assume the successorship to themselves alone, are as opposite to each other in sentiments and worship as light is to darkness. They cannot, therefore, all have it ; and if only one has it, how shall we know who he is ? No man's testimony ought to be taken in his own case ; and if we take that of other people, there are twenty to one against them all.

If the clergy of the church of England, as by law established, be, of all the reformed, supposed to enjoy this line of entail entire to themselves, pray how came they by it ? Not from the Reformation, which began not till near fifteen centuries after the apostles were dead ; and Cranmer owned ordination then to be no more than a civil appointment to an ecclesiastical office. It is certain, that at that time, this Utopian succession was not so much as thought of by any who embraced the Protestant religion. At present, indeed, and for a good while past, the high clergy contend for it with equal modesty and truth. But in order to adopt it, they are forced to pass over the Reformation.

This same succession is now deduced from Rome, and the pope has had the keeping of it, who is held, by all who adhere to the Reformation, to be Antichrist and the man of sin. This pope has frequently been an Atheist, often an adulterer, often a murderer, always an usurper, and his church has constantly lived in gross idolatry, and subsisted by ignorance, frauds, rapine, cruelty, and all the blackest vices. It is certain she was full of wickedness and abomination, and void of all goodness and virtue, but that of having kept the apostolic orders pure and undefiled for our modern high churchmen. However, I think they themselves appear to be sensible that it will be a difficult matter to make out, in this way, their kindred to the apostles, without being nearer akin to popery. These churchmen are, therefore, forced to own the church of Rome to be a true church. Nor ought we to be surprised if, in succeeding to the orders of that church, they also succeed to most of her good qualities. I confess it would look a little absurd if, among we laymen, any one should gravely assert, that, though *Lais* was so filthy a strumpet that no virtuous woman would converse with her, yet that she was, for all that, a true virgin, and that all chastity was derived from her!

But such absurdities as these go for nothing among some sort of ecclesiastics. We will, therefore, inquire what it is which the clergy would succeed to. The apostles had no ambition, juris-

diction, dignities, or revenues, to which they could be successors. We do not, in scripture, read one word of ecclesiastical princes, popes, patriarchs, primates, and a host of officials. On the contrary, our Saviour himself declares that his kingdom is not of this world. When the young man in the gospel* asked of him what he should do to obtain eternal life? he answered, that, beside keeping the commandments, he should sell all that he had, and give to the poor. Christ did not bid the young man give one penny to the priests.

In the twentieth chapter of the same gospel, our Saviour takes notice to his disciples, that the princes of this world exercise dominion over them; “but,” says he, “it shall not be so amongst you; but whosoever will be great amongst you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief, let him be your servant.” Nay, he says, “that even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” In the twenty-third chapter he condemns the Scribes and Pharisees for loving the uppermost rooms, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and their desiring to be called of men, Rabbi; and he forbids all this pride to his disciples as well as to his casual hearers, and orders them not to call one another, Master; “for,” says he, “one is your master, even Christ, and he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” Nor

* Matt. xix. 16.

do I find that while he was upon earth, he laid claim to any power but to do the will of Him that sent him. Indeed, after his resurrection, he tells his disciples that all power is given to him in heaven and in earth ; and he bids them teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; but he does not give them the least power or dominion of any kind whatever. It is plain, too, that his disciples understood him so. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, in the first chapter of his second epistle to them, that he and his fellow-apostles had not dominion over their faith, but were helpers of their joy. In the fourth chapter of the same epistle, he tells them, that they preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves their servants for Jesus' sake. In the third chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, he admonishes them not to glory in man,—no, not in himself, nor Apollos, nor Cephas ; and tells the people, that even the apostles themselves and all things are their's, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. In the ninth chapter he tells them, that though he is free from all men, yet he has made himself servant unto all, that he might gain the more. St. Peter, also, in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, exhorts the elders to feed the flock of Christ, and to take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither

as being lords over God's heritage, but as being examples to the flock.

These elders were either clergymen or not. If they were clergymen, their pretended successors may see upon what terms they are to be feeders and overseers of the flock of Christ. But if they were only laymen, then it is plain that no other qualifications were necessary to a spiritual shepherd, than a willing, disinterested, and humble mind; and all subjection is, in the fifth verse, commanded to be reciprocal: — “*Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*” I confess that I am not master enough of any language to find words more expressive, or which can more fully renounce all sorts of jurisdiction and dominion than those in the passages which I have here quoted; and nothing can be more ridiculous, as well as impious, than to oppose them with equivocal, doubtful, and figurative expressions. If the popish priests could but find out one such clear text on their side, how would they exult upon it!

It is clear that the apostles understood our Saviour in this sense; and it is evident that the first Christians had not the least apprehension that the apostles claimed any power or authority to themselves. They were poor men, of mean, or at

least of mechanical professions, who left fathers, mothers, children, families, trades, and renounced all the good things of this world, to wander about and preach Christ. Their disinterestedness and sufferings were powerful arguments for the truth of their doctrines. Had the apostles told their hearers, in the modern high-church strain, that, “as soon as they became their converts, they became also their spiritual subjects;—that they themselves were ecclesiastical princes, and that spiritual government was as much more excellent than the civil, as heaven was to earth, indeed more so;—that the episcopal honour and sublime dignity could not be equalled by the glory of kings and the diadems of princes;—that kings and queens ought to bow down to the priests, with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of their feet;—that they had a right not only to the tenth part of their estates, but of their labour; and that since they (their hearers) administered so many things to a king, who administers peace and war for bodily safety, they ought to administer more liberally to those who administer the priesthood towards God, and thus secure both body and soul by their prayers,”—then, indeed, there would have been some pretence for their claims. But they have not; though such blasphemous doctrine has been vended by Hicks, Leslie, and almost all the high church writers, and never publicly censured or disapproved by any convocation or body

of clergy, although the greatest enmity has been shewn towards those who have asserted contrary principles.

Besides, if such language as this had been propagated at the first opening of the gospel, what progress could Christianity have made? How could the apostles have been disinterested witnesses of the truth of the doctrines which gave them such jurisdiction, dominion, and riches? And how justly would the princes and powers of the earth have punished such usurpations upon their civil and ecclesiastical authority! The silence of the enemies to Christianity is a sufficient confutation of this wicked and black calumny, cast upon them by their pretended successors, but with which their bitterest opposers had more modesty than to charge them, though they ransacked earth and hell for all other sorts of scandal.

CHAP. IX.

THE UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION OF THE CLERGY REFUTED,
CONCLUDED.

DR. TILLOTSON, in his Sermon against Transubstantiation, tells us, that it might well seem strange if any man should write a book to prove that an egg is not an elephant, and that a musket-bullet is not a pike. He might have added, that this was the hard circumstance to which the laity were reduced in their disputes about religion with most sets of ecclesiastics ; and what is still worse, that when they had proved these propositions, they were never the better.

The greatest part of mankind have learned to judge of religious matters by other faculties and senses than those which God has given them. The first thing they are taught is, that reason may be on one side of the question, and truth on the other ; which maxim being well established, there will be an end of all reasoning ever after. There can be no longer any criterion of truth and falsehood ; but those who, by education and custom,

have once got possession of the superstition and fears of the people, may impose upon them what crafty and advantageous doctrines they please. By these means the Christian religion, most easy and intelligible in itself, and adapted to the meanest capacities, is become in most countries a metaphysical science, made up of useless sublimities and insignificant distinctions, calculated to gratify the pride of corrupt clergymen, by making them admired and revered by the people for their profound knowledge and deep learning. Religion is consequently wholly left to their care and conduct, as being infinitely above poor *lay apprehensions*; and to this the world is beholden for the depravation of virtue and morality, and for all the domination, pomp, and riches of the popish priesthood.

I hope no one will condemn an undertaking intended to restore Christianity to its primitive innocence and native simplicity; to oppose common sense against pompous nonsense, and learned absurdity; and to shew how, and in what meaning, the kingdom of heaven is said to be revealed to babes and sucklings, while it is hidden from the learned and wise. That is, it is easily learned and known by those who make use of their graciously-assisted natural faculties and uncorrupted reason; but will always be hidden from such who hunt after it in the schools of the philosophers, or in any ambitious and factious assemblies and synods

of popish ecclesiastics. I shall aim to keep this plain and easy subject clear of all vain philosophy and metaphysical gibberish, with which the adversaries always attempt to entangle it ; as knowing well, that if they can but make it unintelligible, their authority will decide every question in their own favour.

I have already shewn that the apostles claimed no jurisdiction, authority, or coercive power, of any kind, over their hearers, but only obeyed the will of their Divine Master in delivering a message from heaven for the infinite benefit of mankind. To prove their mission they brought their credentials, viz. the power of working miracles. This miraculous power died with them, however, and the power and right they possessed to perform the duties and offices of Christianity, did not descend to one Christian more than to another, but all were equally empowered to exercise alike the functions of their most holy religion.

When a command is given from God to men to perform any action, it is not only the right of every one, but it becomes his duty to execute it himself, when he is capable of doing so. Whoever asserts the contrary, is obliged to prove it ; and he must not be surprised if, in a case of this great consequence, we should expect plain and direct texts, describing the extent of the power demanded, and the persons to whom it is given. It will not be enough to collect two or three scattered and dis-

jointed sentences, and, putting them on the rack, torture them till they confess what they never meant, and what is against the whole current of scripture. It must be laid down plainly and directly, and be made obvious to the meanest capacities; not depending upon the criticisms of rabbinical learning; not sublimated from Jewish and Heathen traditions; nor extorted from doubtful, equivocal, and unintelligible expressions. It is not consistent with the goodness of God to suffer a power, upon which the being of Christianity and the temporal and eternal happiness of the world depend, to remain in obscurity and darkness; and, therefore, we may be sure that whatever of this kind does so, is the invention of ambitious and wicked men, and not the will of the great, the good, and the merciful God.

It will be incumbent on them to shew one clear and direct text, where our Saviour confines the administration of the sacraments to any set of men whatsoever. But the contrary of this is so evident, that there is not, in scripture, one instance where the sacrament of our Lord's supper was ever administered by any one who, in our translation of the New Testament, is styled bishop or presbyter. And it is as plain that the right of baptizing belonged equally to all Christians.

But to proceed with my subject.—If a chain of uninterrupted succession had been necessary, an uninterrupted course of talents, graces, and abi-

lities, superior to those of all other lay-christians, had been necessary also to have made the clergy resemble those whom they were to succeed in an employment which required the highest. But there is no such peculiar genius or virtue found amongst them. They are qualified by means evidently human for this divine calling. They are sent to schools and universities to learn to be successors to the apostles, and, to use Dodwell's remarks on the Jewish priests, "they make use of wine, amongst other bodily helps, to obtain the prophetic spirit." All men, who have the same sense and opportunities, thrive, at least, as fast as those who are candidates for the priesthood. They might, if they pleased, apply their learning to the same uses. And as to grace, piety, and humanity, I think the modesty of the clergy will not allow them to pretend to excel their lay-friends in these endowments.

The apostles were inspired, had the gift of working miracles, could bestow the Holy Ghost, and had the discernment of spirits. They were, consequently, proper judges of the fitness of men for the ministry. Our modern divines are not inspired, cannot work miracles, nor give the Holy Ghost ; many of them cannot even find out their own spirit, much less can they discern the spirit of other people.

The apostles were a set of extraordinary persons, appointed by the Son of God to convert all nations,

and they had extraordinary endowments given to them for that end. Their pretended successors are a race of very ordinary men, possessed of no extraordinary abilities, are sent by no divine authority, but take up preaching as a respectable professional vocation, to obtain a livelihood.

Minellius and Gronovius have written notes upon Virgil and Livy ; but are they, for that reason, successors to Virgil and Livy ? And are the stupid commentators successors to the great Roman orator because they have slept over his works, and darkened them with illustrations ? Is every one who sails to America for gain, a successor to Columbus, who discovered and pointed out the way to the new world ? What must the Jews have thought of a set of hair-brained Israelites, who would have demanded of them vast respect and revenues for succeeding Moses in redeeming them from captivity to Pharaoh, and for leading them, every day of their lives, out of the land of Egypt, eighteen hundred years after they had left it ? Or could any number of Jews succeed Nehemiah in bringing back the captive tribes from Persia and Babylon ? Can any one succeed the Duke of Marlborough in fighting the battle of Hochsted, and in relieving the German empire ? I presume that every foot soldier is not a successor to Alexander the Great ; nor every serjeant of the guards descended in a military line from Julius Cæsar. Even

admitting that a succession had once existed, it could undeniably be proved that it has been frequently—I may almost say, constantly—interrupted and broken, under all those particulars which they judge necessary to its continuance.

CHAP. X.

THE HISTORY OF TITHES.

TITHES, from the Saxon word *Teodo*, which signifies the tenth part of a thing, have been defined to be the tenth part of the yearly increase, arising and renewing from the profits of land, or from the stock or personal industry of the inhabitants. But let it be remembered, that though the term *tithe*, or *tenth*, has more or less impressed every man, from long habit and custom, with that part of property which has been assigned to the maintenance of the priesthood, yet it literally means nothing more than the tenth of any thing ; and throughout the Greek and Roman writers, is usually applied to the spoils of war, which were occasionally and voluntarily given away in token of gratitude for success. The most ancient work in which we find the word first used, is the Old Testament, and in the sense here given ; from which circumstance it is possible the appropriation of tithes more particularly originated among the various nations of the earth.

Abraham, in his return from redeeming his nephew Lot, with his substance and all the substance of Sodom and Gomorrah, was blessed by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the most High God, and gave him tithes of all. What that all was, is not agreed upon among the learned. Flavius Josephus, a Jew, and others, suppose it to have been the tithes of what was obtained by the war; *i. e.* of all that Abraham brought back.

The next mention of tithes is in Jacob's vow: "This stone," saith he, "which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will tithes and give the tenth to thee." Josephus informs us, that twenty years afterwards Jacob performed his vow; but into whose hands he gave his tithes is not known, Isaac, his father, being chief priest at the time. Many of the learned have thought, that both Abraham and Jacob were priests when they paid their tithes.

We have no express mention again of tithes in the sacred writings till the time of Moses. The yearly increase of the Jews were either fruits of the ground, or cattle. In the law of fruits of the ground, the first of the most forward were offered to the priest, in ears of wheat and barley, figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, and dates; of these seven, the owner paid in what quantities he thought proper. The next was the *therumah*, or heave offering, or first-fruits of corn, wine, oil, fleece, and other similar things; but it was not

determined by Moses of what quantity this heave-offering should be. The Jews anciently assessed it at the fiftieth part ; but he who paid a sixtieth part was discharged. Many of the strictly devotional Jews offered a fortieth.

The sixtieth part was not under the quantity of the therumah appointed in Ezekiel, where the words are, “ This is the therumah that ye shall offer : the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat ; and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley.” It is the same as if he had said, ye shall offer a therumah of the sixtieth part of every homer. An ephah being the same measure with a bath, *i. e.* near our common bushel, was the tenth part of an homer ; therefore, the sixth part of an ephah was the sixtieth of an homer. After the therumahs offered to the priests, every kind being given in season, out of the rest were taken the tithes, which are best divided into the first and second tithe.

The first tithe was paid out of the remainder, to the Levites at Jerusalem. By the name of tithe it is every where styled ; and out of this tenth received by the Levites, they paid another tenth to the priests, as a heave offering out of their tenth ; which they also called the tithe of the tithe. The priests received no tithes of the husbandman ; but the Levites, who paid their tenths to the priests, did. The Levites could not spend any part of the tenth, until the priests' tenth was paid ; afterwards it

might be employed for their maintenance generally. This first tenth being paid, the nine parts remaining in possession of the husbandmen were accounted profane, or for common use ; yet it was not to be spent by the possessor until he had taken from those nine another tithe, which he was to carry, the two first years, to Jerusalem in kind ; or if the distance were too great, to turn it into money, adding a fifth part of the value, (to this tithe the Jews apply that of Levit. xxvii. 30, 31,) and to spend it at Jerusalem, at the temple, in feasts, which were similar to the *agapæ*, or love feasts of the ancient Christians. Every third year he was to spend the same upon the poor and Levites within his own gates. After these tenths were thus disposed of, the remainder of the year's increase was for common use.

Of the cattle of the Jews, the first born was the Lord's, paid to the priest, of clean beasts in kind ; of unclean in money, with a fifth part added. Of the increase, one tithe only was paid, and that only to the Levites. " Every tithe of bullock and of sheep, of all that goeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to the Lord." At the tithing, the Jews were accustomed to shut the lambs in a sheep-cot, with a small door to permit but one at a time to escape. A servant stood at the door with a rod coloured with ochre, and as the sheep escaped, he solemnly told the tenth, which he also marked

with his rod. Whether male or female, bad or good, it was the tithe, and could not be changed.

How the payment of these tenths was occasionally observed and discontinued, appears partly in the Old Testament, partly by the institution of more trusty overseers.* After the new dedication of the temple by Judas Maccabæus, until his fourth successor, John Hyrcanus—being nearly thirty years—every man duly paid his first-fruits and therumahs; but the first or second tithes, few or none paid justly; and that through the corruption of the overseers. Upon which, the Sanhedrim enacted, that the overseers should be chosen out of more honest men. At the time of this act, a heave-offering, or therumah of the tenth of all, was enforced, *i. e.* that a hundredth part should be given to the priests, and that the second tithe should be paid at the temple; but no first tithe was to be paid of any such thing.

From the above act of the Sanhedrim to the last destruction of the temple, it appears from the sacred writings, that the just payment of tithes continued.

The tithing of every herb spoken of in the gospel, and observed by the scribes and pharisees, was never commanded in scripture, or by the Jewish canon law. There was a tradition of the Rabbies, however, that all things growing out of the earth,

* *Apud* Josephus, Ant.

and fit for man's meat, are titheable ; and by this payment of herbs, the pharisees were on the most sure side.

After the destruction of the second temple, and the dispersion of the Jews, the law of first-fruits, therumahs, and tithes, ceased ; and the most learned doctors among them determine, that no inhabitants but of the land of Israel were to pay tithes, except Senaar, Moab, Ammon, and Egypt.* The great Joseph Scaliger says, that he asked many of the Jews whether their laws of sacrifices, first-fruits, and tithes would be revived, if they were again to rebuild their temple, as they did after their captivity? Their answer was, that to build the temple would be to no purpose, because they had no lawful priesthood, there being not one Jew who could prove himself a Levite. It is clear and evident to every disinterested mind, and that from human testimony as well as divine, that God never intended to impose the payment of tithes on any people but the Jews, which being a part of the Theocracy, was necessary to the support of the Levites, who were a tenth of the population, and had no other inheritance.

The custom of the Gentile nations in giving away a tenth, which is usually brought forward by the supporters of the present system of tithes, is

* Vide In Iad Chazeka Tract. de Therumah, c. 1., and Mikotzi in Præcept. 133, and Eusebius ἀποδείξ. εὐαγγελ. lib. α. cap. α.

chiefly to be confined to the Greeks and Romans. The Grecians, under which name the Asiatics, who were of Greek manners, are comprehended, often consecrated their tithes to Apollo, as may be seen from the following inscription at Delphi :—

ἮΟφρα Θεῷ δεκάτην ἀκροθίνια τε κρεμάσασαιμεν.

“*That we may hang up tithes and first-fruits to the honour of Phœbus.*”

The Crotonians, before their war against the Locrians, vowed a tenth to Apollo;* and the Locrians, to exceed their enemies, a ninth; the oracle having artfully given it out, that—

“*Rather by excess in vows than arms, the victory should be gained.*”

To the same deity the inhabitants of Siphnus gave yearly the tithe of their mines which they found in the isle.† And after a victory over the Thessalians, by the Phocians, they made two statues of the tithe of the spoils for Apollo.‡ After the victory of Pausanius over Mardonius, the money of the tenth of the spoils was, by consecration, divided between Jupiter Olympius, Neptunus Isthmicus, and Apollo. Xenophon tells us, that Diana of Ephesus participated in tithes. Sometimes the offering was given to Jupiter alone; sometimes Juno received tithes, as did also Pallas and Mars.

* Trogus Histor. 20.

† Herodot. lib. γ.

‡ Idem in Urania.

The examples among the Grecians, shew that tithes were vowed to the gods in the event of success in an undertaking—generally of a warlike nature—or otherwise arbitrarily given, or, by some local custom, paid to especial deities.

The Romans had a species of devotion in giving tithes, but neither yearly nor by compulsory law, as some, through ignorance, have imagined. The more wealthy Romans frequently tithed their estates to Hercules, by spending the tenth in sacrifices, gifts to his temple, feasts to his honour, and other similar modes, as evidently appears by Plutarch's words, in which he seeks to know the reason ;—Διὸς τι, says he, τῶν Ἡρακλεῖ πολλοὶ τῶν πλουσίων ἐδεκάτευσον τὰς οὐσίας; *Why do many of the rich men tithe their substance to Hercules?* Plutarch remarks, with other ancient writers, that the giving of tithes was a special devotion of some of the sons of fortune.* Old Cassius is to be thus understood, where he derives the tenth given to Hercules, from an innovation made by Recaranus in the time of Evander.† He says that Recaranus first taught them to give the tenths of their fruits to Hercules, to whom he consecrated an altar under the name of INVENTORI PATRI, after he had regained his herds that Cacus had stolen, rather than give them to the King as he had been accustomed to do ; and then he adds—*inde videlicet tractum ut Herculi decimam profanari*

* Vide, In Lucullo, alibi et Diodor. Sicul. Bibliothec. 5.

† Apud Aurel. Vict. in Orig. Gent. Rom.

mos esset. From hence it came to be a custom of the laity, as we should say, that they paid a tithe to Hercules; but it was required by neither the civil nor the pontifical law. A tithe was often given as a thanksgiving after some increase of fortune, and often by a vow previously made; but was more generally bestowed on the increase of an estate, from money obtained upon sales, or from the spoils of war. Sometimes men are thankful for those things which make considerable accessions to their property, which induced Cicero jestingly to remark, *neque Herculi quisquam decimam vovit unquam si sapiens factus fuisset*;* (no man ever vowed to Hercules a tenth, in hope of an increase of wisdom.) An example is given in the *parasite*, of money obtained upon sale, who, after reckoning up his good merchandize, says, he must sell it as dearly as he can, that he may spend the tenth upon Hercules:—

“Hæc vœnisse jam opus est quantum potest,
Uti decimam partem Herculi polluceam.”†

The Romans not only gave tithes to Hercules, but to other gods. We find the old Pelasgi,‡ who transplanted themselves into Italy, gave their tenth of gain, from sea merchandize, to Apollo at Delphi, who before told them at Dodona, that being mixed with the Aborigines, *δεκάτην ἐκπέμψατε Φοῖβῳ, they shall*

* De Natura Deorum, lib. 3. † Plautus in Sticho.

‡ Dionys. Halicarnass. lib. 1, and Steph. *περι πολιν. Αβοριγ.*

send their tithes to *Phæbus*. Camillus vowed the tenth of the spoils to Apollo, and most carefully took his order to perform it by advice from their most learned priests.* Posthumius, the dictator, upon his happy victory over the Latins, tithed the spoils, spent forty talents upon sacrifices and prayers, in honour of the gods, and erected a temple with what remained to Ceres, Bacchus, and Proserpina.† Other deities, beside these, received occasional tithes, as Fortune and Mercury, being the gods of travellers and tradesmen; and the deities of the way, or *dii semitales*, as Vius and others.

In Italy, the custom to pay and vow tithes to the deities was arbitrary, and continued in use till the later times of the empire, as appears, also, in the law received from Ulpian by Justinian: “*si decimam quis bonorum vovit, decima non prius esse in bonis definit quam fuerit separata, et si forte, qui decimam vovit, decesserit ante sepositionem, hæres ipsius, hæreditario nomine, decimæ obstrictus est: voti enim obligationem ad hæredem transire constat.*”‡ By this it is manifest, that though the vow, or payment without vow, were arbitrary; yet, upon death, after the vow was made, the heir or executor of him that vowed was bound to pay.

* Plutarch. in Camill. Liv. lib. 5.

† Vide Dionys. Halicarnass. lib. 6 et 4.

‡ ff. tit. de pollicit. l. 2. quis § 2.

To the foregoing instances may be added the example of the Carthaginians, that sent the tithe of their Sicilian spoils to Hercules at Tyre.* The Arabian law may be here remembered, in which every merchant was bound to carry his frankincense to Sabota (which the learned take to be Saubatha in Ptolemy, the chief city of Arabia Fœlix), and there offer to their god Sabis the tenth of it, which the priests received. No sale was permitted till the tithe was paid. There is little doubt but Sabis was the same with Bacchus, Uranus, Jupiter, or Sabazius, under different names. The number of the deities of the Arabians were always accounted but two ;† the god Uranus, known also by those other names ; and the goddess Urania or Venus. It is, therefore, pretty clear that Sabis is the same with Sabazius, which was first corrupted from Zabaoth of the scriptures, an attribute of the only and true God. And as this name, so the payment of tenth, probably came to them from the use of it among their neighbours the Jews, as well as to the Carthaginians from their ancestors the Phœnicians, who spake the same language with the Jews, and frequently conversed with them. Nor is it unlikely that the ancient example of Abraham, as I before observed, gave rise to the Europeans to denote the tenth of their spoils of war being

* Vide Justin. lib. 18.

‡ Celsus ap. Originem, lib. 2. Arrian. de gest. Alex. ζ. Strabo, lib. 15. Herodot. lib. γ.

given occasionally to holy uses ; for it is not uncommon to find Jewish customs prevail among the Gentiles, though they may ultimately vary, from the circumstances of time and place. The tenth paid among the Mahometans must be referred to the Mosaic law, which they receive as authentic, but keep according to the imposter's fancy, and the doctrines of his canonists.

CHAP. XI.

THE HISTORY OF TITHES, CONCLUDED.

No historical fact is more certain than this, that the system of tithes was not introduced into the Christian church till towards the close of the fourth century. The church, as I have before shewn, was, for several hundred years, maintained by voluntary oblations. In the age of the apostles we find that the unity of heart, among those at Jerusalem, was such, that every thing was in common :—“ As many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet : and it was distributed unto every man according as he had need.”* In Antioch, where the first Christian church was planted, every one of the disciples had a special ability or estate of his own.† In Galatia and in Corinth, St. Paul ordained that weekly offerings for the saints should be given by every man according to his ability.‡ From examples like these, the course of monthly offerings succeeded in the next ages. They were given by

* Acts, iv. 34.

† Idem. xi. 29.

‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

able and devout Christians, and were carefully and charitably disposed of for the support of Christian worship, for the maintenance of the ministers of religion, for the feeding, clothing, and burying of their poor brethren, widows, and orphans, and persons tyrannically condemned to the mines, to prison, or to banishment. These contributions were called *stipes*, a word borrowed from the heathens, by whom it was given to the collections made for their temples and deities. These offerings were not exacted by canon law, but voluntarily given; as is proved from the testimony of the most learned.

Tertullian, who lived about two hundred years after Christ, says, “ *Neque pretio ulla res Dei constat. Etiam si quod arcæ genus est, non de oneraria summa quasi redemptæ religionis congregatur. Modicam unusquisque stipem menstrua die vel cum velit, et si modo velit, et si modo possit, apponit. Nam nemo compellitur, sed sponte confert. Hæc quasi deposita pietatis sunt.*” He goes on to shew the employment of them in those charitable uses.*

There are authorities extant to prove, that about this time lands began to be given to the church.†

* Apologetic, cap. xxxix. et videsis, cap. xlii.

† Vide Urban. I. in epist. c. xii. 9. I. c. xvi. Sed et vide Euseb. eccles. hist. lib. ix. cap. ix. edict. Maximini, et lib. x. cap. v. edict. Constant. et in lib. ii. de Vita Constantini, cap. xxxix.

The profits of this property formed a treasury, from which, and the monthly offerings, a monthly pay was given to the priests and ministers of the gospel, as a salary for their service; which was distributed, either under the care, or by the hand of the bishop, or else of some elders appointed as *œconomi* or wardens. Those monthly payments they called *mensurnæ divisiones*, as may be seen in the writings of St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who wrote about the year A.D. 250.* The African speaks familiarly on these particulars, and calls the brethren who cast in their monthly offering, *fratres sportulantes*; the offering being denoted by the word *sportulæ*, which, in Rome, signified a kind of running banquets, distributed at the houses of noblemen to those who visited for salutation. These *sportulæ*, of the Romans, were frequently given in money, as may be seen in Martial. The word came, at length, as well to denote the oblations given to make a treasury for the salaries and maintenance of the ministers of the first ages of the church,† as it signified those salaries, wages, or fees, which either judges or ministers of courts of justice received as due to their situations.‡

* Cyprian. epist. 27. et 34. et vide epist. 36. editione Pameliana.

† Concil. Chalced. A.D. 541. in libell. Samuelis et al. contra Iban. et videsis tom. 3. concil. fol. 231. cap. xxxi. edit. Biiii penultima.

‡ Papinian. ff. de decurion. l. 6. §. 1. et c. tit. de sportulis. et vide glossas Græc. juris in *σπóρτουλα*.

Great advantage has been taken of a passage in Cyprian, by the interested clergy, which they have endeavoured to impose upon the credulous in support of tithes. The fact is this:—Cyprian is reproving one Geminus Faustinus, a priest, for being troubled with the office of warden to apportion and distribute the offerings to the ministers. He says, that the dignity of a priest should be free from all secular care, like the Levites, who were provided with tithes; his words are—“*Ut qui operationibus divinis insistebant, in nulla re avocarentur.*” And then he adds—“*Quæ nunc ratio et forma in clerico tenetur, ut qui in ecclesia Domini ad ordinationem clericalem promoventur nullo modo ab administratione divina avocentur, sed in honore sportulantium fratrum, tanquam decimas ex fructibus accipientes, ab altari et sacrificiis non recedant, et die ac nocte cælestibus rebus et spiritibus serviant.*” This plainly agrees with that monthly stipend made from the oblations brought into the treasury, which he compares with that which was received by the Levites. Hence, also, it is manifest that no payment of tithes was in use in the Christian church in the age of St. Cyprian; though the interested would too rashly infer it from this place. The words *tanquam decimas accipientes*, which continue the comparison of ministers of the gospel with the Levites, plainly exclude them.

The laws for the tenths of mines and quarries were made by Gratian, Valerian, and Theodosius,

Christian emperors, about A. D. 380.* Those who are desirous of reading more upon the subject of oblations, by which the church was alone supported for nearly four hundred years, can consult Marcellinus,† and St. Chrysostom,‡ together with the works of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine.

It is painful to remark, that of the present bench of bishops, I know not one who has come forward to oppose the surreptitious canons, decrees, and pious frauds, as they are termed, which were palmed upon the public during the dark ages, in support of tithes and the craft in general, and which now hang heavily upon religion. Let it be remembered, that he who enlightens the mind and cultivates the understanding, destroys the power of despotism, and contributes to the prosperity and happiness of his fellow-creatures, is a much greater and better man than the conqueror of kingdoms and the ravager of nations. Christianity is of too pure and substantial a nature to lose any thing by an exposure of its abuses. It may appear disgusting and forbidding to the eye of the superficial observer, in the dress in which it has often been made to appear by designing and selfish men ; but let it assume its pristine form,

* C. tit. de Metallariis, l. 3, cuncti. et in c. Theodos. lib. 10. tit. 19, l. 10, et 11:

† Amm. Marcellin. lib. 27.

‡ Tom. 6. edit. Saviliana, pag. 897. ὅτι οὐ χρὴ ἀνειδίξειν τοὺς ἱερεῖς, &c.

and it will appear the brightest boon of Heaven to man :—

“Soft peace it brings whenever it arrives,
It builds our quiet as it forms our lives ;
It lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven.”

The constitutions of the church, falsely said to be made by the apostles, and collected by Pope Clement I., expressly support the right of tenths. There we read—“ *Quæ secundum Dei mandatum tribuuntur, decimas dico et primitias, insumat episcopus ut homo Dei.*” And the right of tithes is largely argued upon the Levitical commandment. No honest man, however, will believe that this volume was written in or near the age of the apostles, nor till many hundred years after. It carries fraud and imposture in every page, and has been properly branded as counterfeit by many learned Christians. Previous to its present bulk, which it has gained from accessions of canons of later birth, it was considered in an oecumenical council as spurious.* Had these constitutions been the ordinances of the apostles, or of the church in the primitive times, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian, would not have passed them over in silence ; nor is it probable that all the ancient councils during the first six centuries, which, beyond exception, are re-

* Synod. 6. in Trullo, circa A.D. 690. can. 2.

ceived as authentic, and which contain the offerings, revenues, canons for the lands, and goods possessed by the church, should have omitted the name of tenths, if either such appropriation or apostolical law had preceded them.

Among the counterfeit canons which some too credulously received as made by the apostles, though they rejected the eight books of Clementine, is one on first-fruits; but there is no word of tithes.* I fear a similar credit is to be attached to a fourth council held at Rome, about A. D. 380, by Pope Damasus. Upon the testimony of Cardinal Baronius,† the legend of this pope, which was usually read in the church, is extant, and contains, with some miracles, certain decrees said to be his—but made in what council at Rome nobody knows. One is, “ *Ut decimæ atque primitiæ a fidelibus darentur, et qui detrectarent anathemate ferirentur,*” as he relates it. But these decrees were never received as canonical, nor were they ever mentioned in the oldest code of the church of Rome, or by Fulgentius, Cresconius, Isidore, Burchard, Ivo, or Gratian. There are some decrees of Damasus, with epistles and canons of one council of Rome, that were publicly dispersed in the writings of various compilers; but the subjects

* Vide Canon. Apost. cap. iii. et iv.

† Baron. Annal. tom. iv. ann. 382, pag. 399, et a. 384, pag. 127. edit. Plantiniana.

of tithes, usurers, witches, and other things, which Baronius says he alone published to the world, from a MS., do not appear in any of them, though the pope, in his more generally received writings, speaks of the offerings and oblations of the church.* Nor has any volume of the councils, before the edition of Binius, any decrees or councils of Damasus, such as are related by Baronius. Such impositions as those practised by this writer were not unusual among idle monks in the middle ages. Acts and legends of popes were then published, illustrated by fiction and bold interpolation, which the interested now acknowledge with reverence, and the unwary, mistaking the antiquity of their character, receive as truth. I will mention one of these legends among many, which was written with a view to establish an authority coeval with the apostles for the payment of tithes; which, if my reader can, under any suspension or accidental obliquity of his intellect, admit, he will possess as certain and express authority for the ancient practice of the payment of tithes, as any church in Christendom can produce. The legend may be seen in the public library of Oxford, bound up at the end of "The Life of Thomas à Becket," by John de Grandisono. The story is this:—

About the year A. D. 600, St. Augustine went

* C. 10, q. 1, c. 15, hanc consuetudinem.

to preach at Cometon in Oxfordshire. The priest of the place made a heavy complaint to the saint, that the lord of the manor, though often admonished by him, yet would pay him no tithes. Augustine questioned the lord about his default in devotion; but he stoutly answered, that the tenth sheaf was, doubtless, his that had interest in the nine, and therefore he would pay none. Presently Augustine declared him excommunicated, and turning to the altar to say mass, publicly forbade that any excommunicated person should be present; when, suddenly, a dead corpse, that had been buried at the church door, arose and departed out of the limits of the church-yard, standing still without while the mass continued. On its being ended, Augustine came up to this living-dead, and charged him, in the name of the Lord God, to declare who he was. He told the saint, that in the time of the British state, he was *hujus villæ patronus*; and although he had been often urged by the doctrine of the priest to pay his tithes, yet he never could be brought to it; for which he died, he says, excommunicated, and was carried to hell.* Augustine desired to know where the priest who excommunicated him was buried. This living-dead man shewed him the place, where the saint made an invocation of the dead priest, and bade him arise, because they wanted his help. The priest arose. Augus-

* I should think the author meant purgatory.

tine asked him, if he knew the other who was risen: yes, replied the priest, and also expressed wishes that he had never known him; for, says he, he was in all things ever adverse to the church, a detainer of his tithes, and a great sinner to his death, and, therefore, I excommunicated him. Augustine then publicly declared that it was now proper that mercy should be used towards him, for that he had suffered long in hell for his offence; whereupon the saint gave him absolution, and sent him to his grave, where he again fell into dust and ashes. This *patronus* being departed, the newly risen priest told the saint that his corpse had lain in the grave above a hundred and seventy years. Augustine would gladly have had him continue upon earth again for the instruction of souls, but could not prevail upon him, so he also returned to his former lodging. The lord of the place standing by all this time, and trembling, was now demanded if he would pay his tithes, upon which he fell down at St. Augustine's feet, weeping and confessing his offence, and receiving pardon, became all his lifetime a payer of tithes, and a follower of Augustine!

This legend is also found in the *historia aurea* of Johannes Anglicus,* and in the margin of his book are these words:—“*Hoc miraculum videbitur illis incredibile qui credunt aliquid deo esse impossibile.*”

* MS. part. 2. lib. 17. cap. 72.

Sed nulli dubium est quod nunquam Anglorum duræ cervices Christi jugo se submisissent nisi per magna miracula sibi divinitus ostensa.” It would be an insult upon the understanding, to waste more time in tracing the various modes of force and fraud by which the system of tithes has been enforced by pontifical, provincial, and imperial mandate, from their commencement in the fifth century to the present day. We have certain, but no less melancholy, evidence of their existence during the dark ages up to the present enlightened period. No mention is made of tithes in the grand codex of canons, ending A. D. 457, which book, next to the Bible, Bishop Barlow considered to be the most authentic in the world. During the greater part of the first five centuries it is certain that both the clergy and the church were supported by the free gifts and oblations of the pious.* Blackstone is of opinion, that tithes in England were contemporary with the planting of Christianity among the Saxons by Augustine the monk, about the end of the sixth century; † and that tithes existed by way of offering prior to the year 750, is apparent from the canons of Egbert, Archbishop of York. The payment of tithes is also strongly enjoined in a constitutional decree made in a synod held A. D. 786; but no law appears to have existed for the enforcing the payment of them by civil coercion, prior to

* See Barl. Rem. 169.

† Black. 2 Com. 25.

the year 794, when Offa, King of Mercia, made a grant to the church of the tithes of all his kingdoms, viz. Mercia and Northumberland; and Ethelwulph, about sixty years afterwards, extended it to the whole realm of England.

In the *Fœdus Edwardi et Guthruni*,* the payment of tithes is also strictly enjoined, as it afterwards was by the laws of Athelstan,† about the year 930. And since that period, tithes have been not only fully and generally established, but the payment enforced, as well by the municipal or common, as by the ecclesiastical law.

As to the propriety of the institution of tithes, there can be but one opinion among all disinterested men. Under the Christian economy it is of human invention. Had it been by divine right and appointment, it would have been clearly laid down in the New Testament, and would not have required the propping up of legends and artful priests. Paley says, that “of all the institutions which are adverse to cultivation and improvement, *none is so noxious as that of tithes*. They are not only a TAX upon industry, but upon that industry that feeds mankind, upon that species of exertion which it is the aim of the all-wise laws to cherish and promote.” It is an institution which has supported luxury, pride, and indolence, and done more injury to religion than all the writings of infidels, from

* c. 6.

† s. 6. See Wilk. 51.

Celsus to Carlile. The wisdom of the legislature should modify laws as time and circumstances alter, and as the voice of imperative necessity demands. I shall have occasion in my future publications to revert to this subject, when I will endeavour to point out some of the evils which the system of tithes has brought upon mankind, and which every British subject more or less feels. In doing this, I know I shall incur the displeasure of bishops and their underlings ; but I have long known that all mad-men are not in Bedlam. Those who are there I sincerely pity; at those who are not, I shall continue to laugh.

CHAP. XII.

THE WEALTH OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH, COMPARED WITH THE
WEALTH OF THE CHURCHES OF OTHER NATIONS.

It would make a curious history, to discover and explain minutely, from what particular men, and by what particular arts and application, every farm, every estate, and every donation, now possessed by churchmen, was at first acquired. I question whether any revenues in the world were ever so wickedly procured; since, to enrich the church, all means, even murder and every impiety, have been deemed lawful. Father Paul, a translation of whose History of the Council of Trent it is my intention to give to the public, with notes, as soon as time will permit, says, that the church is beholden, for her greatest legacies and donations, to the bounty of infamous women, strumpets, and prostitutes; or to that of peevish people, who thus gratified their spite towards their own blood and relations. And as the church had no riches but what were freely given to her, or taken and obtained by her unjustly, so she had no power but what was either begged or usurped.

It is well known that assassins and blasphemers purchased protection and absolution; that tyranny

and oppression were warranted and sanctified; that holy snares were laid; that false terrors were spread; that miracles were forged; that God's name was blasphemed; that Jesus and the holy Virgin were profanely personated by priests, to delude enthusiasts to suppose these heavenly beings honoured them with a visit in person,—and all this to create wealth for the church. Indeed, it were endless to enumerate all the arts and impieties, impostures and falsehoods, by which churchmen formerly filled their coffers, at the expense and through the stupidity of laymen. But though no possessions were so impiously obtained, I never heard of any instance in which they parted with them from remorse or shame, even when the right heirs, who were thus deprived of their estates, were starving, and the possessors, or rather usurpers, were gorged with more wealth than they could consume in their luxury and debauches.

Whatever was once annexed to the church in the days of usurpation and darkness, however knavishly obtained, was held sacred and unalienable; nay, it became no less than sacrilege to divest her of what she had gained by robbery and fraud. Whatever was once hers, even her frauds and crimes, were holy, and it was profane to censure them. Indeed, he who did so, was atheistical. Whoever found fault with the church was an enemy to the church; and he who was an enemy to the church, was an atheist. Hence the frequent

and ridiculous application of the terms, atheism and blasphemy, till these two words grew contemptible.

As to the quantity of the church's wealth, she never knew any bounds. As long as the laity had to give, she took ; till at last, in some countries, she possessed all.

Even in this Protestant country, the revenues of the established clergy amount to upwards of NINE MILLIONS, sterling, per annum, as may be seen by the following table* :—

Church-tithe	£. 6,884,800
Incomes of the bishoprics	297,115†
Estates of the deans and chapters	494,000
Glebes and parsonage-houses	250,000
Perpetual curacies, 75 <i>l.</i> each	75,000
Benefices not parochial, 250 <i>l.</i> each	32,450
Church-fees on burials, marriages, christenings, &c.	500,000
Oblations, offerings, and compositions for offerings at the four great festivals	80,000
College and school foundations	682,150
Lectureships in towns and populous places	60,000
Chaplainships and offices in public institutions	10,000
New churches and chapels	94,050

Total revenue of the established clergy, £.9,459,565

I believe this revenue to be larger than in the times of popery, notwithstanding the demolition of so many monasteries, and the seizure of their in-

* Taken from the "Extraordinary Black Book."

† The See of Sodor and Man is not in charge in the king's books, and is omitted in this estimate.

comes ; for it must be remembered, that the clergy then maintained the poor, who are now supported chiefly by the laity, at the immense charge of several millions per annum. The following is the

REVENUE OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT IN
IRELAND.

Archbishops and bishops, average income of each		
£.10,000		£.220,000
Estates and tithes of the deans and chapters.....		250,000
Ecclesiastical rectors, vicars, & perpetual curates :—		
Tithes	£. 590,450	
Glebe lands	91,137	
Ministers' money	25,000	
Church fees	250,000	
		956,587
		956,587
	Total revenue of the clergy	£.1,426,587

I cannot omit giving my readers some useful information contained in a work, entitled, “ An Inquiry into the Consumption of Public Wealth by the Clergy.” The writer observes, that the amount of property held by the Established Church of Great Britain and Ireland, is very far indeed beyond what is necessary for its support to all useful purposes ; and that it exceeds in amount *all* that is paid to all the Christian churches in the world besides.

No reason, no policy, no justice, can justify this. Common honesty and ordinary decency revolt at the astounding proposition ! One can hardly help wondering whether we are not residing among a

race of lunatics, when we see it proved to a demonstration, that the Christians of France, America, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Prussia, the minor states of Germany, Holland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Russia; the Christians in Turkey, South America, and elsewhere, to the amount of nearly TWO HUNDRED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE, receive something less than NINE MILLIONS;—that is, the Christian world, exclusive of Great Britain and Ireland, pays an average of less than *one shilling* for each individual Christian per annum; whilst the Church of England alone, in Great Britain and Ireland, receives *a greater sum* from a population of *twenty-one millions*; which is an average of about *ten shillings* per head for every British Christian!—Great Britain, doubtless, ought to have the best government, and the best religion in the world, if the *quality* of either depends upon the *price*; for it is beyond all question that she pays the *dearest* for them;* though they do not seem to do her much more good than what is obtained by her neighbours from articles so much cheaper.

* It may be well to remark, that a considerable part of this sum is received by lay impropiators, and cannot therefore, in strictness, be taken into account in estimating the cost of religion. But, on the other hand, we have to add to that part of these revenues received by the clergy, all that is voluntarily contributed in the shape of fees, seat-rent, dues, offerings, &c., and also contributions for the support of schools and religious societies. This would materially swell the amount of the funds levied for the support of religion.

Before we present our readers with the calculations from which these results are drawn, we cannot avoid giving the following appropriate observations upon the propriety and justice of applying the *surplus* of the church property, after the *proper* maintenance of its ministers, to the liquidation of what is usually termed the *National* debt.

A crisis in the financial concerns of the British Empire, must, in the opinion of many persons, before long take place, when something must be attempted ; and the holders of all the real property of the country—lands, houses, and so forth—and of the *funds*, must, perhaps, contribute a portion of their property to extinguish a part of the national debt. In so pressing an emergency, it seems extremely probable that the *church property* will be the *first applied* to the same purpose.—*This course has been followed in all Christian nations*, where, from the piety or superstition of the people, a large property had been given to the church. In Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal ; in short, wherever a large property had accumulated in the hands of the clergy, although the people were all of the same religion, all such property has been uniformly applied to the service of the nation, and we are now the only people who have a large mass of ecclesiastical wealth in reserve. Even in the papal tyranny of Rome, *the church property has been sold to pay the national debt* ; so that far more property belonging to the clergy is to be found in any part of England, of equal extent, than in the

Roman State. The cardinals of Rome, the bishops, canons, and prebends, have no longer princely revenues. A cardinal, who formerly had thousands, has now only four or five hundred pounds, English, a-year. But then a new, and much more useful set of rich men has grown up,—the new landlords; men who purchased the estates, and, living on them, improve them to the best advantage. *The purchase-money paid off the whole national debt.* In all these cases, the WORKING CLERGY, and the PEOPLE, were in favour of these reforms of the money-matters of the church; for it was found that *the riches were in the hands of men who kept aloof from the people*, while the *working clergy*, who mixed with them, and were their real spiritual pastors, were only allowed a miserable scanty subsistence. *These reforms have been followed by a comfortable provision for the working clergy.* Whatever we may think of the continued attachment of these nations to the doctrines, discipline, and liturgy of their church, we must give them credit for great good sense, in putting a stop to the excessive consumption of public wealth by their clergy.

These alterations in the revenues of their clerical bodies, though for a long time wished, *never were effected but at periods of great national convulsion.* Probably, had the clergy *consented* to a revision of their incomes, before such moments of violent excitement, they might have made much better terms for themselves. Being no friend to a public

commotion of this sort, I earnestly beg the prelates of our church to take warning by other nations and states, to prevent that eruption, which otherwise must sooner or later take place.

The consumption of public wealth by the Established Church of England and Ireland, is not only greater than that of any other national church ; but her clergymen, as we have seen, receive in the year, *more money than all the clergymen of all the rest of the whole Christian world.* Should any thing near this be found to be the case, considerable part of her wealth may be very properly applied to relieve the national burthens ;—the more so, as of the twenty-one millions of people composing the population of our islands, less than *one-third*, or seven millions of people, are hearers of the Established Church ; the remainder, or upwards of fourteen millions, being attached to other Christian persuasions.

Some men consider us engaged in running the race of national greatness and power, more particularly with France and the United States^e of America ; and contend, that we ought not to bear an enormous weight of a church establishment that they are freed from ! They consider, that it gives those nations a great advantage over us ; and that *difference, between what we expend on the clergy, and what they do, there would be enough to pay the annual expenses of a war between us.* And as some proof of the correctness of this argument, they direct our attention to the glaring fact, *i. e.* that in 1792, the

expenses of the Government, interest of the debt included, was about nine millions. The Established Church receives more than this sum !

The United States of America, after France, or even before her, are, in the opinion of these persons, to be looked to as our rivals ; and they are not, like us, burdened with an expensive church establishment. It is contended that our young men now at Eton will see the United States of America surpassing us in the numbers of her people, and of her seamen, and their navy the most powerful in the world after ours. The armies, influence, riches, and perhaps subsidies of France, in combination with the naval vigour of the United States, will one day demand the full exertion of our power ; and perhaps will render judicious, our ceasing to expend on the clergy of less than one-third of the people, a sum thought to be as great as the revenues of the clergy of all the other Christian nations on the face of the earth.

With a view of giving information and preparing for further inquiry on this subject, the following tables have been framed, shewing the expenditure on the clergy in the various Christian States. Documents exist to give the French expenditure on the clergy with perfect accuracy ; and also to give that of the church of Scotland with great correctness. The expenditure in Spain, Portugal, and Hungary, has also been ascertained with considerable precision. The guides used in framing the

tables have been,—the data obtained from a knowledge of the expenditure of the churches just named; information collected from geographical and statistical works, and from the works of numerous recent travellers; documents given in the public papers of England, France, Spain, and Portugal; verbal communications with natives and other residents, and with recent travellers in each country; submitting occasionally the tables to such persons for examination, discussion, and correction.

While some incline to the opinion, that no provision need be made for the clergy,—that the English, being at least as religious a people as the Americans, will support the clergy handsomely by voluntary contributions, as is done by the people of the United States, and by more than half the people of our own islands for the pastors of their own persuasion; others, and the less numerous party, think a liberal, but still reasonable legal provision is most advisable. Many plans present themselves for carrying such provision into effect.

Such is the introduction to the inquiry, from which the following results are derived. The trivial errors that may be detected in the details, cannot very materially affect the conclusions, which forcibly suggest the necessity of an immediate reformation of the Church Establishment of England.

EXPENDITURE OF THE CLERGY IN FRANCE.

Episcopal body and dignitaries, in all about 578 persons, receive	£. 86,114
2,886 Catholic Rectors, at 48 <i>l.</i> per annum.....	138,480
22,960 Catholic Curates, at 31 <i>l.</i> per annum	701,760
357 Protestants, at 56 <i>l.</i> per annum	19,922
4,000 for occasional services, at 10 <i>l.</i> per annum....	40,000
3,500 ditto at 8 <i>l.</i> per annum	28,000
For uncertain occasional aid is granted	10,000
Loss on the previous calculations, to keep round numbers	25,724
	<hr/>
Total of the French Church Expenditure, £1,050,000	<hr/>

In France, the Protestant ministers are paid higher than the Catholics, because they are permitted to marry, and have wives and families to support; an instance of liberality, in a country where there are twenty-nine Catholics to one Protestant, that shames the persecution of the Catholics of Ireland to a degree at which even an Irish Orange-man might blush. But this is not all. Let a Methodist, a Baptist, an Unitarian, or an Independent of any description, go to France, and bring over to his way of thinking a sufficient number of people to form a congregation, and to erect a place of worship, and he will, by application to the minister of the interior, or home department, get a national stipend for the officiating clergyman.—Every University in France, and every post

in the Universities, are open to the youth ; and every civil and military employment in the state is open to men of all denominations.—That absurd word “ toleration,” the use of which implies that one man has a right to tolerate the opinions of another, is banished from France, and “ *equal liberty and equal protection*” are the admitted rights of all.

Previous to the Revolution of 1793, France had nearly 400,000 ministers of the Catholic church ; that is, more than *ten times as many* as she possesses now ; all the ministers, of all denominations and ranks, amounting at present only to 35,643. Before the revolution, the revenues of the church amounted to 7,400,000*l.* sterling ; so that, by the revolution, France has gained perfect liberty of conscience ;—she has annually saved six millions, three hundred and fifty-two thousand, one hundred and sixty-three pounds ; and sent about three hundred and fifty thousand idle drones, who were accustomed to live upon the labours of others, to earn their own livelihoods by honest and useful occupations. Had nothing else been gained by the French revolution, it would have been a NATIONAL BLESSING, and even CHEAPLY PURCHASED by all the bloodshed that was occasioned, through the envy and fear of the crowned despots of other states !

EXPENDITURE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

There are 938 clergymen who enjoy benefices ; and of these, 893 have the charge of parishes ; 45 have collegiate churches ; and with those who are supported by voluntary contributions, and those not regularly engaged in the ministry, may bring the number up to 1,000 ; the income of which is

is	-	-	-	-	-	-	£.206,000
Dissenters from the Kirk, cost	-						44,000
							<u>£.250,000</u>

EXPENDITURE OF THE CHURCH OF SPAIN.

552 Dignitaries	-	-	-	£.109,400
16,000 Working Clergy	-	-		1,025,000
Total Expense	-	-		<u>£.1,134,400</u>

Previous to the Revolution in Spain, there were in that country, 180,242 ministers and agents of religion, living in more than 3,000 convents, and possessing real property, land, and buildings, to the amount of 186,500,000*l.*, which, at 5 per cent., would yield a revenue of more than nine millions a year ; exclusive of tithes and various other taxes and dues for the clergy. The Cortes, with equal wisdom and justice, put this property on sale, for the benefit of the nation, making a moderate provision for all the parties who were dependant upon

it.—They also reduced the direct tithes one-half, and abolished all other payments to the church. The *half-tithe* has been found amply sufficient to maintain the reformed church; so that, upon the whole, Spain has been a greater gainer even than France; though it is to be regretted, that she has not abolished tithes altogether, and left the ministers of religion to the payment of their flocks, as in America. The American is far preferable to the French mode; as *state-pay* makes priests *state-hirelings*: and to tax any one for the support of opinions which are deemed erroneous, is the grossest injustice, and the most pointed insult that can be offered to a man of spirit and integrity. It is to compel him to contribute his property to support the propagation of what he thinks error, falsehood, or delusion! However, it was something of importance to reduce the national priesthood from 148,222 to less than 17,000, which has been effected, and to produce a saving of more than ten millions sterling, per annum; the difference of which, to the nation, between its consumption by a horde of unproductive drones, and being left to circulate in productive labour, will be immense.

EXPENDITURE ON THE PORTUGUESE CHURCH.

165 Dignitaries are allowed	-	-	£.24,800
4,300 Working Clergy	-	-	262,500
			<hr/>
Total expenditure	-	-	£.287,300

In Portugal, all church property has been taken into the hands of the government since the late revolution. The following passage, from a paper published at Lisbon, in 1822, will shew how rapidly the public mind has been enlightened upon these subjects, in a country supposed to be the most barbarous in Europe :—

“ The tithe is one of those imposts which, perhaps, is deserving of some modification. It is now universally known, that this contribution, or tax, is *not* of divine right ; for if it were so, Sovereigns could neither appropriate it to themselves, as is the case in our American possessions, nor divert it to other uses and applications ; nor remit, nor appropriate it, as was the case in its appropriation to the breaking up of new lands. By letters patent, or charter, of 11th April, 1815, the oblations, or offerings, with which the people in the first ages of the church *voluntarily* agreed to support the clergy, were, in the sixth century, *converted by the people themselves into a regular payment*, which was, in general, a tenth of their produce. This *free offering* became a *usage*, and this came to be regarded as *property* ; and so long ago as the eighth century, this tithe is found embodied in the civil laws, and forming *a right* ! but solely having for its object, the *decent support* of the ministry of the altar. If, however, the obligation was general, it was not always uniform. On the contrary, in its quota it was as various as are the Catholic nations, and

sometimes as various as the provinces of the same nation. In some places, a *tenth* was paid; in others, a *twentieth*, a *thirtieth*, and as far as a *fortieth*! We remember that, in the constitution made by D. Martins, Archbishop of Barga, in 1304, he fixed the tithe in the proportion of one in *seventy* on the *nett product*. From all this, we would only conclude, that if it should be thought *necessary*, it is, without doubt, *lawful*, to reduce the tithes on those lands where the payment being one part in every ten, the cultivator runs a risk of loss.”

It is evident that the writer might have carried the conclusion from his premises much farther. He might have shewn the *cause* of the difference in the rate of the tithe, which, having for its object only the *decent support* of the clergy, would naturally vary in proportion to the *numbers* of the clergy, the population, and the wealth of the different districts; a *twentieth*, or a *fortieth*, being likely to produce in some places, more than a *tenth* in others; and the sums requisite for the decent support of the church being obtained, there is no pretence for levying more under the *tax* denominated tithe.—All *lay* impropriations, or contributions, paid in the shape of tithes to persons who do not belong to the church, are gross impositions on the good sense of mankind.

But though the writer might have gone much farther, *they* have gone a great way farther than could have been expected in Portugal; and we

should be happy to see as much good sense prevail generally in England.

EXPENDITURE ON THE HUNGARIAN CHURCHES.

Hungary contains about eight millions of inhabitants, divided into several sects, who were tearing each other to pieces in the name of religion, until Joseph II. of Austria placed them all on an equality, and enacted a law which declares that no man is obliged to pay a tithe-tax to a religion to which he does not belong. This is the nearest approach to common sense we find recorded of an Austrian Emperor; and it is unfortunate it should have been so little regarded in the way of example. As all the sects support their own teachers, economy is the order of the day. Nearly 5,500 priests of the Latin Catholic Church are maintained for 320,000*l.* at an average of 60*l.* per annum each. The Calvinistic Church has 1,383 clergymen, at an average of 44*l.*, amounting to 60,896*l.* The Lutheran Church has 456 preachers, at an average of 45*l.* each, which amounts to 26,000*l.* The Greek Catholic Clergy are very poor, but not so poor as the members of the Greek Church. There is no reason to believe the remainder are better paid than those that have been enumerated.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA.

Religion, in North America, is left entirely to herself. The State has declined either formally espousing any particular creed, or of resorting to the less credible mode of supporting any. Yet religion is by no means on the wane in America. There are about eight thousand places of worship, supplied by many clergymen of different persuasions ; but they are maintained at a very moderate expense, as the whole cost of the religious establishment is not more than 560,000*l.* But the whole support is derived from voluntary contributions ; and hence the moderate price of religion in the United States, where no man is compelled either to belong to, or to support any church. An assessment on every man for *some* place of worship, to be named by himself, was enforced for some time in a few of the States ; but even *the clergy* joined in obtaining the repeal of this law ; for it was found that places of worship and clergymen were more liberally supported in the States where the contributions were left free.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN ITALY.

In Italy, where the pope has reigned in such splendour as to eclipse that of temporal monarchs,

and where the government has been in the hands of ecclesiastics for centuries, one might expect to find religion wallowing in luxury, and its teachers possessed of all the wealth of the land. But the contrary is the fact ; and a population of *nineteen millions* of hearers, maintains 20,400 clergymen, *the pope included*, for the comparatively small sum of 776,000*l.*, or less than one million ; while the Church of England and Ireland, though not comprising seven millions of hearers, consumes to the value of nearly *nine millions and a half* sterling of the produce of the country ! The French visit to Italy has produced a variety of good effects. The sales of the church estates have been held sacred ; and even in Sicily, where the English fleet preserved the ancient system, the church lands have since been *sold*, in consequence of the example of the benefit to the Italian nation of the transfer of lands from *inert possessors* to *active proprietors*.—But the present clergymen of Italy, *whatever other faults they may have, are not greedy or avaricious. The dues of the church are very light throughout Italy. The ecclesiastical tithe is called the quarantese, or fortieth, and is taken in kind. A prosecution by a clergyman for his tithe is nearly unknown.* There are no pluralities, and residence is strictly enforced. *In Rome, the ordinary income of a cardinal, the next in dignity in the church to the pope (equal to our archbishops), is from four hundred to five hundred a year ; and as*

ancient usage entails certain expenses on their rank, when in public, they have very little left for private comforts. The ecclesiastics who serve the churches in Rome, and who are seen clothed in the gorgeous vestments of their splendid worship, like many others, who take part in the pompous scenes, retire from them to very humble homes ; and with scanty incomes from the church, engage in tuition and other pursuits, to add to the means of their support.—The pope, as a temporal prince, is personally the least expensive one in Europe. It has been said, that five shillings a day pays the expense of his table. What a deplorable want of dignity must this be thought by Dr. Howley and his brother bishops !

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN AUSTRIA.

In Austria, exclusive of its Hungarian and Italian subjects, there are about nineteen millions of inhabitants, who maintain 19,000 clergymen for about 950,000*l.* annually. Joseph II. led the way, about fifty years since, to the suppression of the rich ecclesiastical establishments, and the equalization of the incomes of the episcopal and parochial clergy. He did not live to effect all his purposes ; but the events of late years have done much towards their accomplishment. The remaining monasteries are few, not rich, and not likely to survive the general example of appropriating church property to the use of the State.

EXPENDITURE OF THE CHURCH IN SWITZERLAND.

Every thing is cheap and simple in Switzerland; so that we are not surprised to find seventeen hundred ecclesiastics, who are maintained for the sum of 87,000*l.* annually, or about 50*l.* each individual. But what is more pleasing, is the absence of all religious bigotry, which is so complete, that in many parts of Switzerland, particularly at Lausanne and Berne, is to be witnessed the truly gratifying sight of the two sects, Calvinists and Catholics, using the same church alternately at different hours. There is a communion table for the Protestants, and an altar for the Catholics. As one congregation is retiring, they meet the other which is coming to the same house of prayer; where, with similar sincerity, but in forms and creeds that vary, they offer worship to the same DIVINE BEING.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN PRUSSIA.

In Prussia, there are about ten millions and a half of inhabitants, who maintain 9,578 priests, for the sum of 527,000*l.* England boasts of its *toleration*, most absurdly, while even the despotic state of Prussia sets it a glorious example of freedom in religious matters. All sects are there upon an equal footing. No sectarian differences oppose the pretensions of persons of superior merit; and it is a curious thing, that while of ten millions and

a half of Prussians, there are six millions of Lutherans, and four millions of Catholics, the King and the Royal Family are *Presbyterians*, of which faith there are only three hundred thousand of the inhabitants.—What a contrast is this to the miserable policy of England, which so long rendered the Catholics proscribed dependants, lest the Protestant Church should be endangered! In Prussia, the regular extinction of the civil power of the clergy is steadily pursued. Frederic the Great began by *taxing the bishops* fifty per cent. on their landed estates. The canonries of the chapters are still of considerable value; but, at the death of the present incumbents, their revenues become the property of the public.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN THE MINOR GERMAN STATES.

The minor German States, comprising Bavaria, Wirtemberg, Hanover, Saxony, and twenty-two other Sovereign States, with four cities, contain about twelve millions and a half of inhabitants, and maintain 11,600 clergymen for the sum of 765,000*l.*

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN HOLLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS.

In these countries, five millions of inhabitants maintain 4,500 clergymen, at the annual cost of

265,000*l.*, being at the rate of about 80,000*l* for every million of people, which is higher than any other of the Continental States.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN DENMARK.

The Danes are Lutherans ; and 1,700,000 persons maintain 1,586 clergymen, at an expense of 119,000*l.* The revenue of the Bishop is but *four hundred* per annum. The church property of Denmark was appropriated to the services of the State, in 1536 ; and the appropriation was so general as to include the temporalities of the bishops.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CHURCH IN SWEDEN AND NORWAY.

About three millions and a half of people maintain 3,100 clergymen, for 238,000*l.* annually. The property in this country which had been accumulated into the hands of the clergy, was appropriated to the service of the State by Gustavus Vasa. The expenses of his army involved him in a heavy debt, and he publicly declared, in 1526, his resolution of reducing the number of oppressing and idle Priests and Monks, who, under pretence of religion, fattened on the spoils of the industrious people. As the *majority of the nation* was with him, the property was applied to the use of the state, without much difficulty.

EXPENDITURE ON THE CLERGY IN RUSSIA.

The income of the Russian churches—Greek, Catholic, and Lutheran—amounts to 910,000*l.*, and maintains 74,270 clergymen ; but this sum is very unequally divided—thirty-four millions of the Greek church contributing but 510,000*l.*, while eight millions of Catholics and Lutherans pay 40,009*l.*

In *Turkey*, the Priesthood of six millions of Christians is estimated to cost 180,000*l.*

In South America, fifteen millions are estimated to contribute about 450,000*l.* annually to the Church. The estimated expenditure on the clergy of the remaining small Christian communities, dispersed in various parts of the world, is 150,000*l.* levied upon three millions of people.

From these calculations, it appears that the people have every where, except in England, cast off the prejudice, that it was necessary to yield up a *large portion of their property*, and *the fruit of their labour*, to be consumed by a numerous body of idle and luxurious ecclesiastics.

We shall give, directly, a Table of the state of the Church of England.

This is the only grand monument of church wealth remaining in the world, which shews the influence and dominion over the minds and property of men, which the clergy have had the power to exert, in the ages of darkness and superstition,

before the art of printing, and the consequent diffusion of knowledge and education.

EXPENDITURE ON THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND IRELAND.

In England and Wales, the number of the hearers of the Established Church is estimated at six millions and a half; which is a very excessive calculation. The number of clergymen of the Establishment is set down at sixteen thousand, with an income, in ENGLAND ALONE, of SEVEN MILLIONS, SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS PER ANNUM.

In Ireland, the Established Church has 500,000 hearers, seventeen hundred clergymen, and a revenue of ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN POUNDS per annum.

The remaining six millions of the population of England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, amounting to thirteen millions, pay to 7,448 of their own clergymen, about 836,000*l.* per annum! which brings the salaries of the Catholic and Dissenting ministers to something near the ordinary average of the rest of the Christian world, if the difference in the value of money be taken into the calculation. The GREAT COMPARATIVE ACCOUNT between the Church of England, and the Christian world, then,

stands exhibited in the annexed tables ; and when it is fairly considered, and duly reflected upon, it will be admitted to furnish as extraordinary an instance of *rapacity*, on the one hand, and of *folly* on the other, as can be found in the long list of the instances of the presumption of despotism, and the easy credulity of its ignorant and voluntary dupes.

TABLE I.

Expenditure on the Clergy of all the Christian World, except the Kingdoms of Great Britain, Wales, and Ireland.

NAME OF THE NATION.	Number of Hearers.	Expenditure on the clergy per million of hearers.	Total amount of the Expenditure in each Nation.
France	30,000,000	£35,000	£1,050,000
United States	9,600,000	60,000	576,000
Spain	11,000,000	100,000	1,100,000
Portugal	3,000,000	100,000	300,000
Hungary, Catholics	4,000,000	80,000	320,000
Calvinists	1,000,000	60,000	63,000
Lutherans	650,000	40,000	26,000
Italy	19,391,000	40,000	776,000
Austria	18,918,000	50,000	950,000
Switzerland	1,720,000	50,000	87,000
Prussia	10,536,000	50,000	527,000
German Small States	12,763,000	60,000	765,000
Holland	2,000,000	80,000	160,000
Netherlands	6,000,000	42,000	252,000
Denmark	1,700,000	70,000	119,000
Sweden	3,400,000	70,000	238,000
Russia, Greek Church	34,000,000	15,000	510,000
Catholics & Lutherans	8,000,000	50,000	409,000
Christians in Turkey	6,000,000	30,000	180,000
South America	15,000,000	30,000	450,000
Christians dispersed elsewhere	3,000,000	50,000	150,000

The Clergy of 201,728,000 receive £8,999,000

TABLE II.

Expenditure on the Clergy of the Established Church of England and Ireland.

NAME OF THE NATION.	Number of Hearers	Expenditure on the clergy per million of hearers.	Total amount of the Expenditure in each Nation.
England and Wales	6,500,000	£1,455,316	£9,459,565
Ireland	500,000	2,853,174	1,426,587

TABLE III.

Expenditure on the Clergy of the Established Church of Scotland.

Number of Hearers.	Expenditure on the clergy per million of hearers.	Total amount of the Expenditure.
1,500,000	£166,666	£250,000

The value of ENGLISH CHURCH PROPERTY will be found put down at a much lower estimate than the true one; in fact, if the full produce of the tithes were set down for England and Wales, it would exceed the amount in the Table. The Irish tithe robs the land of more than *two millions*, though the church may not receive so much, as it is compelled to employ an *army of proctors*, to collect them, which must be fed and paid out of them. Thus, the estimates in these calculations may be confidently relied upon as not exceeding the truth.

The intrigue between church and state has produced many plagues, and not one benefit; all its

offspring are mischiefs. In most of the old states, religion is evidently on the decline. In America, on the contrary, it is evidently on the increase ;—so that a State religion is proved to be unnecessary on any religious account : and if it be only useful to rulers, as a means of creating a race of political deluders on political subjects, by *hiring the Clergy* in support of the government, the sooner such a system is reformed the better.

We should, therefore, give the amount of Church Property, which can be resorted to, for the use of the State. The total value of church property, sold at twenty-five years' purchase, is estimated at 204,450,000*l.*, or about *one-fourth* of the funded debt ; but it is evident that such a measure cannot be carried in an assembly of those who are fattening upon the spoil which it is proposed to take from them. The funds of the English church may be considered as the *retaining fees* of the *younger branches* of the aristocracy ; as a species of political tax, devised with more than ordinary cunning, and levied in a mode that is intended to disguise its nature. In the established church, the priesthood is a *regular trade*, like the army, the navy, and the bar. The bishop, who is chosen by the crown, has control over all, and can refuse to admit any opposed to his delegated usurpation. Religion has nothing to do with the matter. The father of a family looks about to see where his interest lies,—

that is, to see what service he can render Corruption, in order to get a portion of the good things that she has at her disposal. If he think he can reach church preferment, he *makes* one son a priest, as he makes another a soldier, a sailor, or a barrister ! It is a very convenient line for a simpleton ; as neither talent nor virtue are requisite for ordination, but an implicit devotion to the “ powers that be,” which a blockhead is far more likely to pay than a wise man !

Sir Charles Wolsely published an excellent address upon the subject of tithes to the farmers of Staffordshire ; and we have some hopes, that the Parliament will follow the advice he gives, in conformity with the LEGAL DECISION, that where there is NO PROFIT, there can be NO LIABILITY to the payment of tithes. A steady determination to act upon this principle, would soon induce even the *dignitaries* of the church, to become friendly to reform, as the *only means* of securing their *own interests*. A bad system of government, by exhausting the present, and by anticipating the future resources of the nation, has at last reached that monstrous climax of consumption, which renders the land utterly unable to bear the burthens that are imposed upon it. It affords no profit, speaking generally ; and in a short period, this will be universally the case. The gross produce of the land of England and Wales, is not more than to the value of 150 millions. The government takes *fifty millions* of

this sum in taxation. The church takes ten millions more in tithes. The poor's rate, and other local rates, amount to nearly eight millions more ; making a subtraction from the gross produce, of about sixty-eight millions—which would be a great deal more than double the amount of the profits of the produce, at prices which would remunerate the farmer. But when it is considered that the cultivators are now actually LOSING BY THE PRODUCE, and that this SIXTY-EIGHT MILLIONS IS TO BE ADDED TO THEIR LOSS, instead of being taken *from their profits*, we cannot fail to perceive, that it is utterly impossible for the thing to last ; and that it is the common interest of all to put an end to it as soon as possible, by the introduction of a new and equitable system. But it is the Parliament that must do this. The payers of tithes must petition for the removal of the evil, and shew that they are losing by the cultivation of their land. They must, also, as resolutely revert to the CONDITIONS on which tithes were originally granted ; and endeavour to enforce their application to the LEGAL PURPOSES for which they were granted.

The clergy have NO CLAIM, by *law*, to any more than *one-third* of the produce of the tithes. The length of time during which they have *usurped* the whole, gives them no more legal claim to the whole, than the diversion of any other charitable fund from its original purpose. When a case of this latter description is brought before the Lord

Chancellor, if the parties were to plead the *length of time* which the funds had been misapplied, he would tell them that they aggravated their case, and must restore to the proper objects what they have been plundering them of; and though it is to be supposed that, in the first instance, the dignitaries of the law will be disposed to favour the dignitaries of the church; yet, at last, law and reason may be found too strong for them all!

It is a common practice with some people, to say, that they will go on *as long as they can!* Those who do this, will go on till they have *nothing left*, for which it is worth their while to make any exertion. Why, then, do they say they will go on as long as they can with a system which has, guinea by guinea, taken away all their profits, and which is now taking away all their capital, still more rapidly than it destroyed their profits? Finally—With justice to themselves, with justice to their country, they can go on no longer. They have reached the *very edge* of the precipice; and if they do not recede, they must inevitably seal their fate as slaves for ever, and bind their posterity in everlasting chains.

Let the PAYERS think seriously on these matters before it be—*too late!*

CHAP. XIII.

HISTORY OF CHURCH HOLIDAYS.

It has always been accounted good policy, in the church of Rome, to withhold the Scriptures from the laity, and to perform the public worship of God in Latin, a language unknown to the people. A religion founded on the infallible judgment of one man, and requiring from the rest of mankind an absolute submission to his dictates, ought not to be examined; for, should the people emerge from credulity, and rise into the exercise of reason, the bold pretender to infallibility would tumble from the pinnacle of pontifical dignity into a gulph of universal contempt.

That wise and vigorous set of men, the Protestant Reformers, broke open the papal cabinet, exposed the pretended titles of the pope to public view, and did all in their power to simplify religion, and to reduce it to its original plainness and purity. They laid open the inspired writings, they taught the right of private judgment, and they summoned all mankind to enter into that liberty with which Christ had made them free.

If these men had a fault, it lay in the breadth of the scale of their operations. They aimed to convert whole nations at once, and to change their customs in a day. Many religious customs were incorporated with civil rights. It was irreligion in ecclesiastics to exercise civil government, and it became, therefore, essential to the accomplishment of their plan, to call in the aid of secular powers. Secular powers readily assisted them ; but, at the same time, obliged them to keep measures with royal prerogatives, court factions, the intrigues of the old clergy, and the prejudices of the common people. They therefore left the reformation unfinished, and died in hopes that their successors would complete, in happier days, what they had begun. Far from entering into this just and liberal design, we seem to have lost sight of it, and to have adopted principles subversive of the whole. We seem to have discarded piety, and adopted luxury ; and the few who have not given up all sense of shame, endeavour to conceal the scandal under a cover of superstition. Thus, says Robinson, we affect modesty, and dance naked to hide our shame !

Superstition is to religion, says one, what astrology is to astronomy—the foolish daughter of a wise mother. These two have long subjugated mankind. We have no objection, in general, against days of fasting and prayer ; they have always the advantage of retaining a scriptural form

of godliness ; they are often edifying, and sometimes necessary. Nor do we find fault with those Christians who make conscience of observing all the festivals of their own churches. They have a right to judge for themselves, and their sincerity will be rewarded. Neither will we suppose that all the English clergy have been deficient in teaching their people, that practical religion divides itself into the two parts of moral obligations and positive institutes ; that the first are universal, unalterable, and eternal ; and that the latter were appointed by the legislature to serve the purposes of the former. But as the cause of moral rectitude can never be pleaded too often, nor the nature of it explained too clearly,—as superstition is very apt to invade the rights of religion, and as numbers who have great interest in these articles have not leisure to trace them through folios,—it may not be unseasonable, and we trust it will not be deemed impertinent, to expose to public view, briefly, the history, the authority, the piety, and the polity of church holidays. To discuss one, is to examine all ; and we select for this purpose that day, on which, it is reputed, the Founder of our holy religion was crucified ; commonly called Good Friday.

Let no one blame an historian who does not begin before his records ; it is not his fault,—it is his virtue. Strictly speaking, all documents in Protestant churches should be found in the holy canon ; for the people of each church refer an

inquisitive man to their clergy, their clergy refer him to their printed confessions of faith, and all their confessions refer him to scripture. There are many ceremonies in some Protestant churches which do not pretend to derive themselves from scripture immediately ; but they were appointed, they say, by those who were appointed by scripture to ordain them. The examination of this appointment does not fall under this part of the inquiry; it will be spoken of hereafter. It is sufficient to say, that Good Friday is a ceremony of this sort, and that the original records of Christianity say nothing about it.

No one evangelist, nor all the four together, narrate the whole history of Jesus Christ, nor yet all the circumstances of those parts on which they enlarge most. St. John, the last of these historians, closes his history with a declaration that many things relative to Jesus Christ were not written. The times of the birth and crucifixion of our Saviour are so written in these authentic records, that nothing certain can be determined concerning them. All who have pretended to settle these periods, are conjecturers, and not historians, as their variety proves. There is only one opinion in the whole Christian world concerning the country of Jesus Christ, and the place of his nativity : all allow he was a Jew, and born at Bethlehem. We should be equally uniform in our belief of the times of his birth and crucifixion. Let us respect

the silence of the oracles of God. No argument can be drawn from it to endanger Christianity. A point of chronology is not an object of saving faith, nor is zeal for an undecided question any part of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. The inspired writers did not design to make laws about feasts, but to enforce the practice of piety and virtue.

The first congregations of Christians consisted of native Jews, Jewish proselytes, and Pagans of different countries, and of various sects. Each class brought into the Christian church some of their old prejudices, and endeavoured to incorporate them with the doctrine and worship of Christianity. The apostles guarded against this unnatural union, and during their lives prevented the profession of it ; but after their decease they were made to coalesce, and from this coalition came Good Friday and other church holidays. Christianity affirmed the facts ; proselyte mathematicians guessed at the time ; pretended scholars accommodated prophecy and history to the favourite periods ; and devotional men, whose whole knowledge consisted in an art of turning popular notions to pious purposes, began to observe the days themselves. By the austerity of their examples, they gave them a sanctimonious air to others, and recommended them to the observation of all who chose to be accounted pious as well as wise.

We hear nothing of Easter till the second century, and then we find Polycarp, Anicetus, and others, conferring on the time of keeping it, celebrating it at different times, and exercising a mutual toleration, notwithstanding their differences. Jesus Christ was crucified at the time of the Jewish passover. The Christians of Asia celebrated Easter on the *fourteenth* day of the moon, according to the law of Moses, on whatever day of the week it fell, so that if they kept some years a Good Friday, they also kept in other years a Good Monday, Good Saturday, or Good *any* day ; for the day of Christ's crucifixion must be at its due distance from the day of his resurrection. These eastern Christians pretended that St. John kept Easter so. The western churches used to observe the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the March moon, and they said St. Peter and St. Paul always did so. If these Christians could not convince one another in times so near to those of the apostles, it is not likely that we should be able to determine the time of Easter at a distance of nearly two thousand years.

About the year A. D. 190, Victor I., then Bishop of Rome, had the audacity to excommunicate those Christians who kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon. The excommunicated pitied his pride, and persevered in their practice. The Roman bishops intrigued, caballed, got councils called, and at length the council of Arles, held A. D. 314, having, no doubt, the fear of God before

their eyes, and being endued with more wisdom, more power, or more presumption than their predecessors, decreed that all churches should celebrate Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth of the moon of March, when that moon should happen after the vernal equinox. Eleven years afterwards, the council of Nice confirmed this decree, and the Emperor Constantine enforced it by orders sent into all the provinces of the empire. The council did not think to provide for one difficulty which might arise, and which might produce a new discussion, and throw down that idol *uniformity*, which these Christian Nebuchadnezzars had committed so many crimes to set up. The fourteenth day of the full moon in March might fall on a Sunday. It did so. A difficulty was started, and different opinions followed. The eastern churches celebrated Easter on the day of the full moon, when it fell on a Sunday in March. The western churches deferred it to the Sunday following. How could a synod of three hundred-and-eighteen bishops, who were but men, foresee this difficulty?

In the seventh century, Oswy, one of the petty kings, having been instructed in the Christian religion by Scotch monks, kept Easter after the Asiatic fashion; while his Queen, who had been taught by a Roman priest, observed it in the western manner. Thus, it sometimes happened, that his majesty was joyfully celebrating our Saviour's

resurrection, while the queen was fasting on account of his crucifixion ! To get rid of this inconvenience, the king summoned a council to meet at Withby, to determine the original of Easter. The clergy, on the one side, rested their cause on tradition derived from St. John, while the clergy, on the other, urged that which came from St. Peter. The king was judge ; the balance inclined neither way, and he was long perplexed with authorities quite equal. At length, being informed that however great St. John might be, St. Peter kept the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, the king very prudently took care of the main chance, declared for St. Peter, and Easter has fallen on a Sunday in England ever since !

Good Friday had the fate of all other holidays: it had a solemn service composed for it ; and, being established by the civil power, the people were obliged to fast, and to pray, and to sing, and so on to the end of the chapter.

When Henry VIII. reformed the British church, although he discarded many festivals, he yet thought proper to retain Easter, and Lent, its appendage. The old service was afterwards new vamped ; and during the succeeding reigns of Elizabeth and the Stuarts, many were persecuted for refusing to comply with it. That inestimable prince, William III., procured a toleration, the present august family protect it, and the inhabi-

tants of Britain now enjoy the liberty of keeping festivals, or of renouncing them, at their pleasure.

The history, then, is briefly this : Neither Good Friday, nor any other good day, fasts or feasts, were appointed to be observed, by Jesus Christ or his apostles. The time of Christ's birth cannot be made out, and that of his crucifixion is uncertain. Could we assure ourselves of the year, we could not prove that the Jews observed the regressions of the equinox, nor that they made use of accurate astronomical tables. No traces of Easter are to be found in the first century, nor for a great part of the second. When the first observers of it appeared, they could not make out evidence of their coming honestly by it. Councils decreed that it should not be kept before the 21st of March, nor after the 20th of April. Some, however, kept it on the 22nd of April, while others celebrated it on the 25th of March; others, at times, different from both, and others kept no day at all. Our ancestors murdered one another for variety of opinion on this subject; but we are fallen under wiser and better governors, who allow us to think and act as we please, provided the state receive no injury. Thus the language of scripture is spoken by the laws of our country: "He who regardeth a day, let him regard it to the Lord; and he who regardeth not a day to the Lord, let him not regard it."

CHAP. XIV.

HISTORY OF CHURCH HOLIDAYS, CONTINUED.

DULL and uninteresting as this poor subject may be, as an article of history, it becomes extremely important, when it is foisted into the religion of Christ, enjoined on all Christian people, under pain of God's displeasure, and considered as the livery of loyalty and piety. In such a case, the disciples of the Son of God are compelled to inquire, whose are we, and whom do we serve? His we are whom we obey.

Should a man form an idea of the Christian church from reading the New Testament, in which Jewish ceremonies are said to be a yoke, which neither the Jews of Christ's time, nor their ancestors were able to bear,—in which those rites are called weak and beggarly elements,—rudiments of the world,—shadows of good things to come, of which Christ was the substance;—should he then behold a Christian church laden with ceremonies of Pagan and Jewish extraction, there would naturally arise a violent prejudice in his mind against such

a Christian church, and he would be obliged to inquire what Joab had a hand in this alteration?

It must be allowed, that consummate wisdom, cool and unbiassed judgment, rectitude the most rigid, and benevolence and power the most extensive, are absolute and indispensable qualifications in religious legislation. The nature of God and man; the relation of each to the other, and of both to all; the countless conditions and circumstances of all the rest of mankind; the kind of worship, and the manner of performing it; the necessary requisitions of justice, and the proper effusions of goodness, with a thousand other articles, form one grand complex whole, which would baffle all, except infinite penetration, in forming a system of real religion.

As an assumption of legislative power in religion is an ascent to the most elevated degree of honour, and as it requires a kind of submission to which human dignity is loth to bow, so, it must be supposed, the clearest evidence of a right to exercise it is naturally expected. No blind submission; no precarious titles; no spurious records; no popular clamour; nothing but clear revelation, interpreted by accurate reasoning, can be taken as evidence here. An immortal intelligence is the noblest production of infinite power and skill; when it pays its homage to the Deity it is in its noblest exercise; and no mean guide must conduct such a being then.

On these just principles I take up church holidays, where I find them, as part of the established religion of my country ; and I modestly inquire the authority that made them so ? A few old women refer me to the fourth verse of the twelfth chapter of Acts for the word *Easter*, and I return the compliment by referring them to their grandsons at school, who say St. Luke wrote *passover*. I could, were I inclined to revenge, be even with these old ladies, by telling them the tale of Lady Easter, Ashtar, or Ashtaroth, a Sidonian toast ; but I am too busy, and too placid now, and I take my leave of this goddess, and also of the godly translator, who profaned a Jewish fast, by nick-naming it after a pagan prostitute, and laid the blame on innocent St. Luke.

The established clergy do not pretend to support their festivals by authority of scripture ; but they say, their legal authority arises from that Act of Parliament which ratified the thirty-nine articles of their faith, one of which affirms, “ the church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith.” This clause is said by them to mean, that the “ governors of the church have power to determine what shall be received and professed for *truth* among the members of the church, and to bind them to *submission* to their sentence, though they err in their sentence.” These are their own words.

The thirty-nine articles were first produced in a

convocation of the clergy, A.D. 1562; they were reviewed by another convocation in 1571; and were afterwards ratified by Parliament. *It is an unquestionable fact, that the religion of all the good people of the church of England, was, in 1562, put to the vote of one hundred-and-seventeen priests, many of whom could hardly write their names, and several of whom were not present, and voted by proxy; and that ceremonies and holidays were carried by a majority of ONE single vote, and that vote given by proxy.* Whether the absent member, who had the casting vote, were talking, or journeying, or hunting, or sleeping, is immaterial; he was the God Almighty of this article of English religion, and his power decreed rites and ceremonies, and matters of high behest!

The insertion of the before-mentioned clause of the CHURCH'S *power* in the twentieth article, was an infamous piece of priestcraft. It is not in King Edward's articles; it is not in the original manuscripts subscribed by the convocation, and still preserved in Bene't College, Cambridge, among the papers of Bishop Parker, who was president of the assembly; it was not in the printed book ratified by Parliament; it was not in the Latin translation of those times; nor did it shew itself till twenty-two years after, as Heylin and other high churchmen allow.

Subscription to this clause is mere mummery; for what does it mean? The CHURCH power to

decree rites and ceremonies! An absolute falsehood. One person in this church, and one person only, has power to decree rites and ceremonies! The common people pretend to none. The clergy have introduced organs, pictures, candles on the communion table, bowing towards the east, and placing the communion table altarwise; and Wrangham, Archdeacon of Cleveland, has introduced, or some one of his predecessors did so, a trumpet, nearly four feet long, I should judge, into his church at Hunmanby, for one of his performers to sing bass through. I made his clerk, when I visited the diocese of York, in 1829, perform on it, and a most ludicrous effect it had; but they have had no right to do these things; for, as the "Common Prayer Book" no where enjoins them, they are expressly prohibited by the Act of Uniformity, which says, no rites or ceremonies shall be used in any church, other than what is prescribed and APPOINTED to be used in and by the "Common Prayer Book." By what effrontery does a priest allow a long trumpet, and fiddles, and organs, in public worship, after he has subscribed to a homily which declares them to be superstitious? Or with what presumption does he dare, in direct opposition to Act of Parliament, to invade a prerogative that belongs to the crown? Neither a convocation, nor a House of Commons, nor a House of Lords, nor all together, have a power to decree rites, ceremonies, and articles of faith in the

established church of England ; the constitution has confirmed it as a royal prerogative, and annexed it to the imperial crown of this realm.

In former times, our kings ceded this prerogative to the pope ; at the Reformation they reclaimed it ; and long after the Reformation they refused to suffer the other branches of the legislature to examine or to meddle with it ; but in later times this prerogative was bounded, and now it is restrained to the national established church. By the Act of Toleration, the crown agreed to resign, and in effect it did actually resign, this prerogative in regard to the nonconformists ; and this cession is become a part of the constitution by the authority of the whole legislative power of the British empire. The mode of restraint, indeed, is not so explicit as it might have been, but the fact is undeniable.

The English nonconformists think civil government to be natural, necessary, and of divine appointment ; they suppose the *form* of it to be arbitrary, and left to the free choice of all nations under heaven ; they believe the form of *mixed monarchy* to be the best for England ; but were they in Venice, they would yield *civil* obedience to aristocracy,—in Holland, to a republic,—or in Spain, to an absolute monarchy ; the best mode of civil government making no part of their religion. They think that in all states impliedly, and in the British most expressly, there subsists an *original contract* between the prince and

the people ; they believe the *limitation* of regal prerogative to be by bounds so certain, that it is impossible a prince should ever exceed them without the consent of the people, one of the principal bulwarks of civil liberty ; they think that there are *ordinary* courses of law clearly established, and not to be disobeyed, and they believe that there are *extraordinary* recourses to first principles necessary when the contracts of society are in danger of dissolution. They think these principles alone to be the *basis* of prerogative and liberty, of the king's title to the crown, and of that freedom which they enjoy under his auspicious reign. And these, their sentiments, are those of the wisest philosophers, the ablest lawyers, and the most accomplished statesmen that England ever produced.

The English nonconformists absolutely deny all *human* authority in matters of religion ; they deny it to *all* civil governments of every form ; they consider Christ to be the *sole head* of the Christian church, and the *scriptures* to be his only code of conscience law. All the articles of their belief are contained in *his* doctrine ; all their hopes of obtaining immortal felicity in *his* mediation ; all their moral duties in the great law of nature explained by revelation ; and all their religious rites and ecclesiastical law, in *his* positive institutes, unexplained, or rather unperplexed by human creeds. They say that Christ himself does not require obedience *without*

evidence; that they submit to him *as God gave him*, as a prophet, a priest, and a king, on the fullest proof; they say that their religion has nothing hostile to *civil government*, but is highly beneficial to it; that although it is no part of it to determine the best form, yet it is a part of it to submit in civil matters to the powers that be. On these principles they justify the apostles for enforcing Christianity, when earthly governors rejected it; the first missionaries who subverted established religions by propagating it; the reformation from popery; and the revolution that dethroned high church tyranny. For their civil principles they are ready to die as Britons, and for their religious ones as Christians.

But we have lost church holidays!—no wonder. Good Friday is a libel against the King of kings; and always when loyal subjects approach him, the traitor lurks behind, skulks among popes and priests, and hides his guilty head in a cowl, muttering,—The church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies.—Ah, sirrah!

The article of authority, then, amounts to this. In that system of religion which proceeds on the principles of the perfection and sufficiency of scripture, and the sole legislation of Jesus Christ, church holidays are nonentities. In those systems which allow human authority, they rest on the power that appoints them. In this happy country, the

power that appoints them is constitutionally bounded, and has agreed to spend its force on as many as choose to submit to it, and to exert itself against all who dare to impede others, who choose to renounce it. So that the authority which appoints a Good Friday ceremonial, has just as much influence over a British subject as he himself chooses to give it. If he choose to be a member of the national church, to which certainly there are many worldly inducements, he allows human authority over conscience, and he ought, in conscience (if it be possible for conscience to agree to its own dissolution), to keep the fast : but if he think proper to dissent, to which certainly there are strong religious inducements, he is protected in disowning the authority, and the obligation is void. When human wisdom affects to adorn a religion of divine revelation, it presumes to paint a diamond, or to lace and embroider the seamless coat of one, whose simplicity is his evidence and his church's glory. When such as St. Austin and St. Gregory, primitive manufacturers of trumpery, imported their bales, and offered their wares to the British church, they were objects of pity or contempt ; but when they presumed to use coercive measures, to make the denizens of heaven purchase their trash ; when a pope, like Judas, came in the night with halberds, and swords, and staves, — Merciful God ! couldst thou be angry with our ancestors

for hand-cuffing the felon, and whipping him out of their isle ! The punishment was too little for the crime. They should have burnt even his rags with fire !

“ The fury fiend, with many a felon deed,
Had stirr'd up mickle mischievous despight.”

CHAP. XV.

HISTORY OF CHURCH HOLIDAYS, CONTINUED.

IF piety be the discharge of duty toward God, there are only two short questions to answer. First, is the observation of an annual fast in commemoration of the death of Christ, a duty required by almighty God? Next, how is this duty *discharged* by those who think it to be such?

All the duties which God requires of mankind, are contained in the moral law. Moral obligations are founded in the nature and fitness of things. There is a fitness between the care of a parent and the obedience of a child. Filial obedience is, therefore, a moral duty. There is a fitness between civil government and taxes. Governors protect subjects; and subjects ought, therefore, to support governors. Taxes, for the necessary support of government, are therefore dues, and the payment of them a moral obligation. But nobody ever yet pretended to make the celebration of Easter, a part of the moral law.

The other class of duties, required of all Chris-

tians, is contained in positive institutes. (Baptism is a positive institute.) They would not have been obligatory, they would not have been known, had not the Christian Legislator instituted them : and they are obeyed, now they are appointed, in proper submission to his authority. But has he appointed this fast? Does it not wander about a mere beggar, actually destitute of every token of a legitimate divine institute?

Since the observation of church holidays is no part of piety, then, we are driven, for want of materials to fill up this article in decent guise, to the sad necessity of turning the tables, and of considering the impiety of that black and bloody day, commonly called Good Friday. Were we to collect into one aggregate sum the impious actions that belong to the introduction, the establishment, and the support of ceremonies, one of which is this day ; were we to balance accounts between moral law and human institutes, we should be obliged to charge to the latter a most enormous and ruinous sum. We should set down the unwarrantable implication of the imperfection of Christianity as Jesus Christ appointed it ; the incorrigible obstinacy of Judaising bunglers, who united a provincial ritual with an universal religion ; the rash enterprises of minute philosophers, who associated the mummeries of Belial with the miracles of Christ ; the paltry babbling of traditionists, whose impertinence put on pretensions to give evidence to wise

and grave men, by their senseless repetitions of “ I hear say, that he heard say, that she heard say, that they heard say ;” the self-employed and uncommissioned racket of councils ; the daring achievements of those knights errant, the popes of Rome ; the base concessions and self-contradictions of their hierarchial squires ; their flattering, betraying, befooling, deserting, and assassinating emperors and kings ; the subverting of all sound maxims of civil polity, every dictate of right reason, the sacred bonds of society, and the natural rights of mankind ; the degrading of magistracy, the banishment of thousands, the bloodshedding ***** (Oh, where shall we end !) ***** all these under a mask of hypocrisy, a pious pretence of uniformity, the erection of *a godly order in Christen states amonge the holye stock that Jesu boughte with hys owne bloode !* I know I shall be reputed a silly enthusiast for what I am going to say ; but what care I ? When the bells chime to call people to celebrate Good Friday, methinks they say to me, *count the cost ! ***** thinking Christian, count the cost !* I do so, and I weep. ***** Am I not a fool ? ***** I can’t help it. ***** I pour out floods of tears to think what human ceremonies have cost all mankind, and particularly what a dreadful price my native country has paid for them ; and I wish, with Luther, that there were no feast days among Christians, except Sundays.

All Christians are not of our opinion. Some

think the observation of this day a duty of religion. Very well. I wish to be instructed. Permit me to see how the duty is discharged. The far greater part of the members of the established church pay no regard at all to Good Friday, nor do some of them know why it is appointed. But there is no piety in professing a religion which is neither understood nor obeyed. The greater part of opulent members of this community pay no other attention to the day than dining on fish, in preference to flesh. This is not piety. Numbers of the clergy read the ritual, and deliver a sermon composed by others; and this is their whole performance. Most artificers, and people of the lower class, imitate their superiors. Some of them do not observe the day at all; and others, who hate work worse than witchcraft, go in the morning to church, and in the evening to the alehouse, and there deposit piety till Easter Sunday, when they travel the same round again. Should a man lay aside secular affairs, abstain from food, dress in black, go to church, say after the parson, hear the sermon, and close the day without company and cards,—who but a fanatic would pretend to arraign the conduct of this man? And yet, most certain it is, he may do all these without performing one act of genuine piety.

In short, there are two general parents of religious action—custom and conscience. The first germinates, and produces a blind, sordid, sorry, crawling lusus, denominated religion, but which is really

superstition. The latter, conscience, may be enervated by ignorance, sloth, scrupulosity, and secular interest; and in this ill state of health may produce a weak family of genuine moral virtues, and of silly deformed superstitions; but, being right in the main, she will always pay her first and chief attention to her moral offspring. Positive institutes, and even human inventions, may be obeyed by people of this kind; but they will never encroach on the rights of natural, necessary, moral law. If the ceremonial of religion supply the place of religion itself,—if the former derogate from the latter,—if the former divert the attention of the latter,—it becomes a reprehensible superstition.

What, then, shall we say of those whose whole piety lies in the observation of *days, and times, and years*? We know what an inspired apostle said to such people—“ I am afraid I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” Father of universal nature! in vain hast thou given us capacity, learning, reason, and religion; in vain does the knowledge of all antiquity shine around us; in vain has the law of nature been explained to us by the writers of revelation; in vain hast thou bestowed thy best and richest gift—the gospel—on us, and a government that allows us to judge of it. We live in the open violation of all thy laws;—we curse, and swear, and blaspheme; we profane thy holy sabbaths; we are guilty of drunkenness, debauchery, perjury, simony, bribery, impiety, and

irreligion of all kinds ; our children are uneducated in religious principles ; our property is wasted in gaming and amusements, our priests and our prophets exemplify luxury, and we expect to avert all our deserved miseries, and to atone for all our impieties, by saying, Have we not fasted on Good Friday, and feasted on Easter Sunday ? The Jewish priests, at the worst of times, prophesied for hire, but some Christian priests take the hire, and prophesy not. They vote, indeed ! But say, ye plundered nabobs ! ye French Candian papists ! ye widows and orphans ! ye depopulated cities, and ruined commerce of rebellious colonists ! say, for what do British ministers of the Prince of Peace vote ? **** They vote that you and your children must fast on Good Friday !

CHAP. XVI.

HISTORY OF CHURCH HOLIDAYS, CONTINUED.

BEFORE Christianity was understood in the world, the first apologists for it thought themselves happy, as St. Paul expresses it, when they were called to defend it before equitable civil magistrates in courts of legal judicature. They had great reason to rejoice in these opportunities, for they taught a religion which recommended itself to all just governments, by its perfect agreement with civil polity. Primitive Christianity wanted only to be known—it was sure to gain ground by being understood. These divine men were able to say, —Is the origin of civil government sacred?—We teach that civil government is ordained by God. Is the well-being of the whole the supreme law in civil polity?—So it is in Christianity. Do the states flourish when the people yield a ready obedience to civil government, and venerate the dignity of magistracy?—Christianity inculcates this. Do temperance, industry, piety, and virtue, render states happy?—Christianity forcibly inculcates

these. Are states happy when discords do not prevail, when kind offices abound among citizens, when benevolence and philanthropy pervade the whole?—Christianity abolishes party factions and odious distinctions, and curbs the passions that produce them; and as to universal love, it is the religion of Jesus itself. Do states enjoy tranquillity, when learning and liberty, conscience and virtue, are nourished, and when impartial equity rewards merit, and restrains and punishes vice?—Christianity does all these. Are states safe when they retain a constitutional power of redressing grievances, of insuring life, liberty, and property from foreign and domestic invasion, and of reducing all cases to one invariable standard of impartial and universal justice?—Christianity inculcates principles productive of all this. No instance, therefore, can be produced of our attempting to subvert civil government; on the contrary, we are entrusted with a conciliating plan of universal peace between secular and sacred things, by Jesus Christ.

The corrupters of Christianity deprived it of this noble feature; they bartered purity for power, exchanged argument for authority, and made a scandalous truck of all the truths and virtues of religion for the seals of a prince, and the keys of a jail. They invented words of inexplicable mystery, and inflicted penalties on those who could not interpret their dreams. They cast innumerable *canons*, and with them destroyed the lives, and

liberties, and property of their peaceable brethren. They armed priests with secular power, and covered their barbarous use of it with infinite pomp. They excited princes to hate, persecute, banish, and burn their subjects for matters of conscience. They thought lay subjects beneath notice, kings above law, and themselves above kings. To their conduct it is owing that most great men consider religion as nothing more than an engine of state.

We hope that Christianity will in time recover from these deadly wounds ; but healing and health must never be expected from such prescriptions as are made up of the false principles that produced the injury. The great and only object of such books as Hooker's Church Polity, and Gibson's Codex, is the support of the hierarchy. God knows, no positions can be less true, no principles more dangerous than those laid down in these compilations. Civilians, sufficiently fed, could build on them the whole fabric of popery ; for the evident drift of them is not only to render the church independent of the state, but to place the state in a condition of dependence on the church. Their system is false in itself, inconsistent with scripture, incompatible with the British constitution, and destructive of Christ's spiritual design. These writers have wrapped their sentiments in the dark clothing of metaphorical style, and there they lurk in seeming asylum. There is an imaginary being called the church governing, distinct from the

church governed : this animal has *sex*, in violation of the English language, and the laws of precise argumentation. *She* is either married or a prostitute, for she is a *mother*, it seems, and has children. All this may be rhetoric, but it is not reason ; less still can it be called religion, and least of all is it that religion which Jesus taught, and which never diminishes the glory of civil polity.

The religion of Christ is the most simple thing in the world. His church was not formed on the plan of the Jewish government, either of the state, temple, sanhedrim, or synagogue ; nor on that of any other state, either of Rome or of Athens. The decree of the Christian church at Jerusalem, called by mistake the *first council*, was not enforced by civil authority. Canons, in the primitive church, were devoid of coercion ; the Emperor Justinian adopted them, and metamorphosed them into civil law. There were, in the primitive church, no coercive powers ; particular churches were united only by faith and love, in all civil affairs they were governed by civil magistrates, and in sacred matters they were ruled by the advice, reasons, and exhortations, of their freely-elected officers. Their censures were only honest reproofs, and their excommunications were nothing more than declarations that the offenders were incorrigible, and were no longer accounted members of their societies. The term *hierarchy* was unknown, and *hierodulia* would have been the proper description then : it

was a spiritual *kingdom, not of this world*; it did not injure, it could not possibly injure, sound civil polity. The primitive Christians were taxed with holding seditious principles; and this calumny they merited for not getting drunk on Cæsar's birth-day; for holding their religious assemblies in the night, when secular business was over; for refusing to swear by the genius of Cæsar; for scrupling to give him the titles that belonged to God; for talking of a kingdom of saints upon earth. However, these sons of sedition prayed for Cæsar, taught all due obedience to him, paid his tribute, fought in his wars, treated all inferior magistrates with profound respect; and these things they did, not for prudential reasons of worldly policy, but from examined and ascertained principles of genuine Christianity.

The whole farrago of a secular religion is a burden, an expense, a distress to government, and every corrupt part and parcel of it is in some way or other injurious to civil polity. Consider a kingdom as one large family, sum up the priesthood into one domestic chaplain, compare what he costs with the good he does, and judge whether the family gains as it ought, or loses as it ought not, by his chaplainship?

To come to the point. We apply these general strictures to one article, consisting of fasts, feasts, and holidays. We divide them into five classes, and discharge four of them. In the first, we place

all those obsolete holidays which were in vogue before the Reformation, such as the Assumption, the Conception, Silvester, Britius, and such like, which were very properly retained in the calendar at the Reformation for law uses, for the ascertaining of the times of tenures, and of the payment of dues, or of charitable donations that were dated by these days. In a second class we put all the Sundays in the year, for although some divines hold the morality of the sabbath, and others place it among positive institutes, yet all agree in the necessity of keeping a day, and a pious clergy know how to improve it to the noblest uses of church and state. In a third, we put all *red-letter days*, as coronation days, birth-days, and others. The suspending of business on these days is a very proper compliment to our civil governors, and the health and spirits of gentlemen confined in public offices require relaxation and exercise. Nobody pretends to make religion of these, and they are on many accounts quite necessary. In a fourth class we put all those *Saints' days*, and other holidays which the clergy are obliged by their superiors to observe. They ought not to complain if they are required to fast on the 30th of January, for the expiation of a crime which no man alive committed, for they are amply rewarded by many a festival, from which none but themselves ever derived the least benefit. All these we dismiss, and retain only a fifth sort of holiday, which con-

stitution and custom engage the whole national church to observe; the smallest number of these days is TEN. A very little attention will convince us, that the observation of these ten holidays are productive of no real advantage, but, on the contrary, of much damage to the nation at large.

As these festivals are generally observed, they hurt the health, the morals, and the little property of the poor; they depress virtue, encourage vice, and generate superstition; they clog business, burden the clergy, increase the rates of parishes, endanger the peace of society at large, and perplex magistrates; in a word, they impoverish the kingdom, in proportion to the extent of their influence.

To examine only one of these items. Suppose a daylabourer to be employed all the year at seven shillings a week, that is, at fourteen pence a day; ten days of his time are worth, to his family, eleven shillings and eight pence. Not to earn, is to pay; and this poor fellow is actually at the annual charge of eleven shillings and eight-pence, for the support of annual festivals. Let us suppose further, that his wife earns sixpence a day, and his four children four pence each, at stone gathering or any other work; ten days of the woman's time are worth five shillings; ten days of each child are worth three shillings and fourpence. So that this man's wife and children pay for festivals, eighteen shillings and four pence a year! We are further to add the extraordinary expenses of his family on these

days, for it is all a farce to talk of their fasting ; they have no fasts in their calendar : all are festivals with them, and they never fast when they can obtain food. We may allow the poor man, then, one shilling on each day to spend at the ale-house, and his family one more for tea, beer, nuts, gingerbread, and so on. We are to add, then, twenty shillings more to his account, and his reckoning stands thus :—

To 10 days' work, at 1s. 2d. each.....	£.0	11	8
To 10 days' work of wife, at 6d.....	0	5	0
To 10 days' work of 4 children, at 4d. each per day.	0	13	4
To 10 days' extra expenses for self and family, at 2s. per day.....	1	0	0
	<hr/>		
Total.....	£.2	10	0
	<hr/>		

Is not the sum of fifty shillings (enormous for this family) a heavy tax paid for a cargo of idleness ? Let us suppose this poor man to enter thoroughly into the pretended design of the day—to abstain from food as well as work, to fast, and pray, and spend nothing ; still the fast costs him all the money that he avoids earning, and this simple devotee would pay twenty or thirty shillings a year for the privilege of emaciating himself.

But the people derive great advantages from festivals ! Good God ! Is religion magic ? What people derive advantages from festivals ? They who never attend them ? It is notorious that the poor

are not to be found at church on Easter and Whitsun holidays. Inquire for the London populace at Greenwich, and for the country people in the various ale-houses. To say, that they might reap benefits, and they ought to pay for the liberty, is equal to saying, that the sober populace might get drunk, and they ought to pay the reckoning of those who do.

Whatever advantages they derive from church holidays, many of their neighbours derive great disadvantages from their sinking fifty shillings annually to support them. This poor fellow should pay thirty shillings a year rent for his cottage, but the landlord never gets it; yet he would thank him to pay his rent by ten days' work for him. He can pay no rates to the parish, nor any taxes to government; yet were he allowed to earn fifty shillings a year more than he does, he could pay both, and save money to buy a pig, or a bullock, and firing too. He owes something to the doctor for physic, and something to the shop for food—debts contracted in lyings-in and illness; he can pay none of these dribblets; yet he could pay all, were he allowed to earn fifty shillings a year more, and to deposit it for the payment of debts. Besides, he got drunk on the feast of the Epiphany, which he, a heathen, called twelfth-night, set up a score at the ale-house, rolled in the dirt, spoiled his clothes, lost his hat, fought with Sam Stride, who sent him a lawyer's letter, for which he paid six

and eight pence, beside a guinea to Stride to make it up ; and on the same night he gave a girl nineteen pence for the liberty of leaving a bastard to the parish ; magistrates were tormented with warrants, and oaths, and depositions ; peaceable subjects, with the interruptions of riot and debauchery ; the whole business of the parish stood still, and the industrious were obliged to pay, out of their honest gains, the whole expense at last.

What ! it will be said, would you keep these people in eternal employment, and allow them no holidays ? I *would* keep them in perpetual employment. Six days they should labour, and do all they have to do ; the seventh, being the sabbath of the Lord their God, the clergy should so perform divine service as to engage them voluntarily to choose to fill a religious assembly ; their children should be catechized, and rational and agreeable pains should be taken to instil the great principles of religion into them ; they should be taught a practice of piety, and a course of virtue. Religion should be unmasked and exposed in its own beauty to their view : at present it appears to them an unmeaning incumbrance of expensive forms ; their infants are questioned and sprinkled ; their wives pay a shilling, and are churched ; they are generally funny at a wedding, and feel no expense but the ring ; they eat cross-buns on Good Friday, are merry at Easter, and mad at Christmas ; they

pay small tithes through life, and are buried in form when they die ; and they call this the Christian religion, in the best constituted church in the world, and abuse all who think otherwise as knaves and fools, ignorant of God, and disloyal to the king ! As to holidays, let the poor take as many as they can afford, and their masters can spare. Far be it from me to wish to abridge their liberty, or diminish their little enjoyments of life ; but let us not make religion of their gambols, nor enrol their pastimes among the laws of Jesus Christ.

There were, in the ritual of our ancestors, above two hundred festal days, many of them in seed time, hay time, and harvest. Great complaints were made to Parliament. The Church, it was said, would ruin the State. While the people were telling beads, and the priests chanting and preaching away, the corn lay rotting in the fields, cattle were neglected, commerce was at a stand, and the nation was starving. The legislature struck off, first, harvest holidays, and then others, and what remain were left for a decoy to papists, to the great grief of numbers who submitted to them, and who wished to get rid of superstition—the rust and the rind of popery.

If any imagine these festivals necessary for the sake of informing people of the events that are commemorated on them, and of preserving and perpetuating their remembrance, we only

beg leave to ask—Where was Christianity so well understood as in the primitive churches, which celebrated none of them? Where is the Christian religion less understood than in the Roman community, where they are celebrated without end? Who understood Christianity best, our Saxon ancestors, who had many festivals, or our immediate parents, who had few? Is religion better understood in these reformed churches where they are celebrated, than in those where they are omitted? Does religion consist in the bare remembrance of a few events in the life of Jesus Christ? May not all the ends proposed by the observation of church holidays be better answered without it? Do we not sacrifice many great advantages, and put ourselves to unnecessary inconveniences and expenses, for mere shadows, which never can be substantiated without civil coercion? Is not the likeliest method to make the clergy loathe the necessary parts of their office, the obliging of them to drudge alone in unnecessary exercises? Many articles are omitted, underrated, and half reasoned; but we have said enough, perhaps too much, on the evil polity of church holidays.

CHAP. XVII.

HISTORY OF CHURCH HOLIDAYS, CONCLUDED.

SHOULD any parish priest of genuine and generous piety (for to sycophants and bigots we have nothing to say,) who loves God, reveres his king, wishes well to his country, and to all mankind,—should such a man say, “ I mourn for the vices and calamities of my country, and I dread those chastisements of Providence which national sins deserve ; I wish to contribute my mite to the public good ; but I know no better way of promoting it, than by inculcating the observation of fasts and feasts, and approved rituals ;” I would venture to reply to him thus :—

“ Reverend Sir ! I give you credit for being a man too wise to quibble about style, where matters of the highest importance are in hand, and too good to be offended with the honest bluntness of one, whose reigning passion is to wish felicity to all mankind. Pardon me, then, if I take the liberty to say, that the cool, disinterested part of mankind consider a hierarchy as they consider a

standing military force. In absolute monarchies, where the main principle of the constitution is that of governing by fear, a hierarchy is essentially necessary to the despotism of the prince ; but in free states a hierarchy will always justly be an object of jealousy. Hierarchical powers have found many a state free, and reduced it to slavery ; but there is no instance of their having brought an enslaved state into Christian liberty. Your country, Sir, is almost the only one in the universe, in which civil liberty is the very end and scope of the constitution. You should therefore acquaint yourself well with all the singular polity of this country, which is governed by a system of laws, all tending to the one great design—civil liberty, and you should not put off the man, the citizen, and the Christian, when you put on the clerical character.

“ You profess a religion, Sir, which agrees with civil polity ; you know how some of your order have deprived it of this glory by resisting or duping their civil governors in order to aggrandize themselves. Recover that character to Christianity, which those tools of a desperate cause, Austin and Lanfrank, Dunstan and Anselm, Thurstan and Becket, Longchamp and Peckham, Arundel and Chichley, Wolsey and Bonner, Parker and Whitgift, Bancroft and Laud, and others of more modern times, have vilely squandered away. Leave secular affairs to secular men. Have no more to do than

what you cannot possibly avoid, with commissions of the peace, county elections, commissions for roads, the civil affairs of hospitals, corporations, and so on. You may have rights as a gentleman, but it is not necessary you should lay aside the character of a gentleman for the sake of asserting them. Civil government administered by clerical men always inspires the laity with jealousy, and the poor with contempt. In your office, be no aspiring statesman's tool for filthy lucre's sake. Do not dare to lift your unhallowed hand against the sovereign's title to the crown, and the people's right to liberty, by brandishing the obsolete and execrable doctrines of passive obedience, non-resistance, the divine right of kings, and all the unconstitutional positions which the supreme legislature consigned to eternal oblivion at the glorious revolution. Your superior may put you on uttering what he dare not utter himself, in order to feel the popular pulse; and he may procure interested hirelings to applaud you, and promise that preferment to you which he intends for himself. If you perish in the attempt, what cares he? But do not deceive yourself. The present king will never prefer men of arbitrary and unconstitutional principles. His Majesty perfectly comprehends the nature of the British constitution; and, as he magnanimously aspires at the glory of reigning over a free people, who have confidence in his goodness, it is impossible he should smile

on those who lay the axe to the root of the constitution, and would, by one fatal blow, fell those twin branches—his title and his people's liberties. Stir up no strife in your public preaching, nor teach your parish to abhor an inhabitant of it for praying in a barn. Never persecute for religion's sake. Never oppress conscience. Never discountenance piety in other communities, lest men should think you not a minister of religion, but the tool of a party. Never condemn denominations in the gross, nor impute principles and practices to them which they abhor. Sow no jealousies or discords in families. Cultivate the general principles of Christianity more than the peculiarities of your own party, and the rights of all mankind rather than the ritual of a very inconsiderable part of them.

“ You are the minister of a religion remarkable for its morality. Do nothing to weaken this evidence of its divinity.

“ Avoid all gross vices, drunkenness, adultery, lying, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking. It is not enough for you to abstain from swearing and lying ; you must not take God's name in vain, nor allow yourself to prevaricate. Abstain from what the scripture calls filthiness of spirit ; pride, levity, hypocrisy, avarice, discontent, distrust, mental immoralities. Practise all the moral duties, and let your flock see as well as hear your doctrine. Have no fellowship with those unfruitful works of dark-

ness—gaming, horse-racing, frequenting taverns and ale-houses, play-houses, opera-houses, balls, assemblies, and masquerades. Avoid also hunting, shooting, dangling at the heels of Sir Robert, cringing at the levee of my lord, and fetching and carrying for my lady ; all of which, whatever may be said for secular men, are highly improper for you. The minister of Christ must at least appear to be a man of delicate and refined moral virtue.

“ You are a minister of *revealed* religion. Study the holy scriptures, distinguish the doctrines of revelation from the discoveries of philosophers ; the precepts of Christ from the prudential laws of Epictetus ; the doctrines and laws of his kingdom from human creeds and worldly maxims ; and do not imagine that classics and mathematics, novels and plays, contain a body of Christian divinity. Never turn the sacred truths of revelation into ridicule, nor call “ *being born again,*” “ *fearing the Lord,*” “ *praying by the spirit,*” the cant of a party. The phraseology of scripture may have been misunderstood, but you should not discard both comment and text ; you have adopted the book, and you ought to explain its meaning. Avail yourself of all opportunities of disseminating scriptural knowledge. Instruct the children and the poor in your parish. Carry religion home to their bosoms. Lay aside the self-important haughtiness of a priest, and put on the meek and humble temper of your Master. Go into the cottages of

the poor. Encourage their meeting together to pray, and read the holy scriptures. Teach them to set up family worship, to perform a course of domestic devotion ; and, above all things, never countenance the profanation of the sabbath, but teach them to reverence and improve it.

“ You are, Sir, a minister in a rich community. Your country gives you good wages, and at least some work is expected. Employ your emoluments to better purposes than those of dress and equipage, Sunday visits, midnight revels, assemblies, simoniacal contracts, and such like. Detest the miserable disposition of hoarding wealth, and dread being possessed by the lust of rising to preferment. Remember, all church emoluments are fiduciary, and they lapse into the public hand when the services for which they were granted are not performed. Flatter the vices of no patron, but, with a modest boldness, reprove them. Dare to be upright. Despise the shame of singularity. Touch no sinecures. Renounce needless pluralities. Do not plead for non-residence ; and if you must have a curate, let him share both work and wages. It would be tedious to you were I to go through the duties that are annexed to all offices, from the curate up to the Metropolitan of all England ; I will only beg your patience, while I add, in general—avoid the six vices that disgrace too many of your order. Destroy the prejudices of deists and infidels ; allow, at least, the probability of some defection, and

adopt the course prescribed by the oracles of God.

“ The principal vices that disgrace the clergy are—*First*, Ignorance of Christian divinity. *Second*, Perjury, if they subscribe upon oath their belief of propositions, which they have either not examined or do not believe. *Third*, Ambition, expressed in a haughty reserve in private life, and a vain and pompous parade in public, a pedantic affectation of wisdom of words in their public preaching, by which they sacrifice the edification of a whole congregation to the silly vanity of shining as men of genius. *Fourth*, Insatiable avarice; being ten thousand times more tenacious of a fourpenny Easter offering than of all the Ten Commandments. *Fifth*, Time-serving, always pursuing those measures which serve their own interest, surrendering to it philosophy and divinity, the interests of their country, and the honour of their God. *Sixth*, Hypocrisy; acting a part; recommending Christianity by office, and establishing Paganism by inclination;—at church in masquerade, and at play in their native character. Such priests as these turn the heavenly manna into poison. They give the enemies of religion cause to blaspheme, and are the ridicule of atheists, and the reasons of deism! Be it your holy ambition, Sir, to wipe off the foul prejudices that deform the face of a weeping reformed church. Your community is suspected of symbolising with popery, for Parpalio, the pope’s

nuncio, offered, in the pope's name, to confirm your service book. All reformed divines own that the distinguishing characters of that apostate church are three—*superstition, tyranny, and immorality.* Are there no evidences of your possessing these marks of anti-christianism? Are your morals uncorrupt? Do you place no religion in habits, places, words, and forms? Have you resigned that unrighteous dominion over conscience, which, in less inquisitive times, your order unjustly acquired? Have you, like other penitents, joined restitution to repentance? Have you expelled no students for praying, and reading the scriptures? Denied ordination to no candidates on account of their holding the doctrines of your own articles? Suspended and persecuted no clergymen for preaching more zealously than yourselves? Have you awed none into silence, who would speak if they dare? What said you to your petitioning colleagues? And what to the dissenting clergy, whom you flatter, and soothe, and call brethren in Christ? Are they freed from oaths, and subscriptions, and penal laws? ***** CHRISTIAN LIBERTY! Thou favourite offspring of heaven! Thou first-born of Christianity! I saw the wise and pious servants of God nourish thee in their houses, and cherish thee in their bosoms! I saw them lead thee into public view! All good men hailed thee! The generous BRITISH COMMONS caressed and praised thee, and led thee into an upper house, and

there **** there didst thou expire in the holy laps of spiritual Lords! **** Allow that it is not impossible, nor improbable, but very likely, that MAY have happened in Christianity, which has happened in law; multifarious statutes have obscured plain common law. Changing the term *law* for *divinity*, I will recite the words of one of the chief ornaments of the learned profession:—The Christian religion has fared like other venerable edifices of antiquity, which rash and inexperienced workmen have ventured to new dress and refine with all the rage of modern improvement; hence, frequently its symmetry has been destroyed, its proportions distorted, and its MAJESTIC SIMPLICITY exchanged for specious embellishments and fantastic novelties. For, to say the truth, all niceties and intricacies owe their original, not to scripture divinity, but to additions and innovations, often on a sudden penned by men, who had none, or very little judgment in divinity.

“ In fine, Sir, feed the flock of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. Covet no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.—Warn every one night and day with tears.—Serve the Lord with all humility of mind.—Keep back nothing that is profitable.—Teach publicly, and from house to house.—Testify to Jews and Greeks neither worldly politics nor human inventions, but repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.—Watch in all things. Do the work of an

evangelist. Make full proof of your ministry.—Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.—Meditate upon these things.—GIVE THYSELF WHOLLY TO THEM.—Do these things, and then, when you are become venerably hoary in the best of services, finish your course with joy!—Take Britain and her colonies, Protestantism and Popery, Canada and China, your own church and other reformed churches, heaven and earth, to record that you are pure from the blood of all men.—Quit the world like your divine Master, and ascend to heaven, you blessing us, and we admiring you!

“ But if, on the contrary, neglecting all the duties of your office, and practising all the vices that ever provoked the patience of God and man ;—if you enter the church by that door by which Ananias was turned out, professing to be moved by the Spirit of God, while you are actuated only by ambition or avarice ;—if, so far from coming up to the spirit of those qualifications which are required to ordination, you fall short of their very letter, either in learning, morality, or knowledge of theology ;—if you subscribe thirty-nine articles, three creeds, the genuine and apocryphal scriptures, the books of prayer, ordination, and homilies, and swear canonical obedience to one hundred and forty-one canons, without having read, examined, and believed the whole ;—if you take the oath of supremacy, and hold, that the church hath legislative

power ;—if you abjure popery upon oath, and yet hold the principal articles that support it ;—if you swear allegiance to his Majesty, and teach anti-revolutionary principles ;—if you obtain preferment by simony, direct or indirect ;—if you take charge of two thousand souls, and never speak to one thousand nine hundred of them ;—if you hold contradictory doctrines, while you profess uniformity ;—if you have a catechism, and never teach it ;—if you neglect your duty, to hunt after preferment ;—if you enjoy the emoluments of a spiritual office in person, and do the service of it by proxy ;—if you hate reformation, and depreciate and persecute those who would reform you ;—if you misrepresent peaceable subjects, taxing them with heresy, schism, and republicanism, and strive to render their loyalty to the crown, and their love to the constitution, doubtful ;—if you profane the sabbath, and ordinances of divine appointment ;—if all your study be to make a fair show in the flesh ;—if you mind only earthly things, your God being your belly, and glorying in your shame—and vainly imagine to cover all these crimes by observing a Good Friday, and so to gull mankind into a persuasion of your sapience and sanctity,—know, of a truth, the time may come, when your civil governors may see it as necessary to reform your reformation as their ancestors did to reform the religion of your predecessors. Till then, although the religion of pious spectators will not suffer them to hurt a hair of your head, yet the

same religion will oblige them to say of you, "This evil man talks of light while his feet are stumbling on dark mountains: his country and the small remains of his own conscience, the canons of his church and the laws of the state, the liberalities of his prince and the tears of his brethren, the ashes of Burnets, and Hoadlys, and Lardners, the best judgments of Heaven on degenerate priests and incorrigible nations,—all call him to his duty, and warn him of the danger of falling into the hands of an angry God. If he will not hear, our souls shall weep in secret places for his ignorance and pride."

CHAP. XVIII.

CHURCH CEREMONIES.

PLAINNESS and simplicity are not more inseparable marks of any other truth than they are of that religion which wants neither paint nor pageantry to recommend it to the hearts of men. It wins the affections by the force of its persuasions, and the understanding by the reasonableness of its precepts. It abhors violence, as opposite to its nature, and despises art and policy, as below its dignity. Human ornaments may hide and disfigure it, but cannot preserve or improve its intrinsic beauty and divine lustre. Pomp and grimace, as they are in no wise akin to it, so neither are they the effect of it, nor can they render it any advantage. On the contrary, they tend to fill the mind with gross ideas, or sullen fear, and create superstition instead of piety.

God himself has told us, that he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, which shews that love and sincerity constitute devotion, and that religion resides in the heart. As to bodily religion,

and corporeal holiness, the gospel is silent, leaving every one at full liberty to behave in his own way in the practice of piety. It is justly esteemed the glory and felicity of the Christian religion, that by it we are released from the grievous yoke and bondage of ceremonies, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. It is a religion of simplicity, void of all superfluities and trifling imperinences.

Men cannot judge of one another's thoughts and inclinations but by words and actions; and because it would be both troublesome and silly to be on every occasion haranguing our friends and superiors upon the profound veneration which we profess for their persons or characters, it has become necessary to agree upon some outward forms to denote internal respect. This I take to be the only good reason which can be given for a particular form of address, or ceremony. It is ridiculous, either by sounds or gestures, to tell a man over and over again what he knows already; and therefore the most intimate friends and old acquaintance make but little use of show or compliment: those who make most, are ever found the least sincere. How senseless and absurd must it be to entertain Heaven with grimaces—Heaven, which searches our hearts, and knows our most hidden thoughts, and will not be deceived by outward, arbitrary, and fallacious marks of the inward disposition!

It can never be conceived, that the all-merciful

and omniscient God should, by the sending of his Son, abolish, or suffer to be abolished, the whole Jewish order of ceremonies, though appointed by himself in person—should graciously condescend to establish a new dispensation, destitute of all ceremony and exterior grandeur,—and yet leave it to the ambition of designing men, or to the folly of weak ones, to invent and impose a fresh load of rituals, in opposition to the plain genius of the gospel. This would be for the All-merciful, to be merciful in vain ; for the Creator to resign his power to the creature ; and for God to recall his own injunctions, which he once gave for a gracious and wise end, since ceased, that men may enforce their's for a weak or a wicked one.

Nothing is, or can be, pure religion, but either what God commands and tells us he will accept, or what is dictated by eternal reason, which is the law of nature. Whatever is superadded, however dignified by a venerable name, is no part of true religion ; which, as has been said, can be supported by nothing but divine revelation, or divine reason. When both these are wanting, we wander in the dark, and worship blindfolded ; being led by the hand of conjecture and invention, which are uncertain and endless. This is so true, that where true religion exists, there are few ceremonies ; and, on the other hand, where ceremonies abound, there religion is either utterly lost, or miserably decayed.

In popish countries, it is more or less visible, according as ceremonies and bigotry—which, like cause and effect, go hand in hand—are more or less practised or promoted. Thus, in France, where, through the commerce of that kingdom with Protestants, there are still some remains of common sense, and consequently of religion, God is worshipped as well as dead men, though not so much; but in Italy and Spain, the saints have deprived their Maker of all devotion; and the blessed Virgin, St. Dominick, St. Jago, and St. Anthony, are made governors of heaven and earth, and the givers of eternal life; and consequently are become, next immediately after the priests, the only objects of adoration. If you deprive them of their saints and their ceremonies, there is not the least semblance of religion left amongst them.

So little has Christianity gained by ceremonies, that a great part of mankind have, by adopting them, banished all true religion. If they were introduced, as it is alleged, to kindle piety, I am sorry to say, it has so happened, that this heat of devotion has quite drank up the truth and essentials of religion. The blind compliance with a senseless cringe, invented and enjoined by a popish priest, is made of more importance and merit than the possession of all moral and Christian virtues, without it. Religion, good sense, and humanity, are inseparable friends; but a superstitious fond-

ness for ceremonies is a contradiction and an affront to all the three.

The teachers of mankind have, for the greatest part, been the most unteachable of all men ; and these our guides to peace have been always the foremost to break it. They have seen, from time to time, the violence and ungodly effects produced by their contention for human forms, habits, and decisions ; and yet, where the religious laity and the law did not interpose to restrain this unchristian behaviour in churchmen, they have not only still adhered with obstinacy to their inventions and impositions, but frequently made it their business to broach new ones, and to throw about fresh balls of strife and cruelty. Ceremonies were first brought in under a very plausible pretence,—viz., that of aiding and promoting religion ; but we have seen, by upwards of a thousand years' experience, that these, its pretended friends, always became its rivals and successful enemies, and, by the help of those whose interest it was to contrive and support them at any rate, never failed to banish it as far away as their power extended.

It is pretended, that the invention of stated ceremonies and garments, is justified by these words of St. Paul to the Corinthians—" Let all things be done decently and in order." But these words are only a precept to avoid immodesty and confusion in religious assemblies. Two, for example, were not

to speak at the same time. One was not to sing psalms while another prayed. Neither love nor trade was to be the business of their meetings, nor tithes and their own power the drift and business of the preachers. Christ was not to be confounded with Belial, nor pride and dominion with meekness and Christianity. Exhortation was not to be mixed with railing, nor praying with cursing. Nor were the people to be taught to hate one another. In short, God was to be adored with the heart and affections, and not with a fiddle, or a pipe, or a tabor!

I do not find that the apostle's words were understood in any other sense than this, by those to whom they were addressed. It does not appear, that immediately upon the sight of St. Paul's epistle, the Corinthians concluded that prayers should be said in surplices; and that the faithful, as soon as the word was given, should kneel, stoop, and stand; or turn to the right or left, like a file of musketeers; or that they were to nod towards the east, as if the Almighty kept his court only there. Nor were the Corinthians directed by this text to play popish tricks over the forehead of a babe baptized, as *sure and certain signs* of regeneration; nor were they commanded to put up their petitions in quavers, and to sing their prayers as well as say them; nor was that subtle distinction then and there found out, of bowing at the name

of Jesus, but not at the name of Christ or of God. All these pretty fashions were unknown to the apostle and his correspondents, and their genteelness and significancy have been long since discovered by the Romish clergy in later days ; and, indeed, it is now become impossible to make one's court well without them. The words *decorum* and *significancy*, which are made use of to justify the celebration of ceremonies, are words of such prodigious latitude, that the world does not agree, nor ever can agree, what it is that comes properly under their denomination, and what does not. With the Turks, it is decent to be covered at devotion ; with us, to be bare-headed. How is the wearing of a wig, or a cap, more decent and orthodox than the wearing of a hat ? How is a prunella gown, or a lawn frock, more significant than a cloth coat ? Is God better pleased with a cambric band than with a muslin cravat ? And is an organ-loft more acceptable to Him than plain country piety, that has neither motion nor music in it ?

If men be at liberty to invent and enjoin one unnecessary ceremony, why not two ? And if two, why not two thousand ? When such a power is once granted, it cannot be easily, nor indeed reasonably, limited. If the clergy can oblige me to throw my head into my bosom, upon their pronouncing certain sounds, they may oblige me to run it against a stone wall ; nay, what is still worse, whoever has an authority to direct my manner of

worship, must have also a power to direct the matter of it, and may command me whom, as well as how to worship.

Superstition in the people, and power in the priests, were the true ends and consequences of creating ceremonies; for, as to their significancy, it was a mere pretence. Such a plea would justify endless phrensy and fooleries, and every madness would be made a mystery. For instance, we might be made to walk bare-footed into the church, to signify the sanctity of the place; and to crawl upon all fours out of it, to signify the humiliation of our hearts. A match of cudgel-playing every Sunday might be instituted, to signify our spiritual warfare; and a game of blindman's buff, to signify the darkness of our understandings. In short, any thing might be made to signify every thing, and any punishment be inflicted upon the profane gainsayer. Upon this principle may be justified all the pagan and popish fopperies that ever were, or ever could be invented, and nothing can be said against all the many garments, and many colours, and many antic gestures, used by the Romish - priests at this day.

It must be evident to every intelligent man, that all this pretty pageantry and raree-show, can never make men more acceptable to God, who will not be gratified or obliged by a jig or a tune. I believe I may safely affirm, that if all the merry-making and jovial devotion in the popish churches do no

manner of good, they must needs do harm ; because they divert the mind from deliberate devotion and calm repentance, and can, at best, only work it up to a wild and enthusiastic worship. However, though this pompous parade in piety does no service to religion, it effectually answers the end proposed, and contributes vastly, as every thing else does, to the advancement and grandeur of the Romish clergy. It turns men's thoughts from divine objects to a superstitious veneration for postures, habits, grimaces, cringes, utensils, and other things, all invented by priests, who are always sure to appoint themselves masters of the ceremonies, and to be well paid for their deep knowledge in this momentous science. Besides, it enlists into their service great numbers of people ; organists, fiddlers, singing men, with all the piping and chanting crew, as well as artificers of various kinds. It engages men and women of pleasure in their interests ; it catches the multitude by the ears and the eyes, and sets them a staring ; it alleviates their own drudgery of frequent preaching and praying ; and also serves the purposes of interludes in the perpetual tragedies they are acting ; which they render less terrible by playing, like Nero, upon their harps in the midst of conflagrations of their own making.

The pagan religion consisted, altogether, in a great number and variety of strange and senseless ceremonies ; and being foolish and false, it could

consist of nothing else. Its votaries had, for their religious task, certain frantic actions to perform, certain wanton motions to make, or certain mad races to run ; sometimes galloping about the streets like lunatics, sometimes half naked, and at other times altogether so, or in a religious antic dress significantly suited to their behaviour. They were to be religious with their heads, feet, and other members. They were also to utter certain harsh and devout sounds which had no meaning, but were prodigiously significant, and being very ridiculous, were very decent.

During all this holy exercise, which was edifying in proportion as it was mad, their minds were possessed with a drunken festivity and wantonness, or with craziness and enthusiastic fear. They were either lewd and raving rakes or fanatics. It never entered into their heads, nor did their priests ever put it into them, that religion was a sober thing, consisting in the exercise of reason and the practice of virtue. No ! a spirit of sobriety, or a ray of understanding, would have blown up the authority and dominion of the heathen parsons, and, therefore, the poor lay pagans were not suffered to know that a man might be a religious man without being a good dancer, and please God without roaring, and running races.

This was the godly and wholesome discipline invented and instituted by the pagan clergy, for the use and edification of the deluded and idolatrous

world. Action and outward show were all they knew of religion ; and therefore their superstition took great delight in building and beautifying temples. They imagined that the doing of a thing which had any reference to religion, was actually a piece of religion ; and that any job of work about a holy place, was, in good earnest, a job of holiness. They might as rationally have believed, that masons, joiners, and plasterers, employed about a temple, derived piety and merit from that employment. Had not pagan ceremonies signified nothing, or rather something very bad, as, indeed, it was evident to every eye that they were either senseless or impious, our Saviour would never have instituted, as he did, a religion without one ceremony in it. The religion of the gospel is as pure from fancies and ceremonies, as from pride and the spirit of dominion.

Our blessed Saviour knew well, that the crafty and profane priests had, by their shameless inventions and filthy ceremonies, polluted or abolished all religion ; and therefore, in mercy to mankind, He founded a religion without priests and without ceremonies. (For it is to be observed, that while the established church of paganism flourished, priests and ceremonies always flourished and increased together.) Such was the simple institution of the gospel ; but when popery began to expel Christianity, ignorance and ceremonies were some of the principal engines by which it effected its

purpose. For, as the meekness of Christians was then converted into the cruelty of barbarians, and the plainness of the gospel into all the detestable fopperies of paganism ; so holiness of heart was changed into holiness of posture ; the humility of soul into bodily bowings ; the worship of God into the worship of bread, and the piping of organs ; and the clergy, as they named themselves, were no longer clothed with humility, but with surplices and other robes. Nor was this mighty revolution, this unnatural transition from the beauty and gentleness of Christianity to the unhallowed spirit and abominable rituals of the heathens, at all hard or impracticable. The people had, by the idleness, insufficiency, and debaucheries of the ecclesiastics, become corrupt and blind to the last degree, and, therefore, ran readily and cheerfully into every new absurdity. Whatever the bishop pronounced *decent*, though ever so vile or silly, his conforming flock received as reverend and edifying. A gross and sensual manner of worship suited best with the grossness of their understandings and the sensuality of their minds. They had no conception of the spiritual nature of the gospel, and of that evangelical grace which operates internally, and is wholly employed about the soul, but produces neither cringes, nor dances, nor grimaces.

A religion, therefore, of ceremonies, which is no religion at all, agreed well with those carnal Christians who were taught to place all religion in cere-

monies. When the ignorant vulgar are once persuaded that ceremonies are good for any thing, they come quickly to think them good for every thing ; and the more the better ! They are delighted with shadows, and mystery, and juggling. Ignorance, like every other habit, is daily improving itself, and increases in strength as in years ; it delights to be still plunging into farther and deeper darkness. The less people understand, the more they stare ; and because there is nothing in the gospel but plain piety, plain reason, and plain matter of fact, therefore it can raise no wonder, and, consequently, no popular piety ; but strange and mysterious ceremonies can do this, and, for that reason, have always got the better of religion in all bigoted assemblies.

Here, then, is a glorious and ample field of gaping sottishness and credulity, in which crafty priests play their tricks, and sow superstition. Indeed, they have exalted themselves in this undertaking with such dexterity and success, that their humble and resigned votaries do not any longer pretend to carry their own eyes or understanding. Their very palates and noses are priest-ridden, and dare neither taste nor smell without an ecclesiastical licence. Thus, even the invincible operations of the animal spirits, and of the five senses, must stand still, when commanded by a priest, who can annihilate the creature and create his creator. As, under the sacred name of God

and religion, the greatest irreligion and impieties have been propagated, so, under the colour and umbrage of significant and decent ceremonies, the most ridiculous and immodest usages have been introduced. It would require more than a whole chapter to expose all the apish gesticulations of the Romish mass now celebrated almost in every town in England; I shall only run over a few of them.

The priest, in the administration of mass, must wear a white linen garment, which I suppose must signify whiteness; for I cannot see a more obvious meaning for it. The same was also worn by the primitive heathen clergy, when they butchered bullocks to appease their deities. As he approaches towards the altar, having great devotion in his back-bone, he bows, and bows, and ducks his head, as if he were playing at hop-frog. The altar is also covered with a surplice, or white cloth, which, doubtless, signifies some great mystery; but, in profane eyes, typifies only a damask table-cloth. It also stands towards the east, which most certainly must have a deep meaning, and seems to imply as if the Almighty was either more merciful or more powerful in that quarter of the world, (though he made it all,) than in any of the other three; or as if he liked that climate best, and all those who bow to it. He then, after many monkish gestures and scrapings, says a world of short prayers, (the whole service being judiciously

sliced into pretty little morsels of devotion,) and reads scraps of scripture ; all which prayings and readings would not be half so wholesome any where else, as they are just at the elbow of the altar. Then there is a lighted candle standing by him at noon-day, probably to signify that there is light enough without it. In some churches the altar is only illuminated with dark candles, which, for aught I know, may be equally mysterious and significant ; but upon this great and essential point I shall pronounce nothing dogmatically. The priest then mutters words over the bread and wine, which immediately starts into omnipotent flesh and blood, and the living Jesus is swallowed wholly in remembrance of the dead one ;—the priest makes his Maker, and the people eat him ! The wine, which the priest very naturally keeps all to himself, must not be poured out of a bottle into a glass, which would not be significant enough ; but out of a flaggon, which, being of silver or gold, and holding more liquor, is consequently very significant. He repeats, “ Lord have mercy upon us ! ” very often, to signify that he does it more than once ; and speaks loudly, to signify that he may be heard. But I am quite sick of this strange significant stuff, before I have got through the tenth part of it. The whole performance is perfectly theatrical, and improperly and impiously called a sacrament. It is, indeed, a wretched, unentertaining interlude ; a stupid farce,

of which the priest is the chief mimic ; for mumbling and making mouths do not deserve the name of acting.

We have had several attempts made to revive among us this infamous mummery in devotion, and these apish ceremonies, which are an affront to common sense, and below the dignity of human nature, much more of religion. But such attempts can never succeed, while we enjoy either liberty or knowledge. Archbishop Laud, when he had bewitched the court, swayed the sceptre, and destroyed the liberty of the people and of the press, took the best opportunity he could get, to transport Rome to Lambeth ; and, having married the harlot, he adopted her trumpery. A sample of this man's genius for popery may be seen in his mad manner of consecrating some new brick and mortar which had been used in the repair of St. Catherine Creed church, London, as the same is related at large by Rushworth. At his approach to the west end of the church, the door flew open, upon pronouncing certain words out of the Psalms,—“ That the King of Glory might enter.” The bishop then entered, and, falling down upon his knees, baptized the ground, or, which is the same thing, pronounced it holy, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He then threw dust in the air, and played some other pious pranks—pronounced many curses, and called upon the people to curse with him. He then scattered a

basketful of blessings among all the masons, and other holy mechanics, who had helped to make so fine a church. He also went round the church in procession, and told God Almighty and the people, over and over, that that was holy ground. At last, after a bead-roll of prayers, and a hundred-and-fifty bowings, and many wild gestures, sometimes advancing, sometimes recoiling, like one affrighted and crazy, he gave the sacrament. Besides all this, he removed the communion-table, and placed it on the chancel, altar-wise, contrary to the express directions of the rubric; which says, that it shall stand where morning and evening prayer is directed to be said. He made pictures of the Trinity, and caused them to be hung up in churches, and was guilty of many other popish innovations, all tending to create fanaticism and superstition.

This chapter grows too long, and leaves me no room to do justice to crosses, square caps, and fantastical robes; all which, I warrant my reader, are profoundly mysterious; though, to carnal eyes, they seem only intended to induce the people to stare; for every odd sight strikes the imagination, and disposes the beholder either to laughter or reverence. Nor have I time to honour, with a proper encomium, that ingenious and ecclesiastical device, of explaining the sublime mystery of the Trinity by a pair of compasses; indeed, it is above all explication, and even of conception, unless

through faith ; and of representing the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by a triangle in a circle, over the communion table. Was there ever such a pretty piece of pious cunning? By the said triangle is typified and held forth to us, that the said triangle consists of three angles, which is exceeding plain and edifying. By the circle is signified, that the said circle is but one circle, which is prodigiously good again ! But how a triangle is a circle, and a circle is a triangle, I am at a loss to comprehend.

I must for the same reason pass over unobserved, the praising of God with organs, which our homilies very uncivilly call superstitious ; engravings in the Common Prayer Book tending to prepare people for idolatry, and pictures in churches, for the same devout purpose.

CHAP. XIX.

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

IN our disputes with the Church of Rome, we contend, that the scripture alone is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, and our divines have proved it unanswerably ; but when our high church priests argue with dissenters, holy writ is not so highly complimented. It is then very subject to lead us into mistakes, and hard to be understood. It is true, it is infallible, and was given us from heaven to be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths ; but still it is dark and insufficient without human aid and explication ; for though it is exceeding plain to the members of the established church of England, and proves them to be right in every article, ceremony, and habit, it is utterly hidden from those who will not accept of our guidance, and submit to our authority. If they refuse to believe and obey the supplements and improvements of the Bible, therefore, and to accept of the

salvation which is to be had in the church of England and the church of Rome, they shall have no salvation at all. It is fit and orthodox that men should perish for following their consciences, and for understanding the scriptures without the leave of the ordinary!

Thus, when they debate with the papists, they praise the scriptures, inveigh against the imposing of opinions, and speak in the style of dissenters; but when they are pleased to rebuke non-conformists, they borrow the language of papists, urge the authority of our apostolic church and her divine right to judge for others, and deal out hard language, and worse usage, to all that take the same privilege which they do. There is, however, this small difference between the conformists and schismatics—the one have good pay for being orthodox, the other pay dearly for being in the wrong. If these are not good reasons for delivering schismatics over to Satan, I despair of finding better. In consequence of this power in high churchmen to be the mouthmen of the Bible, which, if we take their word, cannot speak for itself, they claim a right to make creeds for others, which is what I am now to examine.

I think it but justice to the goodness of God to affirm, that belief or disbelief can neither be a virtue nor a crime, in any one who uses the best means in his power of being informed. If a proposition be evident, we cannot avoid believing it; and where is the merit or piety of a necessary assent?

If it be not evident, we cannot help rejecting it, or doubting it; and where is the crime of not performing impossibilities, or not believing what does not appear to us to be true? Are men who have good eyes, the more righteous for seeing? or do they offend in seeing too well? or do blind men sin, in not distinguishing colours?

When we clearly see the proof of a proposition, or know that we have God's word for it, our assent is inevitable; but if we neither comprehend it, nor see God's authority for it, and yet swallow it, this is credulity, and not divine faith, which can have nothing less than divine truth for its object. When we are sure that God speaks to us, we readily believe Him, who cannot lie, nor be mistaken, nor deceive us; but when men speak, though from God himself, our belief in them is but human confidence, if we have only their own authority that they had it from God. Their being bishops, their being learned, their meeting together in synods, all this alters not the case. We can judge of their opinions in no other way than as of the opinions of men; and of their decisions, but as of human decisions. When the articles of any creed appear to be contained in scripture, whoever believes that, does, in consequence, believe them; and then such creed is unnecessary: but when we cannot, or think we cannot, find them in scripture, and yet give equal credit to them, we depreciate and profane the divine authority itself, by accepting the

words of man's invention as wiser and more significant than the words of God's own choosing.

We are sure that the scripture-phrases were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and as sure that our own forms and injunctions are human, and framed by priests. It is, therefore, strange that the former should be insufficient and unintelligible, and the latter infallible, and to be embraced and obeyed on the pain of damnation; and that the priests must do what God has, without success, endeavoured to do. Besides, as the imposition of human creeds is contrary to reason, so it is also opposed to charity. They were generally made in a passion, not to edify, but to plague those for whom, or rather against whom, they were intended. They were the engines of wrath and vengeance, nor could they serve any other purpose. Those who believed them already, did not want them; and those who disbelieved them were not the better for them. But this was not the worst of it; for they who did not receive them, against their conscience, were cursed, and they who did, deserved it. So that either the wrath of God on the one hand, or the wrath and cruelty of the clergy on the other, was unavoidable. If people said they believed, and did not, they mocked God, and shipwrecked their souls; and if they did not believe, and expressed their disbelief, though they saved their souls, they provoked their reverend fathers, and were destroyed. Whenever these dictators in faith had a mind to

be mischievous, and to undo one who gave them signal offence, either by his good reputation or good bishopric, they began his ruin by their great care for his soul, and so invented a creed for him, which ruined him effectually, by giving him, as they said, to Satan, but in truth, to beggary, stripes, or flames. He, therefore, who had any virtue or religion, was a certain sufferer by these systems of faith, which were contrived for that purpose. The man who had no conscience nor honesty, was not worthy of their anger, or which is most likely, was on the orthodox side, or at least, quickly became a convert to it, being, like themselves, able to swallow any thing.

Thus creeds, as they were the result of revenge, pride, or avarice, were the constant preludes and introductions to ignorance, cruelty, and blood; and the wretched laity were craftily, as well as inhumanly, made the deluded and unnatural instruments of butchering one another, to prove the infallibility of the faithmakers, who, while they were wantonly shedding Christian blood, and dooming to damnation those who called upon the name of the true God, had the shameless assurance to miscall themselves the ambassadors of the meek Jesus. And, indeed, what better could be expected from men so chosen, so unqualified, and so interested, as the members of these general creed-making councils for the most part were? They were chosen from several places by a majority of

votes, and they who were most aspiring, factious, or crafty, carried it. They sprung from the meanest of the people; they were bred in cells, and popped into the world without experience or breeding; they knew little of mankind, and less of government, and had not the common qualifications of gentlemen; they were governed by passion, and led by expectation; and, either eager for preferment, or impatient of missing it, they were the perpetual flatterers or disturbers of states and princes.—These were the men, and this their character.

When these reverend fathers were assembled together in a body, by the order of a prince, or a pope, who, having his necessities, or the ends of his ambition to serve, chose proper tools for those purposes, they were directed to form such creeds and systems of faith as their patrons' views or interests made it requisite for mankind to believe. In this new employment, every member, we may be certain, was forward to shew his talents in starting new tenets, or in contradicting those already introduced, and so to make himself sufficiently considerable for that preferment which he was resolved to earn one way or another. This being the great aim of all, jealousies and harsh language were carried to the most violent extent. There was no end of their wrangling and reviling. Not content to abuse each other by word of mouth, they sometimes scolded in writing, and every reverend father

drew up a petition against other reverend fathers, in language more suitable for Billingsgate than for the church. Sometimes, not satisfied with volleys of scurrility, unheard of in assemblies of gentlemen, they had recourse to club-law, and made good their inventions and distinctions with blows and blood. If the truth could not be discovered by scolding, contradiction, and battering, it was not found out at all. Thus, any emperor or pope might have what creed he pleased, provided he would be at the pains and price of it; and for the rest of mankind, they had this short choice—to comply, or be undone!

CHAP. XX.

THE CLEARNESS OF SCRIPTURE.

THE Almighty, in revealing his will to mankind, has always taken effectual care that it should not be mistaken, and therefore made it so plain, as to need no farther explanation, in all things which are necessary for us to know. When he would have his pleasure known, it is agreeable to his goodness to make it evident ; when he would not, it is agreeable to his wisdom to make it impenetrable. Scripture was not given to make work for interpreters, nor to teach men how to doubt, but how to live. The Holy Spirit has made undeniably clear and manifest all those precepts that enjoin faith and obedience, which are the great points of religion.

I think it is generally granted, that revelations are no more, and that prophecy has ceased. The reason given for this I take to be a very good one ; viz. that God has already sufficiently discovered his mind to men, and made his meaning manifest. If it were otherwise, we should doubtless have his

extraordinary presence still ; but as we have not, it is to be presumed that there is no occasion for it. He appeared himself whilst men were in darkness, but now that he has shewn them his marvellous light, he appears no more. His presence is supplied by his word, which being addressed to all men equally, and not to one tribe of men, to interpret it for the rest, it follows that all men have in their power the means to understand it. Old revelation, therefore, does not want the assistance of new, nor has the Almighty any need of prolocutors.

While God is delivering his law to the world, he is plain, even to exactness ; and his orders are full and circumstantial, even about the minutest points. This is eminently proved by his manner of giving laws to the Jews. Every ceremony, and every instrument and garment, used in their worship, is precisely described and directed. The trumpets, the candlesticks, the lamps, the spoons, the snuffers, are all of his own appointment, both as to the materials and the use of them. He makes it impossible to mistake. He calls the priests by their names, points out their persons, and shews them every branch of their office. He limits and governs their behaviour while they are about it, and does not leave it to their wisdom to invent such postures and ceremonies as they think fit to call decent and significant. They had not the privilege to choose their own garments. Moses,

who was the civil magistrate, had it in his charge to sanctify and consecrate their persons. Their business in the sacrifices is pointed out to them: they are to put their hands upon the head of the beast, and to receive its blood, and to make fires. They are not, as I remember, once made use of to speak God's mind to his people; that is the duty and commission of the civil magistrate, and Moses performs it. They had not the least hand in celebrating the passover—the Jewish sacrament, to which our's of the Lord's Supper has, it is said, succeeded. As little were they employed in that other of circumcision, the reputed ancestor of baptism. In short, their whole function was to be servants and operators in the house of sacrifice.

If the Almighty was thus punctual and particular in the rituals and outside of his worship, can we imagine that he was defective or obscure in declaring the more weighty points of the law? No. When our first parents broke the covenant, they did it wilfully, and could not pretend that they understood it not: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it," was the injunction that was laid upon them. There was no need of a commentator here; the text might have been rendered more perplexing, but not more plain.

The covenant which God made with Abraham was not less clear. He was to be the God of Abraham and of his seed; and every male of his

race, and those that were bought with money were to be circumcised. There were no more words to this contract ; and the patriarch and his issue had but one short system of divinity, most intelligible in itself, and in nowise darkened with glosses.

The Decalogue, or the law of the Ten Commandments, delivered by God himself from Mount Sinai, with great glory and astonishing circumstances, was little else but the law of nature reduced into tables, and expressed in words of God's own choosing. And they were worthy of the omnipotent and infallible Author, for they were so plain and indisputable, that not a single person of all the twelve tribes, so addicted on such occasions to contradiction and wrangling, so much as pretended not to understand them. Nor was there one man, much less a body of men, set apart to explain them.

When God spoke to the Jews by his prophets, the same method of clearness was observed. The admonitions given, and the judgments denounced, were adapted to the capacity of every one concerned. The Jews, it is true, did not often believe them, at least not mind them ; but it was never pleaded that they did not comprehend them. God inspired, the prophets spake, and all understood ; but neither creeds nor paraphrases were made, for they were not necessary. At last, indeed, the priests and pharisees made void the word of God by their traditions, and very rigidly tithing mint

and cummin, neglected the greater things of the law, and taught for doctrines the commandments of men. But we know what thanks and character they had for their pains from the Saviour of the world, and what a terrible doom he pronounced against them. Read the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and see the description of these vile hypocrites, and then consider whether they be at this day without heirs and successors. Indeed, their's seems to me to be the only succession which has not been interrupted.

The gospel, when it came, as it was to excel all other laws in its ends and usefulness, so was it the shortest and plainest institution in the world. It only added the duty of faith to that of good works, which were the great, if not the only business of the moral law. To believe that Jesus Christ was the only Son of God, was the great principle of the Christian religion. Nor was the practice of this belief attended with the least difficulty, since our Saviour proved his mission and omnipotence, by miracles that were undeniable and convincing. For the truth of them he appealed to men's senses. There was neither mystery nor juggling in his actions, nor did they want any one to explain them.

All this is further confirmed by the conduct of the apostles. The constant drift and tenor of their lives and preaching, was to persuade mankind to believe in Jesus Christ; in order to which they worked miracles, and gave the Holy Ghost. The

precept was thus short, and the motives to comply with it were thus irresistible. Hence it was, that sometimes thousands were convinced in a moment, without either commentaries, creeds, or catechisms. Indeed, who could avoid believing a proposition that proved itself?

The apostles, when they had converted one city, did not stay to establish a hierarchy there, and to tell the same thing over and over again to those who knew it already. No; when they had planted the faith in one place, they travelled to another, and preached the gospel to the unconverted world; leaving those already converted to perform Christian worship their own way. If they believed in Christ, and lived soberly, the apostles desired no more. Those were the two things needful, nor were they more needful than clear.

In this plain manner did the Almighty always discover himself and his will, whenever he dispensed his laws to men. On the other hand, while he hid himself from the heathen world, did their priests ever discover him? No; they had deities without number; they worshipped stocks and stones, trees, rivers, bulls, serpents, monkeys, and garlic. Both their religion and their gods were of the priest's making, and therefore, we may be certain, they were hopeful ones. They created their deities after their own likeness—angry, cruel, covetous, and lustful. Their mysteries were full of horror, obscenity, craft, and delusion. The will of their

god was searched in the entrails and ordure of dead beasts ; and a coop of chickens were his privy counsellors. His favour or displeasure depended upon their maws ; if they had puny stomachs, the god was in a fit of the spleen ; if ravenous, he was in a giving humour, and would grant any thing, even to the cutting of the throats of a whole army, the burning of a city, or the plundering of a province. When he was tired of his favourites, he would, in a day or two, do all this for an enemy.

Upon the whole, when the Almighty reveals his will, he does it effectually ; but when he disguises it in dark and doubtful expressions, it is plain that the time of making himself farther known to men is not yet come, and it is in vain to pry into his secrets. We are certain that the all-merciful God does never require of us that which we cannot find he requires. It is not consistent with his wisdom and goodness, to make that necessary which he has not made plain. He has, with the greatest perspicuity, described the candlesticks, tongs, and other implements of worship under the Jewish law ; and yet, in the gospel, he has not said one word of some doctrines which we are told are necessary to salvation. Altars and priests are divinely appointed in the old dispensation, but are neither directed nor described in the new ; and yet we know of what importance they are at present held to be, by many of the clergy. The priest's office is particularized and circumscribed, even to the killing of a goat, or a

pair of pigeons ; and yet, under the gospel, it is not so much as hinted that a priest shall administer either of the sacraments. Yet, if we hearken to the clergy, there can be no sacrament without them. In the Levitical law, the sons of Levi are expressly appointed to be priests continually ; but it is not once said in the Christian law, that there must be an uninterrupted race of bishops, or popes, or priests, to the end of the world, and that there can be no church where it is not. But if this had been needful, it must have been particularized. So essential a part of the Christian religion, and so absolutely necessary to every man's salvation, could never have been wholly omitted, or so much as left in doubt.

As, by the law of Moses, the priest's office and duty were minutely described, so their maintenance was ascertained. But by what law of Christ is the priesthood appointed, and where is the certain provision made for them ? It is said, indeed, that the labourer is worthy of his hire ; and I acknowledge it to be fit that those who hire the clergy should pay them. But surely this text leaves every one at liberty to choose his own labourer, and to make as good a bargain as he can ; or to do his own business himself. What pretence is there, in the gospel dispensation, of a divine right to just a tenth part, and not only of our estates, but of our stock and industry, too, which, in some corn lands, comes to double the rent that the landlord receives ?

The tribe of Levi, amongst the Jews, were the twelfth tribe of Israel, and, in the division of the lands, had a right to the twelfth share, without any regard to their priestly office. They were, consequently, allowed but a very small proportion towards their hire ; much less, I doubt, than would satisfy their pretended successors. I would, as a sincere friend to the clerical order, recommend to their consideration, whether it would not be more advisable to quit their divine right, and be contented with the laws of the land ?

CHAP. XXI.

 REMARKS ON THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

By *Liturgy* is understood certain prescribed and limited forms of prayer, composed for the public service of the church, and appointed to be read at all times of public worship. In this particular we wish to prescribe to no man's conscience. We beg only to appeal to the Proclamation of Edward VI., wherein the original of our liturgy is published to the world. The statute mentions four different forms then in use, out of which an uniform office was to be collected, viz., the use of Sarum, of Bangor, of York, and of Lincoln,—all which were Roman, rather than Christian.

If there had been any liturgies in the times of the first and most venerable antiquity, the great inquirers after them would have produced them to the world before this time; but that there were none in the Christian church, is evident from Tertullian, in his Apol. cap. 30, where he says, “The Christians of those times, in their public assemblies, prayed, *sine monitore quia de pectore*, without

any prompter except their own hearts." And in his Treatise of Prayer, he adds, "There are some things to be asked according to the occasions of every man." St. Austin says the same thing, (Ep. 121.) "It is free," says he, "to ask the same things that are desired in the Lord's prayer, *aliis atque aliis verbis*, sometimes in one manner of expression, and sometimes in another." And before this, Justin Martyr, in his Apology, says, "ὁ προεστῶς, the president, or he that instructed the people, prayed according to his ability, or as well as he could." Nor was this liberty of prayer taken away till the times when the Arian and Pelagian heresies invaded the church. It was then first ordained, that none should pray, *pro arbitrio, sed semper easdem preces*; that they should not use the liberty which they had hitherto practised, but should always keep to one form of prayer.* Still, this was a form of the ministers' own composing, as appears by a Canon of the Council of Carthage, A.D. 397, which gives this reason for it:—*ut nemo in precibus vel Patrem pro Filio, vel Filium pro Patre nominet, et cum altari adsistitur semper ad Patrem dirigatur oratio, et quicumque sibi preces aliunde describit, non iis utatur nisi prius eas cum fratribus instructoribus contulerit*; i.e. that none in their prayers might mistake the Father for the Son, or the Son for the Father; and that when they assist at the altar,

* Vide 18th Canon of the Council of Laodicea.

prayer might be always directed to the Father ; and whoever composes any different forms, let him not make use of them till he has first consulted with his more learned brethren. It appears from hence, that there was no uniform prescribed liturgy at this time in the church ; but that the more ignorant priests might make use of forms of their own composing, provided they consulted their more learned brethren ; till, at length, it was ordained at the Council of Milan, A.D. 416, that none should use set forms of prayer except such as were approved in a synod.

The manner of public worship in the times of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, was this :—First, the scriptures were read ; after reading, followed an exhortation to the practice and imitation of what was read ; then all rose up and joined in prayer ; after this they went to the sacrament, in the beginning of which the president of the assembly poured out prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people said Amen ; then followed the distribution of the elements, and a collection of alms. This was Justin Martyr's liturgy or service ; and Tertullian's is the same, only he mentions their beginning with prayer before reading the scriptures, and their love-feasts, which also opened and concluded with prayer, and were celebrated with singing of psalms.

When our Lord taught his disciples a form of prayer, he never designed to confine them to the

use of those words only, nor did the primitive church so understand it, as is proved by St. Austin. The pretended liturgies of St. James, Basil, and St. Chrysostom, are of little weight, as being allowed by the most learned critics, both protestants and papists, to be full of forgeries and spurious insertions. Bishop Burnet says,* that it was in the fourth century that the liturgies of St. James, St. Basil, &c. were first mentioned; that the Council of Laodicea appointed the same prayers to be used mornings and evenings; but that these forms were left to the discretion of every bishop; nor was it made the subject of any public consultation till St. Austin's time, when, in their dealing with heretics, they found they took advantage from some of the prayers that were in some churches; upon which it was ordered that there should be no public prayers used but by common advice. "Formerly," says the Bishop, "the worship of God was a pure and simple thing, and so it continued till superstition had so infected the church that those forms were thought too naked, unless they were put under more artificial rules, and dressed up with much ceremony. In every age there were notable additions made, and almost all the writers in the eighth and ninth centuries employed their fancies to find out mystical significations for every rite that was then in use, till at length there were so

* His. Ref. part ii. p. 72.

many missals, breviaries, rituals, pontificals, pontoises, pies, graduals, antiphonals, psalteries, hours, and a great many more, that the understanding how to officiate was become so hard a piece of trade that it was not to be learned without long practice." We willingly challenge the present Bench of Bishops to produce any one genuine liturgy used in the Christian church, during the first three hundred years after Christ.

At the Reformation a new liturgy was introduced ; but the Parliament, in 1644, discarded it, and introduced a new plan for the devotion of the church. The reasons for doing this I shall transcribe from the parliamentary annals :—" It is evident, after long and sad experience, that the liturgy used in the Church of England, notwithstanding all the pains and religious intentions of the compilers, has proved an offence to many of the godly at home, and to the reformed churches abroad. The enjoining the reading all the prayers heightened the grievances ; and the many unprofitable and burdensome ceremonies have occasioned much mischief, by disquieting the consciences of many who could not yield to them. Sundry good people have, by this means, been kept from the Lord's table ; and many faithful ministers debarred from the exercise of their ministry, to the ruin of them and their families. The prelates and their faction have raised their estimation of it to such a height, as if God could be worshipped no other

way but by the *service book*; in consequence of which the preaching of the word has been depreciated, and, in some places, entirely neglected.

“ In the mean time, the papists have made their advantage this way, boasting that the Common Prayer Book came up to a compliance with a great part of their service; by which means they were not a little confirmed in their idolatry and superstition, especially of late, when new ceremonies were daily obtruded on the church.

“ Besides, the liturgy has given great encouragement to an idle and unedifying ministry, who chose rather to confine themselves to *forms* made to their hands, than to exert themselves in the exercise of the gift of prayer, with which our Saviour furnishes all those whom he calls to that office.

“ For these and many other weighty considerations relating to the book in general, besides divers particulars, which are a just ground of offence, it is advisable and proper to set aside the former liturgy, with the many rites and ceremonies formerly used in the worship of God; not out of any affectation of novelty, nor with an intention to disparage our first reformers, but that we may answer in some measure the gracious providence of God, which now calls upon us for a further reformation;—that we may satisfy our own consciences, answer the expectations of other reformed churches, ease the consciences of many godly persons among

ourselves, and give a public testimony of our endeavours after an uniformity of divine worship.”

That the present liturgy needs cancelling or revising, I shall shew in Chap. xxix., “ On the necessity of a Reformed Church,” and intend, at no distant time, to take upon myself to draw up a new Service, for those who are fond of *forms*.

CHAP. XXII.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PROVED TO BE A CREATURE OF
THE STATE.

IN the days of the Reformation, the Protestant high clergy endeavoured to divert the growing spirit of reform in the Christian world to metaphysical and useless speculations, of no benefit to the present or eternal happiness of mankind, whilst they were seating themselves at leisure in the chairs of their predecessors. But far otherwise was it, where it fell under the direction of laymen, who considered it as an opportunity put by Heaven into their hands, to free themselves from the usurpations and unjust domination of the priesthood. They made no scruple to seize and apply to public uses, a great part of those riches which the Roman clergy had extorted from old women, and superstitious and silly bigots,—the compositions for murders, for public and private robberies, the plunder of dying and despairing sinners, and the support of their own idleness, pride, ignorance, and debauchery.

A bold and honest physician, whose name was Erastus, at this time started up and told the world, that all these squabbles of the clergy about their own power, were disputes *de lana caprina*, concerning a nonentity, and that none of them had any right to what they almost all claimed; that the quarrel amongst them was only which of them should oppress the laity, who were independent of them all, for that their ministers were their servants, creatures of their own making, and not of God Almighty's. He shewed them, both from reason and scripture, that every state had the same authority of modelling their ecclesiastical, as well as civil government; that the gospel gave no pre-eminence or authority to Christians over one another, but every man alike, who had suitable abilities, was qualified to execute all the duties and offices of their most holy religion; and that it was only a matter of prudence and convenience, to appoint particular persons to officiate for the rest, with proper rewards and encouragements, which persons would be entitled to no more power than they themselves gave them.

This doctrine, as little as it pleased the clergy, yet prevailed so far with the laity, that most protestant states modelled their ecclesiastical polity according to their own inclinations or interests; and particularly in England, the whole Reformation was built upon this principle, which, till of late years, was esteemed the great characteristic of the

Church of England. It is, therefore, the height of clerical insolence for a body of men to call themselves the only true churchmen, at the same time that they deny, and every where exclaim against the fundamental and essential article which distinguishes our's from most other churches ; for as to the rest of the articles, the Calvinists are more orthodox than the churchmen themselves.

At the beginning of the Reformation, the clergy here in England, conscious of their own enormities, and the just vengeance which hung over their heads, were contented to disgorge their ill-gotten, and as ill-used power ; and, in full convocation, they threw themselves upon the king's mercy, acknowledging his supremacy in the fullest and most significant words ; and promised, in *verbo sacerdotii*, that, for the future, they would never presume to attempt, allege, claim, or put in use, enact, or promulgate any canons, constitutions, or ordinances, without the king's most royal license and assent had thereunto ; and humbly besought his majesty to appoint thirty-two persons, half clergy, and half laity, to examine the canons and constitutions in being, and to abrogate and confirm them as they should think good.

This petition was changed into an Act of Parliament by the 25th of Hen. VIII. cap. 19. But it is there declared, “ that the crown and convocation together, shall not put in execution any canons, constitutions, or ordinances, which shall be con-

triant or repugnant to the king's prerogative, or the laws of the kingdom." The same statute also gives an appeal from the supreme ecclesiastical court to the king's commission.

In the same session of Parliament, the manner of proceeding upon the *conge-d'elire* is directed,* viz., a license from the crown is to be sent to the chapter, directing them to choose or elect an archbishop or bishop. A letter missive is sent with it, nominating the person whom they are to choose, which, if they do not obey, nor signify the same according to the tenor of the Act, within twenty days, they are subjected to a *præmunire*: if the election be not made within twelve days, the king may nominate a bishop, by letters patent, without any election at all, as is now done in Ireland, and formerly was in Scotland, where their bishops were *durante bene placito*.

The next year, the Parliament,† reciting that the king justly and rightly is, and ought to be, supreme head of the Church of England, enacted the same, and that he shall have full power to visit, redress, reform, correct, and restrain all errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be, which, by any manner of spiritual authority or jurisdiction, ought, or may be reformed, redressed, &c. Afterwards, in the 37th year of the same reign, the Parliament, recit-

* 25 Hen. VIII. cap. 20.

† 26 Hen. VIII. cap. 1.

ing that the Bishop of Rome and his adherents, minding utterly to abolish, obscure, and delete the power given by God to the princes of the earth, whereby they might get and gather to themselves the rule and government of the world, had decreed, that no layman might exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, lest their false and usurped power, which they pretended to have in Christ's church, might decay, wax vile, and be of no reputation, which power they affirm to be contrary to the word of God, and to his majesty's most high prerogative; and reciting also, that archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical persons, have no manner of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by, from, and under the king's majesty, enact that laymen, qualified as the law appoints, may exercise all parts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and all censures and coercions appertaining, or in any wise belonging thereunto.

The 2nd and 3rd of Edward VI., cap. 1, enacts the Common Prayer Book, which before was compiled and drawn up by the king's authority, and makes it a law. The 3rd and 4th of Edward VI., cap. 12, appoints such form and manner of making and consecrating archbishops, bishops, priests, and deacons, and other ministers of the church, as by six prelates, and six other men of this realm, by the king to be appointed and assigned, or by the greater number of them, shall be devised, &c., and *none other*. These two Acts were confirmed,

with some alterations, in the 5th and 6th year of the reign of George II.

The 1st of Queen Elizabeth, cap. 1, establishes and enacts, that all jurisdictions, privileges, superiorities, and pre-eminences, spiritual and ecclesiastical, at any time lawfully used or exercised, for the visitation of the ecclesiastical state, or persons, and for the reformation, order, and correction of the same, and of all manner of errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, contempts, offences, and enormities, shall be annexed to the imperial crown of this realm; and gives power and authority thereto to appoint any persons, being natural born subjects, to exercise all sorts of ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and declares, at the same time, what, and what only, shall be deemed heresy. The oath of supremacy, which is an assent to these laws, and obliges those who take it to assist and defend them, is appointed in this Act; which oath all ecclesiastical persons, as well as any others, who shall be promoted and preferred to any degree or order in the university, are to take, under severe penalties.

The 8th of Elizabeth, reciting, that the Queen had in her order and disposition, all jurisdiction, power, and authority, ecclesiastical as well as civil, and had caused divers archbishops and bishops to be duly elected and consecrated, confirms all the said elections and consecrations, as also the Common Prayer Book, and the orders and forms for the making of priests, deacons, and

ministers, which were added to it in the fifth and sixth years of Edward VI. These Acts are all now in being, and in full force, and are sworn to by all the clergy, who are subjected to a *præmunire* if they contradict them. Thus, our parliaments, soon after the Reformation, whilst the memory of sacerdotal oppressions remained with them, were resolved to curb the insolence of the clergy, and not leave it in their power to corrupt religion any more. For this purpose, they put it under the care of the civil magistrate, who could seldom have any interest in perverting it.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND PROVED TO BE
CREATURES OF THE STATE.

IN the last chapter, it was shewn what is meant by the supremacy of the crown of England, by virtue of which, our kings, sometimes with, and sometimes without, the Parliaments, have governed and modelled the ecclesiastical state ever since the Reformation. Bishops, as well as inferior clergymen, have been often suspended and deprived by the king's authority; and, in the instance of Archbishop Abbot, during his pleasure. The popish bishops were all deprived by Queen Elizabeth; some thousands of the parochial clergy were rejected by the Act of Uniformity; and many, also, of all orders, were deprived at the Revolution.

I shall now proceed to shew what have been the opinions and practice of the whole body of the ecclesiastics, since the making of these laws; in doing which, I shall take notice only of their

public and authentic acts ; for as to the caprice and whims of private doctors, I think them of so little weight, that I should be ashamed to quote them on either side of the question.

Upon the clergy's acknowledging the king as Supreme Head of the Church, at the Reformation, all the bishops took out commissions for exercising their ecclesiastical jurisdiction ; which were again renewed upon his son's coming to the throne. In these commissions, all ecclesiastical jurisdiction is owned to proceed from the crown, as from a supreme head, and fountain, and as the spring of all magistracy in the kingdom. They acknowledge that they executed their jurisdiction formerly only *ex precario*, and that now, with grateful minds, they accepted the favour from the king's liberality and indulgence, and would be always ready to yield it up again, when his Majesty pleased to require it.

These commissions recited, among other particulars of spiritual power, that of ordaining presbyters, and of ecclesiastical correction.

The 2nd canon excommunicates every one who shall endeavour to hurt or extenuate the king's authority in ecclesiastical cases, as it is settled by the laws of the kingdom ; and declares he shall not be restored till he has publicly recanted such *impious errors*.

The 37th canon obliges all persons, to their utmost, to keep and observe all and every one of the statutes and laws made for restoring to the

crown the ancient jurisdiction it had over the ecclesiastical state.

The 12th of King James's canons declares, that whoever shall affirm that it is lawful for the order either of ministers or laics to make canons, decrees, or constitutions in ecclesiastical matters, without the king's authority, and submits himself to be governed by them, is, *ipso facto*, excommunicated, and is not to be absolved before he has publicly repented and renounced these anabaptistical errors.

Archbishop Bancroft, when at the head of all the bishops of England, delivered articles to King James, for increasing the ecclesiastical courts, and for annexing all ecclesiastical, as well as civil power, to the crown. This may be seen at large in Lord Coke's third institute, which I would recommend to the perusal of every one, as a specimen of the difference held to exist between ecclesiastics and laymen.

I think it necessary here only to add, that the clergy have never presumed, by any public act, directly to controvert this prerogative, or indeed, even to nibble at it, unless in one instance during the reign of Queen Anne, which she highly resented, and made the convocation know, by a letter to the Archbishop, that, "*she was resolved to maintain her supremacy, as a fundamental part of the constitution of the church of England.*" This, then,

is the supremacy of the crown ; these are the genuine principles of the Church of Great Britain, which, whoever denies, may be a papist, a presbyterian, a dissenter, or any thing but a member of the Church of England. This doctrine and these opinions have been acknowledged and sworn to by every ecclesiastic since the Reformation ; and we daily see that they are all ready to swear them over again, upon any fresh motives of advantage. Surely, no man will suggest, that the whole clergy of England have lived in a state of perjury for nearly three hundred years. I am sure, if this be the case, it is not their interest to let us know it.

We have it here upon oath, that all jurisdiction, power, and authority, spiritual or ecclesiastical, of what kind or sort soever it be, flows from, and is derived from, the king's majesty. The clergy have been always delighted at distinctions and discoveries : if they can find out any power or authority, which is of *no kind or sort whatever*, I think they ought to have it for their pains. I wish them much joy with it, and shall own it always to be sacrilege in any one who shall attempt to take it from them. But if there be any such thing, it is plain that it belongs to them as governors of the invisible church, and is of a nature of which we know nothing.

It is certain, then, that archbishops and bishops are creatures of the civil power, and derive their

being and existence from it. They are chosen by the direction of one Act of parliament, and ordained and consecrated according to a model prescribed by another. Those who officiate in the service, act only ministerially, and all other methods of choosing them which the clergy can devise, are declared to be void and ineffectual. They have no spiritual power to induce any clergyman to pay submission to the choice, should he not like the man; or if he did, provided he thought he should lose any thing by his choice. If the bishops have no power but what they derive from the crown, they can convey none, but of the same sort, to the inferior clergy.

I durst not have incurred the imputation of calumny, in charging any of the present clergy with principles or practices directly in defiance of their notorious and frequently repeated oaths and subscriptions, if I had not authority to bear me out. In an appeal of Dr. Wake, then, Archbishop of Canterbury, he says, “ a new sort of disciplinarians are arisen up from among ourselves, who seem to comply with the government of the church, much upon the same account as others do with that of the state; not out of conscience to their duty, or any love they have for it, but because it is the established church, and they cannot keep their preferments without it. They hate our constitution, and all who stand up in good earnest for it; but

for all that, they hold fast to it; and so go on to subscribe and rail.”

To such practices as these we owe the present disaffection to the clergy, and most, if not all the calamities and public disturbances which have happened since the Revolution; and yet, lamentable to say, they have prevailed so far among the corrupt part of the clergy, that I wish we could find more, even of those who are called “evangelical,” who dare thoroughly to renounce these *impious and unabaptistical errors*, as their own canons call them.

Dominion! Dominion! is the loud cry, which, as it has already produced the cruelties and absurdities of popery, is still teeming with, or bringing forth, new monsters. What other issue, indeed, can be expected from so unnatural a union as that of the Christian priesthood with worldly power?

To this we are beholden for all the corruptions and follies brought into religious worship, as well as the ill-shapen and ungainly brats of passive obedience, the divine right of kings and bishops, the uninterrupted succession, the priest’s power of the keys—of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sins—the real presence in the sacrament, the altar, and unbloody sacrifice upon it, the giving of the Holy Ghost, excommunication, the consecration of churches and church-yards, persecution for opinions, the tritheistical cha-

rity, and a long train of monkish fooleries, no part of which could ever have entered into the heart of one layman, or clergyman either, if no earthly advantage had been, by them, to be obtained.

CHAP. XXIV.

A GENERAL IDEA OF PRIESTCRAFT.

I HAVE, in the twenty-first chapter of this work, endeavoured to vindicate the Almighty from the imputation of obscurity, in revealing his will to mankind; and shewn that He is plain, exact, and even circumstantial, when He delivers his precepts to them. I shall now expose the contrary method of weak and corrupt men, by giving a general idea of the principal arts by which the designing priests of all religions have kept their craft and impostures from a discovery, and made the truth, as far as they could, inaccessible to the people.

Every bad action or principle in religion and government, must have some apparent cause assigned for it, calculated to amuse the people, and to conceal the true cause. Mankind, as tame as priests and tyrants have made them, will not be satisfied to be deceived or butchered, without having a reason for it. The pope, who assumes a power to judge for all men, and devotes whole nations to massacre and damnation, and sends

people to heaven or hell in colonies, just as their money or disobedience determines him, acts a very consistent part in tying the keys of both worlds to his girdle, and in styling himself, God's absolute *vicar general*. These are his reasons; and the Catholic and more orthodox parts of Europe are perfectly contented with them.

In former reigns, when many of our English clergy thought proper to tie us hand and foot, and deliver us over to our kings, as their proper goods and chattels, to be fed or slayed according to their *sacred* will and pleasure, they told us that it was the ordinance of God, that one man might glut his lust, or his cruelty, with the destruction of millions; and if we kept out of harm's way we were assuredly damned. These were *their* reasons then. Of late, it is true, many of them have changed their doctrine and behaviour. We are, it seems, *at present*, living in the guilt of rebellion, which is a damnable sin; and so we are to rebel, upon pain of damnation, to free ourselves from the damnation which follows rebellion. These are their reasons now.

Formerly, when certain persons were satisfied to be Protestants, the Church of Rome was the *spiritual Babylon*, and the *scarlet whore*, and *Sodom*; and the pope was *anti-Christ*, for he sat in the temple of God, and exalted himself above all that is called God. But this was truth, and could not hold long, considering into whose hands

it was fallen ; and, therefore, in a little time, when they wished to get into the pope's place, and to do and say as he did, the Church of Rome became all of a sudden a *true Church*, and an *old Church*, and *our mother Church*. In short, the *old withered harlot*, and *mother of whoredoms*, grew a great beauty, and her daughter, here in England, resembled her mamma more and more every day she lived, and gave the foregoing reasons for her belief.

From hence it is evident, that though for every imposture some cause must be assigned, yet oftentimes a very indifferent one will serve the turn. The bulk of mankind are dull and credulous ; few make any inquiries at all, and fewer make successful ones. It is, however, still best if the cheat stands upon such a foundation, that it cannot be searched nor examined by any human eye.

When Numa Pompilius told the Romans that he conversed familiarly with the nymph Egeria, which of them could pay her a visit, and ask her whether the prince and she were in earnest such very good neighbours ? When Mahomet took such a wide range upon his nag Elborach, and told wonders at his return, there was neither man nor horse in all Arabia that could take the same journey to disprove him ; nor did I ever hear that when he was pleased to be thought conversant with the angel Gabriel, the angel signed a certificate that they were unacquainted. The quack, who had found

out the true fern-seed, and the green dragon, thought it would be, no doubt, a hard matter to prove him a liar.

In the heathen temples of old, neither the sybils, nor any other priests or fabricators of prophecy, male or female, were answerable for the oracles and dark sayings which they uttered. They had what they said from a god, who never once contradicted them! It was impossible to come at him for personal information, and was a very profane crime not to believe his priest. You had nothing to do but to subdue your reason to your faith, and swallow the *verbum sacerdotis*. If you did not, the judgment of the god, *i. e.* the anger of his priest, was sure to pursue you.

The same policy has been ever practised by the deluders of mankind, in all names and shapes. They have always intrenched themselves behind the ramparts of mystery, uncertainties, and terrors. The Romish clergy maintain all their pretensions and power by doctrines which are calculated to make the people either wonder or tremble. When a man has lost his courage and his understanding, he may easily be cheated or terrified into as tractable an animal as the creation affords. The doctrines of purgatory, and the power of the priests to forgive or damn, are alone strong enough to frighten most men into what liberality and submission the church thinks fit to demand of them; and we all know that she is not over-modest upon such occasions.

“*Bring me all that thou hast, and follow me,*” is her style of speaking.

I wish we could keep these impostures and wild claims altogether out of England, and confine them to popish and infidel countries. But that which is obvious and avowed cannot be hidden. Many of our high clergy aim at dominion by the same wicked means, and hood-wink and alarm us all that they can. They lead us out of the road of reason, and play their engines in the dark ; and all the illumination we can get from them is, that we are all in a mist. Without their guidance we go astray, and with it we go blindfold. All their arguments are fetched from their own authority. Their assertions are no less than rules and laws to us, and where they lead we must follow, though into darkness and servitude. If we grow wilful, and break loose from our orthodox ignorance, we are pursued with hard names and curses. Doubting is infidelity ; reason is atheism. What can we do in this case ? There is no medium between a blockhead and a schismatic. If we follow them blindly, we are the first ; the second, if we leave them. We want faith if we will not take their word ; if we do so, we want understanding. They, indeed, give us a sweetmeat, and refer us to the Bible for proof of all that they say. But, in truth, this privilege, if we examine it, will be found none at all, but, on the contrary, a gross absurdity ; for when they have sent us to a text, will they allow us to construe it in our own

way? No! they have fixed a meaning to it, and will permit it to bear no other. You may read, provided you read with *their spectacles*; and examine their propositions *freely*, provided you take them every one for granted. You may exert your reason to its full extent, but be sure it must be to no purpose; you may use your understanding independently, under their absolute direction and control. How astonishing that these men should have the impudence to impugn the church of Rome for locking up the Bible in an unknown tongue!

The continual war which the clergy wage against reason, which they use just as they do scripture, is founded upon good policy; but it is amusing to observe their manner of attacking it. They reason against reason; use reason against the use of reason; and shew, from very good reason, that reason is good for nothing. When they think it on their own side, then they apply all its aids to convince or confound those who dare to think without their concurrence; and therefore, in their controversies about religion, they frequently appeal to reason. But we must not accept the appeal, for if our reason be not their reason, it is no reason at all. They use it, or the appearance of it, against all men; but no man must use it against them. But as there is no such thing as arguing and persuading without the aid of reason, it is a little absurd, if not ungrateful, in these gentlemen, to decry it, at the same time that they are employing

it ; to turn the batteries of reason against reason, and make it destroy itself.

Neither scripture, therefore, nor reason, by these rules, signify any thing till the clergy have explained them, and made them signify something. The word of God is not the word of God, till they have declared its sense, and made it genuine.

From what has been observed, the following conclusions may be fairly drawn. Such clergymen as I have been describing, prove every thing by asserting it, and make any pretence support any claim. They build systems upon pretended facts, and argue from propositions which are either highly improbable, or certainly false. When they cannot convince, they confound ; when they cannot persuade, they terrify. We have but two ways to try the truth of their doctrines, and the validity of their demands, viz. by *reason* and *revelation* ; and they would deprive us of both, by making the one dark, and the other dangerous !

CHAP. XXV.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

How far the force of example influences nature, and enlarges or restrains the human passions and appetites, is evident to all who compare different nations, and the several ranks of men in the same nation. Custom, which is a continued succession of examples, warps the understanding, and, as it is observed or neglected, becomes the standard of wisdom or folly. Men cannot bear to see what they themselves reverence, ridiculed by others ; nor what they ridicule, revered by others. It is a common thing to educate men in a veneration for one sort of folly, and in a contempt of another, not worse, nor so bad ; in a high esteem for one kind of science, and in aversion to another full as good ; to love some men because they have good names, and to hate others for their best qualities ; to adore some objects for a bad reason, and to detest others against all reason.

In Turkey, they have as good natural understand-

ing as other people, and yet, by their education, they are taught to believe, that there is a sort of divinity in the utter absence of all understanding. They esteem idiots and lunatics as prophets. They think their raving to be celestial, because it is nonsense ; and their stupidity instructive, because unintelligible. If, upon the article of religion, you offer or expect common sense, they revile you, and knock you on the head ; but if you be a natural fool, your words are oracles, and phrensy is saintship !

A papist laughs and shakes his head at this religious sottishness and fury on the Turks, but burns you if you laugh at him for doing the same things. There were never greater sots or madmen than many of the Roman saints ; nor are they the less worshipped for that, but the more. As they were enthusiasts in proportion to their lunacy, they are adored in proportion to their folly. St. Francis, for instances, was an errant changeling ; St. Antony was distracted ; yet who is of more consequence in the Roman breviaries than these two saints ? They are daily invoked by many devout Catholics, who never earnestly prayed to God in their lives.

That all this wild and astonishing bigotry is the pure effect of example, or of education, which is the same thing (being only some men setting examples to other men), may be learnt from hence, that no man bred without superstition, any particular form of it, can rarely ever be brought into the vanities of a strange devotion at once. People

must be seasoned in it by time, by steps, and by reiterations. After certain periods in life, examples come too late, or with small force. It is a saying of the amiable Jay, of Bath, that there are two things equally difficult, "to raise a dead man, and to convince an old one." A grown Spaniard can hardly ever become a Frenchman, or a Frenchman a Spaniard. We see men who will fight and die for certain practices and opinions, and even for follies and fopperies, which, had they been bred to others, they would have despised, and perhaps have died for such as they now despise.

It is plain from the accounts given by the missionaries, of the progress which they make in converting the natives of the East and West Indies, that their proselytes are very few, and those few fickle, not half made, and luke-warm; still fond of their old superstitions, and, upon every terror or temptation, ready to revolt to paganism, which they had scarcely forsaken. I believe this is almost universally true of the elder sort. I doubt not but they are almost all like father Hennepin's old woman, who, when all other arguments were unconvincing, yielded to be baptized for a pipe of tobacco, and having smoked it, offered to be baptized again for another. It is certain that the Chinese converted the Jesuits, who, at least, civilly met these obstinate heathens half way, and went roundly into paganism, to make the Pagans good Catholics,—a union not

unnatural, though it is to be lamented, that the peaceable heathenism of Confucius should be polluted by the barbarous spirit of popery, which has not only, from the beginning, adopted the ancient gentile idolatry, but disgraced it by added cruelty.

I am satisfied that Dr. Blomfield, the present Bishop of London, is a very sincere and keen churchman ; but I am equally satisfied, that, had he been educated in the Mosaic law, he would have been as fierce a Jew ; or, bred at Athens, in the days of Socrates, as clamorous as the rest of the rabble against that wise and moderate man, who was most certainly a heretic as to the doctrine and discipline of the Athenian priests. If in this conjecture I have offended the Doctor, who, they say, is a man of warm spirit, I will give him competent revenge, by declaring my equal belief that many a stern Calvinist, zealous in his way, would, with different breeding, have been as zealous an Arminian. I could wish that, from this consideration, both sorts would learn to bear with one another, and with all men ; that at least they would be as angry at Mahomet as at any one of our dissenting preachers, and learn not to attack heresy through the sides of charity. But, in this very thing, the force of example, of which I am writing, is against me.

By this force, men may be brought to renounce every glimmering of common sense, every impulse

of piety, and be transported with every degree of madness and inhumanity. In many countries, the death of a snake will cost you your life ; and those people who would murder a man and eat him, would tremble at the thought of hurting a serpent, for which pernicious reptile they have a religious regard. The unnatural mercy which superstition teaches them is the only mercy that they have, and is exercised upon a creature that is a known enemy to human life.

The Iroquois, not satisfied with putting their enemies to death in coldblood, burn them alive, after other tortures, cut off pieces of their raw flesh, and eat them, and give the children the blood to drink, to season their young minds with the like sanguinary spirit. Thus the cruelty is continued by example from father to son, and grows natural by habit. Their enemies serve them the same way ; but this consideration reclaims neither. It is heroism to be barbarous, and the fiercest cannibal is the bravest warrior. Yet these savages, in their own clans, may be copied by the Christian world ; they are merciful and good natured to one another, and they live together in remarkable innocence, simplicity, and union.

American nations, who thus destroy one another, are very thin of population ; there is more than territory enough for them all ; nor is husbandry any of their arts. There are woods large enough for many more to hunt in, and rivers for many more to fish in.

The inhabitants live from hand to mouth, and though they do not much regard property, yet inveterate quarrels are handed down from generation to generation, and daily inflamed, which perpetuate their mutual ferocity and rage. They often watch many days, in hunger and cold, to circumvent their enemies, though nothing is to be expected at last but blood lost or obtained; but blood, on whatever side shed, is glory.

In some parts of Peru this savageness is still improved. Their chief ambition in war is to make women captives. These they make their slaves in a strange way. They breed from them, and eat the children so bred at the age of ten or twelve years, having first well fattened them. The women, when they can breed no longer, are eaten also. Among these people the sense of shame seems entirely extinguished, or rather never known. Their prostitutions, natural and unnatural, are as public as their eating and drinking. Some of them account virginity a great blemish, and the young women must be beholden to their friends and relations to get rid of it before they can get husbands. Their women ran openly after the Spaniards, in all the transports of female rage, begging the gratifications of gallantry. But what is still most monstrous and incredible, there are, of those people, who have public temples for the practice of sodomy, as an act of religion; for, with all these abomina-

tions, they have a religion, which is part of them ;— and here we see into what excesses mistakes in religion can run. They believe the immortality of the soul ; they have offices for the dead ; they worship the sun ; they believe in a Creator of all things ; they offer sacrifices to their idols, and sometimes human sacrifices. Will any of our casuists say, that it were not better they had no religion, than one that teaches them such hideous crimes and barbarities ? I wish that these brutal heathens were the only instances where reason and humanity are made victims to religion. But customs of religion and honour, right or wrong, as both are commonly vilely mistaken and abused, are apt to take an inveterate hold of the human soul, and to master every natural faculty.

It would be a hard, if not an impossible thing, to convert these Peruvian savages. There is no weaning them from their horrible but delicious banquets of human flesh, alive or dead ; and while they themselves have such a relish of man's blood, they will always think it acceptable to the gods. Men every where imagine that the Deity loves and hates just as they do ; and their common way of going to God is to bring God to them.

It is as easy to bring an Englishman into the way and life of a Hottentot, or Greenlander, as to bring them into his. Both are impossible. The

Hottentot is filthy and naked, and lives or starves upon filth ; the Greenlander lives in piercing and inhospitable regions of snow, in a country made desolate by nature, where no comfortable thing appears, but all covered with darkness or the rage of the elements ; yet both these miserable barbarians—miserable, at least, in our eyes—are inveterately fond of their own cares and miseries ; nor could all the delicacies and allurements of Europe ever reclaim one of them. Their captivity in the midst of plenty, conveniencies, and kind usage, either broke their hearts, or attached them more violently to their own more amiable barbarity, indigence, and garbage, when they returned.

What shall we say to all the strange propensities of mankind—strange, but natural ? They are the effects of education, habit, and prepossession, from which no man is wholly free, and by which almost all men are wholly governed. I have seen them strongly marked in servants and persons of inferior birth, who were exclusively attached to the society and habits of those whose education and character were low and grovelling like their own. From all this, let us learn a lesson of mutual forbearance ; let us throw off those prejudices of education which prevent the growth of our intellectual powers, and interrupt us in our moral and spiritual course. Let us no longer be fettered with the bonds of priestly intolerance, nor follow

the biblical interpretations of an interested priesthood. Let us rather learn wisdom from the wickedness and folly of past ages, and earnestly look up to God alone for the teachings of his Holy Spirit, knowing that our redemption draweth nigh.

CHAP. XXVI.

MUTUAL BITTERNESS AND PERSECUTION AMONG CHRISTIANS,
 REPUGNANT TO THE DOCTRINES OF CHRIST, AND DETESTABLE
 TO A RATIONAL PAGAN.

REASON is not the only thing in which men exceed brutes ; their passions, as well as their reason, are stronger than those of the dumb creation, and prompt them to commit more abominable things. To qualify and restrain those passions is the business of religion ; and when it has contrary effects, it is either a bad religion, or they are very bad men who profess it. By this rule all men may know what sort of Christians they are :—“ Except ye love one another,” says our Saviour, “ you cannot be my disciples.” How different is this from the style of many who call themselves his successors ! —Unless you hate, kill, and destroy one another, you cannot be our followers, say they !

The only end of Christianity, as to this life, was to teach men peace, charity, mutual forbearance, and the forgiveness of injuries. This was the “ new commandment,” which Jesus Christ gave

to his apostles, and to all Christians. How ill it has been observed; or rather, how impiously it has been violated! Let those whose duty it is more especially to see it obeyed, consider whether they have not inflamed, instead of calmed, the natural heat and foolish passions of men? and whether, far from instructing them to forgive injuries, they have not taught them never to forgive things which were no injuries, viz. the opinions of one another?

If a man halt in his understanding, how is any one injured by his intellectual lameness, more than by the lameness of his limbs? If his opinions be crooked and wild, what offence is that to another more than if he squinted, or had a wild look? Error is an infirmity of the mind, as pain, halting, and crookedness are of the body; and why should internal, any more than external defects, provoke any rational man? Would not he who went about to persecute or invent penalties for crookedness, be looked upon as a monster equally cruel with those savages who drown all their innocent new-born babes whose make does not please their eye? And is not hating, hurting, or killing, for the natural or habitual weaknesses of the soul, equally monstrous and savage? What is it to any man what I think of colour, and whether I like or dislike white or black;—or what sentiments, which are the colours of the mind, fit mine best;—or what actions or gestures they produce in me, provided my ac-

tions and gestures hurt not him? Does he, by hating or distressing me, fulfil our Saviour's commandment of loving one another? Are his own notions right? Let him enjoy them,—he is happy. Are my notions wrong? I am unhappy; why does he persecute me? Perhaps fortune has been kinder to him than to me, and he is richer and handsomer. Why does he not chastise me for this fault, too, for I cannot force fortune more than nature? The truth is, none persecute but the worst, the most ignorant, or the most barbarous men. By this mark we know a Nero from an Antoninus, and a fatherly pastor from a bloody inquisitor.

The perverting of no one thing upon earth is so bad, and so sinful, as the perverting of Christianity, because Christianity is the best thing upon earth. He, therefore, who makes use of Christianity to raise heats, feuds, and hatred among men, is a much worse man than he, who, having no Christianity, can make no ill use of that which he does not use at all. It is like turning the best medicine into poison; and a physician who does so, is worse than a peasant who knows not the nature and use of physic. It is a strange and astonishing thing to see a man in a rage, with the New Testament open before him, justifying his rage out of the Scriptures, and raising in his hearers, from thence, a cruel and angry spirit like his own. And yet such sights are far from being rare. I have frequently heard a text from the holy and peaceful gospel

quoted and explained to rouse all the most barbarous and unsocial passions, and to authorize all the worst and most inhuman effects of those passions. This has been confidently called *preaching the gospel*; and this herald of wrath, *a preacher of the gospel*, and his raging hearers, *a religious assembly*.

I have sometimes fancied to myself, what a sensible Chinese would think of the gospel upon reading it; in what manner he would conceive it must be preached, and what consequences he would expect from that preaching.—“Here,” he would say, “is the most benevolent system that ever appeared in the world; a system contrived to root out the roughness, malignity, and selfishness of human nature, to extinguish or restrain all its sour passions, to destroy, for ever, all the seeds of strife, anger, and war, and to make all men friends. Happy are they who receive this system! Most happy they among whom it is continually preached and inculcated! Here is no pretence for divisions, at least for quarrelling about them. Here all the pomp and tyranny, affected by men over men, are expressly forbidden; and love, even to our enemies, is strictly enjoined. This is admirable! Without doubt, it is from God. The Divine Being, in pity to the ill-natured, jarring, and tempestuous world, has here offered them a divine calm, and restored them to a state of perfection and innocence, by giving them these celestial rules for bearing and forbearing all manner of

evils. Would I could be a witness of the happy state of Christendom !”

I have fancied this same Chinese to be in Christendom; and first in Rome, the centre of Christendom, the residence of his Holiness, and the seat of all abominations, poisonings, assassinations, unnatural lust, pride, ambition, divisions, tyranny, luxury, poverty, and oppression. There he sees an old friar, who calls himself the vicar of the meek Jesus, covered with all the ensigns of savage tyranny, supporting his monstrous and motley domination with dark intrigues and every pious and worldly fraud; holding his own subjects under severe fetters and famine; scattering, every where, firebrands and the spirit of slaughter and war amongst Christians; animating sovereigns against their people, the people against their sovereigns; and giving his apostolic benediction to human rage and malice.

The Chinese asks if his Holiness be a Christian according to the gospel? Yes, he is answered; he is what he is from the gospel, and all that he does is from it. The Chinese blesses himself, and the more Christian spirit of good old Confucius. He is just ready to return to China, to a happier people, and more virtuous paganism, but meets with a Protestant, who tells him, that all the wickedness which he finds at Rome, is the abuse of religion, and the natural effects of the pope's lying pretensions and usurpations, and begs him to visit protestant countries, which abhor the pope, and all his doings.

The Chinese, ravished to hear that the gospel does not fare every where alike, and in hopes of beholding societies of men who are Christians according to the gospel, travels through part of the empire, where he finds Lutherans and Calvinists, headed by their guides, at mortal enmity. They both believe the gospel, but rail at one another out of it, hate one another for it, and are only restrained by their princes from contending, even to blood, about words which are not in it. In Denmark and Sweden he finds the Lutherans still fiercer, and suffering no sort nor name of Christianity among them but their own, and treating all others with the highest pitch of fury and ignorance.

The Chinese, who thinks the Lutheran popes as little justifiable as the Romish popes, since they alike set up for spiritual dominion, which the gospel gives to no man upon earth, once more praises old Confucius ; and, resolved to find, if he can, the spirit of Christianity in some Christian country, sails away for Great Britain, and lands in Scotland. There he beholds a rigid gravity in the countenance of the Kirk ; she affects great sanctity, has an eminent conceit of her own righteousness, but finds righteousness nowhere else ; she has a very strong stomach for dominion, but sweetens it with a soft name, and calls it discipline, which she exercises with little tenderness upon such as offend or gainsay her ; and

towards all other churches and opinions, her looks are sour and unforgiving. She talks much of the Lord, and contends that nothing is to be done, by any man, without God's grace moving in him, and assisting him, which is in no man's power. But, for all that, if you want that grace, of which she is judge, or if you do not derive it from her, and submit implicitly to her, though she be not the giver of grace, you will find that she asserts a claim, as well as his Holiness, to chastise wrong faith and obstinacy, as Mr. Fletcher, of Moorfields, can assert. For though the pope, being the man of sin, has no such right, yet she, who is the daughter of Zion, is entitled to it.

The Chinese cries, that here is much loud and warm zeal, very long prayers, a world of bitterness, but no charity. In England, says he, there is more knowledge and freedom; I will try England. He finds here great liberty of conscience, and rejoices in it; but he sees those who should be most for it, most implacable against it. He sees churchmen nobly provided for, but many of them not satisfied; on the contrary, claiming ten times more, and blindly supporting those claims by the gospel, and by the example of cheating and usurping popish monks. He sees them railing at private conscience, damning all who exercise it, and calling for the temporal sword to destroy them. Here he finds archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, deans and chapters, and chancellors,—all fattening

in dignities and honours, violent in politics, and jobbers in secular and state affairs. He sees many of the Dissenters, who, after much suffering, enjoy a precious liberty, setting up the same antichristian spiritual domination, as that against which they have protested; and taking, as far as they can do so, the blessing and protection of the law of mercy from one another.

The Chinese, therefore, sees and applauds the wisdom, gentleness, and Christian spirit of the Legislature which restrains the irascibility of these professing Christians. He finds the chief human security for the gospel to be in an Act of parliament, which gives to every man the privilege to read, understand, and apply the Scriptures in his own way. "This," says he, "is Christianity according to the gospel, which, I find by observation, can only subsist where all sorts of consciences, the strong and the weak, are equally protected; where no sort of power is exercised over the mind, and where every man is left to understand and interpret with security the words of Christ and of Paul, as he judges Christ and Paul meant them. No two things—not heaven and hell, or good and evil—are more opposite than force and faith. The one is only from the wise and beneficent Creator; the other from the worst passions of the worst of men."

CHAP. XXVII.

AN INQUIRY INTO RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

So various and contradictory are the opinions and reasonings of men, that no voluntary society or assembly can long act or hold together, but by establishing certain rules and orders among themselves, regarding the common interests and conduct of the society, and appointing persons whose duty it shall be to see those orders put into execution. If any member does not think it lawful or expedient to submit to the public regulations, they must have a right to exclude him; or, in other words, to excommunicate him from their body, if he do not choose to separate himself.

If the design of the society be to worship God, to join in the same prayers, and to exhort and edify each other, which assembly is called a Church, there must be time and place appointed, when and where they are to meet, and also persons to prepare and keep in order all things necessary for their meeting. There must be one or more appointed

to read those prayers to the congregation in which they are to join, and to do all those offices which can be performed only by single persons ; and if the society would avoid the loquacity and interruption of ignorant and conceited members, they must confine exhortation to one, or to a few persons, of approved gravity and wisdom. There must also be some means of conferring and agreeing together, to support the common expenses of building, repairs, utensils, and so on ; and, consequently, there must be debates, which cannot be well carried on without a president, chairman, or prolocutor, to regulate them, collect their voices, and pronounce their resolutions. Without these precautions, the members will be more likely to fight than to pray.

If several of these churches, residing at too great a distance from one another to meet together, should esteem it their duty or advantage to join in the same form of worship, and unite in a common interest to support it, they must find out some means of communication, and contrive some cement of their union ; otherwise they would again soon separate. This may be done by choosing deputies to represent them, and to concert common measures ; or by submitting themselves to the conduct and determinations of one or more persons, chosen by common consent, in all such matters as do not interfere with their duty to God. The persons so chosen can have no more power, nor

for a longer duration, than their principals think fit to give them.

If such churches should think it their duty or interest to enlarge their foundation, and make converts, they cannot take a more effectual method to do so, than to choose, appoint, or ordain discreet and honest men, who are acquainted with their way of worship, their ordinances, and the reasons of them ; and send them forth to teach, persuade, and convince others ; to exhort them with meekness and love, and afterwards to preside and watch over them, for preventing their straying and apostatizing.

This was the case at the commencement of Christianity, before national churches were established ; as it is also the present case of independent voluntary societies. The apostles' commission was, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. This was impossible for them to do in their own persons, and, therefore, as they made converts, they exhorted them to convert others, as may be seen in Acts viii. 1, 4. When the apostles were left at Jerusalem, the church was scattered abroad throughout all Judea and Samaria, and those who were scattered abroad preached the word ; see Acts xi. 13, 14. They who were scattered abroad upon the persecution which arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnice and Cyprus, and preached the word to none but the Jews only ; and some of them, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preach-

ing the Lord Jesus Christ. From chap. iv. ver. 4. we find that Peter and John converted five thousand. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness, ver. 31.

The apostles were enabled to prove their mission by having the power of working miracles; for we read, Mark xvi. 17, 18, that these signs were to follow those who believed in Christ's name. They could cast out devils; they could speak with new tongues; they could take up serpents; no deadly thing could hurt them; they could lay their hands on the sick, and recover them. In John, chap. xiv. ver. 12, our Saviour says to his disciples, "Whosoever believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do, and greater than these shall he do also;" which gifts would have been unnecessary, if they were to have made no use of them. By virtue of those general powers, given to all Christians, Philip and Stephen—who were chosen by the congregation to the menial office of serving tables—preached, baptized, and did many wonders and miracles, as may be seen, in Acts, chap. vi. ver. 8, and chap. viii. ver. 7.

But besides the common right which every man had to preach Christ, and propagate his kingdom, the apostle prevailed upon particular persons to undertake it, and make it their business. These were to assist and oversee the brethren, as a shepherd does his sheep. Having the gift of discerning spirits, they knew who were best fitted for the same

employment, and who would engage in it without sinister views. But it is plain, they conferred no gifts or advantages above other Christians. They could not give the Holy Ghost, which power was confined to the apostles, and, as far as appears, was bestowed, without distinction, upon all who believed and were baptized. The power of speaking with tongues, was given to all believers ; which appears to be, in scripture, one constant and inseparable mark of having received the Holy Ghost.

In Acts ii. ver. 4, it is said, “ The Holy Ghost fell on the apostles, and they spake with tongues.” In Acts x. ver. 46, “ While Peter spoke, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard the word, and the Jews were astonished when they heard the Gentiles speak with tongues.” Chap. xix. ver. 6, “ Paul laid his hands on certain disciples, and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” Acts xi. ver. 15, Peter justifying himself to the Jews for preaching to the Gentiles, says, “ And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost ; forasmuch, therefore, as God gave them (*viz.* those who believed) the like gift as he did to us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God ?” We

learn here, from the mouth of Peter himself, that the Gentiles, who believed, had the same gift as the apostles. Chap. viii. ver. 14, "When the apostles at Jerusalem had heard that the Samaritans had received the Holy Ghost, which they had not received before, though they were baptized by Philip." In chap. ii. ver. 38, Peter says to them of Israel, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost;" and ver. 41, "They gladly received the word, and the same day were added to them three thousand souls," who must have all, consequently, received the Holy Ghost. In chap. viii. ver. 8, 9, Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, says, "God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith."

It appears plain, that all who believed, especially through the apostles' ministration, received the Holy Ghost, and could perform miracles; and, consequently, the persons before mentioned, by whatever names they are called, were not designed to be an order of men distinct from other Christians, with different powers and privileges. They received a burden, not a sinecure. They were better and poorer than other people, not their lords and masters; nor is there a word in scrip-

ture, from which we can imagine that they were intended to be successors to the apostles, much less that the successorship was to continue to the end of the world. It is evident, indeed, that there were no such successors appointed, because the power of giving the Holy Ghost, and, in consequence, of performing miracles, soon ceased in the church. With this in view, let us examine the Acts and the Epistles.

Acts xiv. ver. 23, Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every city; and chap. xx. ver. 17, Paul calls the elders of the Church of Ephesus together; and ver. 28, tells them their duty—"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Here, indeed, the word, ἐπισκόπους, is translated *overseers*, and not *bishops*, because it is explained in the text, to import no more than to feed the Church of God, *i. e.* to assist them, to preach to them, to exhort them, to advise them, and to give them good examples. But all this implies no jurisdiction; nor had the apostles any to give.

Ephesians, chap. iv. ver. 7, 11, "Unto every one is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." And in the next verse he tells

us for what purpose, viz. “ for the perfecting the saints (*i. e.* all the faithful), for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying the body of Christ.”

Romans, chap. x. ver. 14, 15, “ How then shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent?” This relates plainly to the teaching of the apostles, who were sent to preach the gospel to the unconverted world, that otherwise could have known nothing of it; and possibly in a larger sense it may be extended to all Christians, who had the power, as well as the means, to preach the gospel, and consequently might be said to be sent to do it. But I should be glad to know, by what skill it has been discovered, or how it came to be guessed at, that the clergy of the many nations in Europe, as by law established, were the persons meant; or, if only one kind of them, which kind that one is; when it is plain that they have no other means of knowing Christ than the laity have, and, for the most part, can tell them no more than they knew before.

Hebrews, chap. xiii. ver. 7, “ Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation;” and, ver. 17, “ Obey” (by others translated, “ be persuaded by”) them that have the rule over you, and

submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account." Here, it seems, the editors of our English Bible did not think proper to stand to their translation ; for in the margin, against the words, " rule over you," in both verses, they have inserted the word *guides*, which does not give us altogether so frightful an image.

The word translated *obey* in the last verse, is explained by the word *remember* in the first ; and the reason given in the one is, *because you are to consider the end of their conversation* ; and in the other, *because they watch for your souls*. So that the Hebrews were exhorted to remember, hearken to, or be persuaded by, their guides, who had spoken to them the word of God, which was the end of their conversation, and who watched for their souls. I think all good Christians ought to continue to do so, *i. e.* as soon as they know where to find them, and the clergy have agreed among themselves who they are.

At the latter end of the second Epistle to Timothy, in our edition of the Bible, he is said to be the first bishop of Ephesus,* by which, we are to understand, if we please, that he was in possession of the authority and dignity of a modern prelate ; but the text says no such thing. Indeed, Paul's first Epistle, chap. i. ver. 11, says that the glorious gospel of Christ was committed to his trust, *i. e.* he was entrusted to preach it. And, ver. 18, he

* See the beginning of the seventh chapter of this work.

commits the same charge to Timothy; but in chap. iv. ver. 12, 13, he tells him what he is to do;—he is to be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity; and till he comes himself, he is to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. The rest of the epistle is employed in telling him what doctrine he is to preach.

In his second Epistle, Paul says unto him, “and the things thou hast heard from me amongst many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;” which he expresses summarily before, in these words, “lay hands suddenly on no man,” a ceremony always used among the Jews, to denote a person appointed for any purpose, as well as on many other occasions. So that Paul himself knew, by inspiration, who was fit for his charge, and Timothy was to make good inquiry after faithful men. No power is given here, however, but to preach the gospel, and to employ others to do it; which I have shewn every one was at liberty to do, though all had not an equal call, or were equally qualified for it; and therefore it was certainly good advice to endeavour to find out such as were, and prevail upon them to undertake it.

In the Epistle to Titus, who, it seems, was another bishop, he is directed to set in order the things which are wanting, and to ordain elders in every city, as Paul had appointed him; which alludes to

private directions before given, and proves nothing, but that Paul took measures to propagate Christianity by reducing his converts, in every city, into orderly, though voluntary societies, by finding out and appointing discreet and honest men to assist and superintend the rest. And it cannot be doubted but the people who knew him to be inspired, would be advised by him, accept his recommendations, and be directed by the wisdom of a person so powerfully recommended. This respect and deference has been always paid by every sect in the world, to their first founders, and for the most part, also, to their subsequent leaders.

These are all the texts that I can at present remember, which are usually brought to support the priestly claims, except such as plainly relate to our Saviour himself, or to his apostles.

But what has all this to do with a formal and solemn institution and established form of government; a political economy; or, in ecclesiastical language and style, a spiritual hierarchy? What! must sovereign and independent power (without which, as I have shewn in Chap. VI., there can be in this case no power at all) depend upon figurative expressions, and allusions to seniority of age, as elders, to mean and low professions, as guides, shepherds, pastors, teachers, overseers, notably translated *bishops*? Or upon the critical knowledge of ancient eastern terms of doubtful and disputed significations, which would put it in the

power of the very few men, said to be skilled in the oriental tongues, to settle what establishments or religion they please?

The prophets and evangelists often speak after the manner of eastern nations, which was, for the most part, figurative; where, “for ever,” “to the end of the world,” and such like language, was frequently used to denote a long space of time. General expressions in scripture, therefore, are not always to be taken strictly; as, “covetousness is the root of all evil,”—“swear not at all,”—“children and servants, obey your parents and masters in all things,”—“take no care for the morrow,”—“take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, what you shall drink, or what you shall put on,”—“whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you,”—“submit yourselves one to another,”—“ye younger, be subject to the elder; yea, be subject to one another,”—and, “there were many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, the whole world could not contain the books,”—and more than a hundred others of the same kind. When such passages occur, we must construe them by the rules of eternal righteousness—the reason of the thing, and the general tenor of scripture;—and then we cannot mistake their meaning, unless it may be in such cases as are of no consequence whether we do or not.

Besides, almost all words vary their meaning by

time ; and every one, of the least reading, knows that there is scarcely a word, except the proper names of persons, places, and things, that is answered by any other in a different language, so as to comprehend exactly the same number of ideas. Nor is it probable, that any two persons of the same nation ever used one such word precisely to the same purpose ; if they were asked to give an adequate definition of what they meant by it, they would differ in some particular. It is, therefore, absurd to suppose, that men's duty and eternal salvation should depend upon the nice signification of single Hebrew and Greek words—languages so long since dead, or out of common use.

The Almighty is too merciful to his creatures to leave them in such uncertainties, which is, in effect, to let them throw at chances for their religion. When he makes an establishment, and gives laws to mankind, he always expresses himself in a manner not to be misunderstood. Thus he did in the Jewish dispensation, where there was no dispute about the meaning of the law.

Though there is nothing in scripture, then, to countenance these pretensions of erecting religious establishments on civil authority, yet the gospel, almost everywhere, forbids them, as I have already shewn ; as well as clearly proved that the pastors, in the first ages of Christianity, were always chosen by the people, and lived upon their alms. By what means of impiety and forgery they came to be lords

of so great a part of the terrestrial globe, I need not repeat. I will only add to what has been said, that it is not necessary for any particular religion to be incorporated into the constitution of the state. Religion and civil government are distinct things. Religion may be the support of a civil government, and it is the duty of the civil magistrate to protect his subjects in the free exercise of their religion ; but to incorporate any particular religion into the state, and to make it a part of the *common law*, and to oppose or punish those who dissent from it, is to tolerate despotism, and support the reign of antichrist. True religion in the first ages, before Constantine, had not, nor required, any such support ; nor does it at the present day. I have opposed, and always will oppose, any imposition upon my conscience, and resist all party distinctions. The Bible alone is the standard of religious truth, and it is opposed to spiritual tyranny and oppression.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THE REDUCTION OF EPISCOPACY, AND OF THE PRESENT LITURGY,
NECESSARY FOR A REFORMED CHURCH.

THE present form of episcopal government was brought in by antichrist, and has let in all kinds of superstitions into the church. It has been the instrument of displacing and removing the most conscientious men from the communion of the church, whenever they discovered any unwillingness to comply with her superstitious inventions and ceremonies. Episcopal government has destroyed the very life and power of godliness, and supported unrighteousness. It has done what it can to bind the laity in perpetual slavery, and to tolerate the observance of superstitious inventions. Episcopal government, as it now exists, is prejudicial to the civil liberty of our country. The doctrine of arbitrary power is taught by the members of the church. The Protestant religion must always be in danger while it is in such hands, nor can there be much hope for reformation, either in church or state, while bishops have votes in Parliament. The fruit being so bad,

the tree must be bad, and the only remedy is, to cut it down, as a cumberer of the ground.

If episcopal government has been the chief impediment to the reformation and growth of religion, it ought to be taken away. It is, in fact, so rotten in the foundation, that if we pull it not down, it will ultimately fall upon those who are propping it up.

It would be a waste of time to give a historical account of the infamous character of bishops, in the times of popery, from Cyprian to Pius X. or to De Domus ; of their treasonable and rebellious conduct towards their sovereigns ; of their antipathy to the laws and liberties of their country ; of their ignorance, pride, and attachment to the pomp of this world ; of their neglect of their spiritual functions ; and of their enmity to all methods of reformation, to the present day. I dare not ask in what particular our Protestant bishops excel.

It has been ignorantly asserted that episcopal government is of divine right. This is contrary to the statute 37. of Henry VIII., chap. 17, which says, that bishops have their episcopal authority, and all other ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatever, solely and only by, from, and under, the king. To argue that the crown is dependent upon episcopacy must appear extremely ridiculous to any man of common reading, who knows that the kings of England were long before bishops, and may readily depose them.

It has been said, that episcopacy is a third estate

in the government ; but this I deny, for the three estates are, the king, the lords temporal, and the commons. Kings of England have held several Parliaments without bishops. King Edward I., in the 24th of his reign, held a Parliament *excluso clero* ; and in the Parliament of 7th Richard II. there is mention made of the consent of the lords temporal and the commons, but not a word of the clergy. The hierarchy, therefore, is but a mere human institution, and, even as such, has not always existed in this country.

The baronies of bishops are merely of the king's favour, and began in this kingdom in the 4th of William the Conqueror, by virtue of which they have had place in the House of Peers in Parliament ; but in the 7th Henry VIII.,* it was resolved, by all the judges of England, that the king may hold his Parliament by himself, his temporal lords and commons, without any bishop ; for a bishop has not any place in Parliament by reason of his spirituality, but merely by reason of his barony. Accordingly, Acts of Parliament have been made without bishops, as 2nd Richard II., chap. 3, and at other times : nor were they ever called spiritual lords in our statutes, till 16th Richard II., chap. 1.

But to enter upon the subject more at large :— The spiritual powers of a bishop are those usurped powers which raise him above the order of a pres-

* 1846, Ket.

byter. And here may be considered, first, his authority over presbyters by the oath of canonical obedience, by which he may command them to collect tenths granted in convocation, according to 20th Henry VI., chap. 19; secondly, his office, which is partly judicial and partly ministerial; by the former, he judges, in his courts, of all matters ecclesiastical and spiritual within his diocese, and of the fitness of such as are presented to him, to be instituted into benefices; by the latter, he is dedicated to divine service in sacred places. By the 9th of Henry VI., chap. 17, he is to provide for the officiating of cures in the avoidance of churches, on neglect of the patron's presentation. He is to certify loyal or lawful matrimony, general bastardy, and excommunication. He is to execute judgments given *in quare impedit*, upon the writ *ad admittendum clericum*. He is to attend upon trials for life, to report the sufficiency or insufficiency of such as demand clergy; and lastly, he is to ordain deacons and presbyters.

These powers being usurped, or given to bishops, *jure humano*, they may, for just reasons, be taken away; for it has already been proved, in Chap. VII, that, according to scripture, a bishop and presbyter is one and the same person, their duties being mentioned as the same; the bishop being to teach and rule his church (1 Tim. iii. 2, 5), and the presbyter to do the same (1 Pet. v. 2, 3). Presbyters also, in scripture, are said to be bishops of the Holy Ghost

(Acts xx. 28), and St. Paul charges the presbyters of Ephesus, to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them (bishops or) overseers. Other bishops the Holy Ghost never made. Among the enumeration of church officers, in Eph. iv. 11, of which three are extraordinary, and have ceased, there remain only the pastor and teacher, which is the same with the presbyter. The bishop, as he is more than this, is no officer given by God; and it is an encroachment upon the kingly office of Christ, to admit other officers into the church than he himself has appointed.

Episcopacy, then, as far as it exceeds the presbyter's office, and not being of divine appointment, should be destroyed, and presbyters restored to the right of ordination, and liberty to preach the whole counsel of God, without restraint from a bishop. Presbyters should have this share in the discipline and government of the church. In a word, all superiority of order between bishops and presbyters should be taken away.

Bishops should be deprived of their baronies, and all intermeddling with civil affairs. Institution and induction, the jurisdiction of tithes, causes matrimonial and testamentary, and other usurpations of the ecclesiastical courts, should be restored to the civil judicature, and be determined by the laws of the land.

That bishops ought to be reduced to their primi-

tive state is evident, because their attendance on secular affairs, not relating to the church, is a great hindrance to their spiritual functions. “No man that warreth,” saith St. Paul to Timothy, “entangleth himself with the affairs of this life;” because it is contrary to his ordination vow; for when he enters into Holy Orders, he promises to give himself *wholly* to that vocation. Councils and canons in several ages have forbidden bishops meddling in secular affairs; because the twenty-four bishops depend upon the two archbishops, and take an oath of canonical obedience to them; because their peerage is not of the same nature with the temporal lords, being but for life; because they depend upon the crown for translation to greater bishoprics; and because it is not fit that twenty-six of them should sit as judges upon complaints brought against themselves and their order.

It has been argued, that bishops have for centuries voted in Parliament. Let it be remembered that time and custom ought to be of no weight with law makers, on the behalf of things which are allowed to be inconvenient. Abbots voted as anciently in Parliament as bishops, and yet their votes were taken away. It has been said, that the bishops’ voting is no considerable hindrance to their spiritual functions; and that though no clergyman should *entangle* himself with the affairs of this life, the apostle does not exclude him from inter-

meddling. But if the episcopal functions be well discharged, the diocese of every bishop is sufficiently large to employ all his thoughts and labour. The design of St. Paul was, most certainly, to exhort Timothy to withdraw himself as much as possible from the affairs of this life, that his thoughts might be more entire for his evangelical work ; and, therefore, in another place, he exhorts him to give himself wholly to these things.

It has further been observed, that clergymen have always been in the commission of the peace, from the first planting of Christianity, and that they are the best qualified for it. To this it is answered, that they are most unfit for this employment, because it has a direct tendency to hinder their usefulness in their ministerial character. Besides, the office of magistrate has not been perpetual and coeval with Christianity. The first clergymen who were justices of the peace, or who had power in temporal jurisdiction, were the bishops of Durham and York, 34th Edward III. ; for before the Act of Conformity, 1st Edward VI., the clergy were not put in commission for the peace ; and the reason of their being then admitted was, that they might persuade the people to conformity. But if, in conscience, they held it to be inconsistent with their spiritual calling, they might refuse.

If it be judged that the taking away of one whole branch from the House of Peers would be a bad precedent, and might encourage the Commons, one

time or other, to cut off the barons, or some other degree of the nobility, it must be recollected that the peerage of the bishops does not stand upon the same footing with that of the rest of the nobility. Their *honour* does not descend to their posterity, and they have no right to vote in cases of blood. If they had the same right of peerage with the temporal lords, no canon of the church could deprive them of it ; for it was never known, that the canons of the church pretended to deprive the barons of England of any part of their inherent jurisdiction.

It has also been said, that if the bench of Bishops were deprived of their votes, they would be left under very great disadvantages ; for while the meanest commoner would be represented in the lower House, the bishops would be deprived of this benefit. Besides, if they have no share in consenting to the laws, either in their persons or their representatives, what justice can oblige them to keep those laws ? It is answered, that the bishops have the same share in the legislation with the rest of the freeholders of England ; nor is there any more reason why the bishops should be a part of the legislature, than the judges or the lawyers, as such, or any other incorporated profession of learned men.

The chief and last argument urged in favour of the bishops, which I shall notice, is, that they are one of the three estates of the realm ; that, as such, they are the representatives of the

whole body of the clergy. To turn them out, it is said, would be to alter the constitution, and to take away one branch of the legislature; the Parliament would not then be the complete representative body of the nation, nor would the laws which were enacted in their absence be valid. This is easily answered. The bishops do not sit in the House as a third estate, nor as bishops, but only in right of the baronies annexed to their bishoprics, 5 Will. I. All the bishops have baronies except the Bishop of Man, who is as much a bishop, to all intents and purposes of jurisdiction and ordination, as the others; but he has no place in Parliament, because he does not hold *per integram baroniam*. It must be admitted, that in ancient times, the lords spiritual are sometimes mentioned as a third estate of the realm; but it could not be intended by this, that the clergy, much less the bishops, were an essential part of the legislature. If so, it would follow that no Act of Parliament could be valid without their consent; whereas various Acts are now in force, from which the whole bench of Bishops have dissented, as the Act of Conformity, 1 Edw. VI., and the Act of Supremacy, 1 Eliz.* If the major part of the Barons agree, and the House of Commons concur, any Bill may pass into an Act, with the consent of the King, though all the bishops dissent, because

* Nalson's Collections, vol. ii. p. 502, &c.

their votes are over-ruled by the greater part of the Peers.

In the Parliament of Northampton, under Henry II., when the bishops challenged their peerage,* they said, “ *Non sedemus hic episcopi sed barones,*” —“ We sit not here as bishops, but as barons.” We are barons, and you are barons here, therefore we are peers. Nor did King Charles himself apprehend the bishops to be one of the three estates ; for, in his declaration of June 16, 1642, he calls himself one, and the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons, the other two. In ancient times, the prelates were sometimes excluded the Parliament, as in 25 of King Edward I., when they would not agree to grant an aid to his Majesty in the Parliament at Carlisle; and before that time several Acts had passed against the oppression of the clergy, of which the entry in the record stands thus :—“ The King having consulted with the earls, barons, and other nobles, or by the assent of the earls, barons, and other lay people ;” which shews that the bishops did not consent, for if they had, they would have been first named ; the order of nobility, in all ancient records, being prelates, earls, and barons.†

When the convocation had cited Dr. Standish before them, for speaking words against their

* See Fuller's Appeal.

† Rushworth, part iii. vol. i. p. 396.

power and privilege, in the 7th of Henry VIII., it was determined by all the judges of the land, in presence of the king, that his Majesty might hold his Parliament without calling the bishops at all. It appears, therefore, from hence, that the bishops never were accounted a third estate of the realm, in such a sense as to make them an essential branch of the legislature. Nor are they the representatives of the clergy, because then the clergy would be twice represented in the Houses of Parliament. Besides, none can be properly called representatives of others, but such as are chosen by them; the bishops not being chosen for this purpose, cannot, therefore, properly be the representatives of the clergy in Parliament. They sit there, not in their spiritual character, but by virtue of the baronies annexed to their bishoprics, and if the King, with consent of Parliament, should annex baronies to the courts of justice in Westminster hall, or to the supreme magistracy of the city of London, the Judges and Lord Mayor for the time being, would have the same right of peerage.

“ *Cuncta prius tentanda ; sed immedicabile vulnus
Ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur.*”

The ambition of prelates will not let them see how inconsistent two contrary functions are, in one and the same person.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE REDUCTION OF EPISCOPACY, AND OF THE PRESENT LITURGY,
NECESSARY FOR A REFORMED CHURCH, CONTINUED.

By the law of England, the church establishment may always be reformed by the civil magistrate, without the concurrence of the prelates or the people. But when princes or magistrates are negligent of their duty, God may stir up the subject to perform this work. If otherwise, what reformation can be expected in France, in Spain, or in Rome itself, for it is not to be imagined, that the pope or prelates will consent to their own ruin. The Reformation of Henry VIII. was very defective in the essentials of doctrine, worship, and government ; it proceeded with a Laodicean lukewarmness. The supremacy was transferred from one wrong head to another, and the limbs of the anti-christian hierarchy were visible in the body. The imperfection of the English Reformation has been the complaint of every judicious and wise Christian. It has occasioned, from its defects, more schism

and separation than ever was known to the other reformed churches of the Continent. Episcopacy cannot make out its claim to apostolical appointment. When the apostles were living, there was no difference between a bishop and presbyter ; no inequality in power or degree, but an exact parity in every branch of their character. We have already shewn that there is no mention in scripture of a bishop being superior to other pastors.

An attempt to support the government of the Church, from its practice subsequent to the third century, or from the writings of the Fathers, is fallacious or uncertain. Some there are who unite the word of God and antiquity, while others make the scriptures the only rule, but antiquity the authentic interpreter. The latter fall into a greater error than the former ; for the papists bring tradition no farther than to an equality of authority with the inspired writings ; but the former make antiquity the very ground of their belief of the sense of scripture, and by that means exalt it above the scripture, for the interpretation of the Fathers is made the very formal reason why they believe the scriptures in such a sense. Thus, contrary to the apostle's doctrine, their faith must stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. But the law and the testimony must be the only rule. Indeed, the practice of the primitive Church, in many things, cannot certainly be known. Even in the apostles' time, Diotrephes

moved for the pre-eminence, and the mystery of iniquity began to work ; after which, ambition and weakness quickly made way for a change in Church government.

No man of discretion will deny the lawfulness of the ministry, and the due administration of the sacraments in those reformed Churches abroad, where there are no diocesan bishops ; for it is evident from scripture, as well as confessed by many champions for episcopacy, that presbyters may ordain presbyters ;* and it is clear that his Majesty is not bound by his coronation oath to support episcopacy ; for, as relates to the Church, when the formal reasons of an oath ceases, the obligation is discharged. When an oath has a special regard to the benefit of those to whom the engagement is made, if the parties interested relax upon the point, dispense with the promise, and give up their advantage, the obligation is at an end. Thus, when the Parliament agrees to the repealing of a law, the king's conscience is not tied against assenting to the bill ; if it were, the altering of any law would be impracticable. It is certain that the English Reformation has not perfectly purged out the Roman leaven, but has rather depraved the discipline of the Church, by conforming to the civil polity, and adding many supplemental offices to those instituted by the Son of God.

* See 1 Tim. iv. 14.

We are told, by Strype, that the pious scholar, Clarke, in a sermon before the Heads, at St. Mary's, Cambridge, boldly declared that the hierarchical orders of Archbishops, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and so on, were introduced into the Church by Satan. What Christian can sanction and support the temporal dignities and baronies annexed to the office of English bishops? Who can admire their engaging in secular employments and trusts, tending to exalt them above their brethren, and being incompatible with their characters as ministers of Christ, and inconsistent with the due discharge of their spiritual functions? What man, who is a believer in the New Testament dispensation, can uphold the titles and offices of archdeacons, deans, chapters, and other officials belonging to cathedrals, which have no foundation in scripture, or in the first ages of the Christian Church?

The non-conformists, under Archbishop Parker, bitterly complained of the exorbitant power and jurisdiction of the bishops, and their chancellors in their spiritual courts, as derived from the common law of the pope, and not from the word of God, or the statute law of the land. It was said by the Rev. T. Cartwright, B.D., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Lady Margaret's Professor, of whom the great and celebrated Beza declares that he thought "there was not a more learned man under the sun," that the names and functions of archbishops and archdeacons ought to be abo-

lished, as having no foundation in Scripture. The offices of the lawful ministers of the Church, says he, *viz.* bishops and deacons, ought to be reduced to the apostolical institution,—the bishops to preach the word of God, and pray, and deacons to take care of the poor. The government of the Church ought not to be intrusted with bishops, chancellors, or the officials of archdeacons ; but every Church should be governed by its own minister and presbyters. Ministers ought not to be at large, but every one should have the charge of a certain flock. No man should ask, or stand as a candidate, for the ministry. Bishops should not be created by civil authority, but ought to be fairly chosen by the Church. I would here ask, what would this learned professor say were he living at the present day? Methink I hear him exclaim : “ Come, ye bishops, away with your superfluities, yield up your thousands, be content with hundreds ; let your portion be priest-like, and not prince-like ; let the government have the rest of your temporalities to assist to pay off the national debt, which you and your forefathers contracted ; let every parish have a faithful preacher, and every city a bishop ; live the remainder of your days honestly, and not pompously ; let your future good conduct atone for your past offences. This cannot be done unless your lands be dispersed and bestowed upon many, which now feed and fatten one. Remember that Abimelech, when David in

his banishment would have dined with him, kept such hospitality, that he had no bread to give him but the shew-bread. Where was his superfluity to keep your pretended hospitality? A bishop, says St. Paul, should be blameless, of good behaviour, no brawler, nor striker, nor greedy of filthy lucre. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. Shall the liberties and property of mankind be trampled upon by a despotic power? "For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord."

The greater part of the people who call themselves churchmen, are "perishing for lack of knowledge," while the bishops and incumbents are indulging in luxury, idleness, and sloth. I know a bishop, not many hundred miles from Norwich, who has spent a great portion of his evenings at cards with his secretary and clergy. I know a minor canon, not far from the same city, whose life and soul is in a game of whist. I know a beneficed clergyman, (a favorite with his diocesan) who is an organ-builder and a notorious infidel. I know one parson who is a Socinian, another a Swedenborgian; one who sent his servant to London to lie-in, where she was taken up under suspicion of murdering the infant. I could go on

to enumerate instances of even greater evils committed by clergymen of the Church of England; but I forbear, as inconsistency in their conduct is too frequently seen in the various parishes of the country. The name of *parson* has become a by-word for hypocrisy, lust, and intolerance; exaction is characteristic of the order, and leanness is in the train of its votaries. The day is past and gone, when the mere possession of clerical orders insured outward respect and inward veneration. Cock-fights, coursing, and fox hunting, frequently place them on a footing with the lowest and most profligate of the neighbourhood. These things ought not so to be. I would new model the Church; but by enlarging the terms of communion, not substituting new ceremonies in the room of those already burdensome. In introducing a new discipline, if episcopacy be retained, let the spiritual jurisdiction, which is both arbitrary and oppressive, be for ever abolished. Let insufferable insolence and intolerance—children of the “man of sin”—unprofitable drones, or rather working locusts, consuming thousands a year without profit to the Church of Christ—be for ever banished from our view. The Church of England has too long been the harbour of the idle and time-serving hypocrite, whose prebends and livings should immediately be given up. Those men who traffic with deaneries, double benefices, pensions, advowsons, reversions,

and so on, should give up their charge as unprofitable servants ; as being those of whom, “ Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds ; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock ; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more ; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them : for thus saith the Lord God, behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

The sixteenth epistle of the first book of Horace, the thirteenth satire of Juvenal, and the second satire of Perseus, appear to contain the petitions of our modern prelates, being expressive of their anxiety for temporal good, and their indifference of a future life. It is certain that their attachment to the pageantry and splendour of office, their fondness for arbitrary power and consequence, their vanity for honour and title, and, above all, their thirst for the mammon of unrighteousness, occupy the greater part of their time and their talents. How much such sticklers for court favour, for secular pomp and parade, must inwardly despise the humble Jesus, the son of a carpenter, and his disciples, the poor fishermen !

This insolence and pride of a bishop impressed me most particularly the other day, in a place where we would least expect it; where all the partakers of this frail and mortal state should appear in a state of equality,—I mean at church, in the immediate presence of Him who made high and low, rich and poor, and where the gilded and painted ornaments on the walls seemed to mock the folly of all human pride. The pew of this “Reverend Father in God” is raised above the others, though its elevation is an obstacle both to the eyes and ears of those who are placed in its vicinity. It is furnished with rich curtains, adorned with linings, and accommodated with cushions; servants in livery walk in his train, open the door of his luxurious seat, and one carries the burden of a book! Those who did not bow at the name of Jesus, bent with all lowliness to his Lordship. The whole of his behaviour led me to conclude, that this self-important being would scarcely deign to enter heaven, any more than he does the church, if he must be reduced to an equality with the poor vulgar of the congregation. Such men, consistently with their arbitrary principles, though they may be indifferent to religion, are zealous for the church. But for what purpose, I would ask? They consider the church as useful, not only as providing for them, but as giving them power to keep down such contemners as myself, who will not yield the servile submission

they require. We read, that Satan offered our Saviour all the kingdoms of this world, and their glory, if he would fall down and worship him; and there is reason to fear, that such idolaters of the kingdoms of this world, and their glory, would apostatize from Him, who said, “ My kingdom is not of this world,” if the same evil being were to make the same offer. The temporalities and splendours of the church triumphant endear it to them; but if it continued in its primitive state, or in the condition in which it was when poor fishermen were its bishops, they would soon side, in religious matters, with the hirelings of Judas. While they can possess mitres and stalls, and be the promoters of arbitrary power and principles, they honour the church, though they know nothing of Christ; they stickle for the bench, though they abandon the creed. An ally like the church, possessed of great power and influence, must be cherished; though they would be the first, if they knew they must lose it, to question its rights and accelerate its subversion.

Farewell, then, all that truly ennobles an English bishop. Pride, pomp, and tyranny domineer without control! Gold rules absolutely! Reason, law, and liberty, repose in the tomb with the departed simplicity of the gospel of the humble Nazarene! The sun of the spiritual world is extinguished, and my country is overshadowed with

darkness and death. Better had it been for a man not to have been born, than born in a country where religion is prostituted to the unchristian purposes of political artifice and the sycophantic associations of pulpit placemen. The Tindals, the Collins's, the Bolingbrokes, the Humes, the Gibbons, the Voltaires, the Volneys—call them, if you please, the miscreant philosophers of France,—never did these men so much injury to the cause of Christianity as those English bishops and clergy, who, under the cloak of religion, prostitute the church and the cure of souls to the corruption of a venal senate.

CHAP. XXX.

THE REDUCTION OF EPISCOPACY, AND OF THE PRESENT LITURGY,
NECESSARY FOR A REFORMED CHURCH, CONTINUED.

It has already been proved, that, in the ancient church, bishops could do nothing without the consent of the clergy; nor, in cases of excommunication and absolution, without the whole body of the church to which the delinquent belonged, as appears from the testimonies of Tertullian and St. Cyprian. Dr. Howley, and his brother bishops, have been challenged to find, in all antiquity, any authority for their delegates, such as proctors, commissaries, and others, who never received imposition of hands. These offices were not known in early times, and no instance can be produced of their being held, by either laity or clergy, for above four hundred years after Christ. Even supposing that in the third or fourth century, bishops were a distinct order from presbyters, yet, let it be remembered, even these men differed very widely from the bishops of the church of England. The primitive bishops were elected by a free suffrage

of the presbyters, but our's by a *congé d'elire* from the king.

The Parliament, so late as the seventeenth century, thought it right to deprive the bishops and clergy of all secular power, which ceased by an Act passed and signed by Charles I. The Act runs thus :—

“ Whereas, bishops and other persons in holy orders ought not to be entangled with secular jurisdiction, the office of the ministry being of such great importance that it will take up the whole man ; and that it is found, by long experience, that their intermeddling with secular jurisdictions has occasioned great mischiefs and scandals, both to church and state, his majesty, out of his religious care of the church and souls of his people, is graciously pleased that it be enacted, and by authority of this present Parliament be it enacted, that no archbishop, or bishop, or other person, that now is, or hereafter shall be in holy orders, shall, at any time after the 15th day of February, in the year of our Lord 1641, have any seat or place, suffrage or vote, or use or execute any power or authority in the Parliament of this realm, nor shall be of the privy council of his majesty, his heirs, or successors, or justices of the peace of *oyer and terminer*, or gaol delivery, or execute any temporal authority, by virtue of any commission ; but shall be wholly disabled and be incapable to have, receive, use, or execute any of the

said places, powers, authorities, and things aforesaid.

“ And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that all acts from and after the said 15th of February, which shall be done or executed by any archbishop or bishop, or any person whatsoever in holy orders ; and all and every suffrage or voice given or delivered by them, or any of them, or other thing done by them, or any of them, contrary to the purport and true meaning of this Act, shall be utterly void, to all intents, constructions, and purposes.”

The passing of this Act was attended with public rejoicings.

Of the various schemes offered for the reduction of episcopacy, perhaps that of Archbishop Usher may be considered the most mild. He was for reducing it into the form of synodical government, received in the ancient church, in which he supposes, that of the many elders that ruled the church of Ephesus there was a stated president, whom our Saviour calls the angel ; and whom Ignatius, in one of his Epistles, calls the bishop, to whom, in conjunction with the elders or presbyters, the whole government of the church, both as to doctrine and discipline, was committed. He therefore proposes, that those be continued ; and, for a regulation of their jurisdiction, that suffragans should be appointed to hold monthly synods of presbyters, from whom there should be an appeal

to diocesan, provincial, and national ones, and more particularly,

1. That the rector of every parish, with the churchwardens, should admonish and reprove such as live scandalously, according to the quality of their offence ; and if by this means they are not reclaimed, to present them to the next monthly synod, and in the mean time debar them the Lord's table.

2. Whereas, by a statute of 26 Henry VIII., suffragans are appointed to be created in twenty-six several places of this kingdom, the number of them may be conformed to the number of the several rural deaneries into which every diocese is subdivided ; which being done, the suffragan may every month assemble a synod of the several rectors or incumbent pastors within the precinct, and according to the major part of their votes conclude all matters that should be brought into debate before them.

3. A diocesan synod might be held once or twice a year, where all the suffragans, and the rest of the rectors and incumbent ministers, or a certain select number out of every deanery within that diocese, might meet, with whose consent all things might be concluded by the bishop or superintendent, or, in his absence, by one of his suffragans, whom he should appoint as moderator in his room, and here the transactions of the monthly synods might be revised and reformed.

4. The provincial synod may consist of all the bishops and suffragans, and such of the clergy as should be elected out of every diocese within the province. The primate of either province might be moderator, or in his room one of the bishops appointed by him. This synod might be held every third year; and, if the Parliament be sitting, both the primates and provincial synods might join together, and make up one national synod, wherein all appeals from inferior synods might be received, all their acts examined, and all ecclesiastical affairs relating to the state of the church in general established.

The religion of the papists is incompatible with any other religion; it is destructive to all others, and will endure nothing that opposes it. There are other religions that are not right, but not so destructive as popery; for the principles of popery are subversive of all states and persons that oppose it.

Let any man read Archbishop Laud's conference with Fisher, the Jesuit:—"Another church," says his Grace, "may separate from Rome, if Rome will separate from Christ; and, so far as it separates from him and the faith, so far may another church separate from it. I grant the Church of Rome to be a true church in essence, though corrupt in manners and doctrine. And corruption of manners, attended with errors in the doctrines of faith, is a just cause for one particular church to

separate from another." His Grace then adds, with regard to the Church of Rome, "the cause of the separation is your's, for you thrust us from you, because we called for truth and redress of abuses ; for a schism must needs be their's whose the cause of it is ; the woe runs full out of the mouth of Christ, even against him that gives the offence, not against him that takes it. It was ill done of those, whoever they were, who first made the separation from Rome,—I mean not actual, but causal ; for, as I said before, the schism is their's whose the cause of it is ; and he makes the separation who gives the first just cause of it, not he that makes an actual separation." What will Archbishop Howley say to these concessions?

Although I admit, that the Church of England is by no means so corrupt as the Church of Rome, it is obviously as lawful to separate from the corruptions of one church as from those of another. Indeed, it is necessary to do so, when those corruptions are imposed as terms of communion. We may not use things in idolatry—"And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them ; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger."*

Eusebius, St. Austin, Calvin, Bucer, Musculus, Peter Martyr, Beza, Zanchy, Jewel, Pilkington,

* 2 Kings, xvii. 11.

Bilson, Humphrys, Fulk, Andrews, Sutcliffe, and others, protest against conformity with idolaters. The cross has been abused to superstition and idolatry, to drive away devils, to expel diseases, to break the force of witchcraft, &c.

Kneeling (at the sacrament) before the elements, believing them to be the real body, &c. This ceremony was not introduced into the church till antichrist was at its full height, and is idolatry.

The primitive Christians, according to Tertulian, thought it unlawful to kneel at the Lord's table; and the first Council of Nice, A. D. 327, made a solemn decree that none may pray kneeling, but only standing, on the Lord's day, because on that day is celebrated the joyful remembrance of our Lord's resurrection. To kneel is a gesture of sorrow and humiliation, but he that prays standing shews himself thankful for the obtaining some mercy or favour. Eusebius,* speaking of a man that had been admitted to the communion, says, "he stood at the table, and put forth his hand to receive the holy food." The gesture of kneeling is contrary to the nature of the Lord's Supper, which is ordained to be a banquet and a sign of the sweet familiarity that is between the faithful and Him, and of that spiritual nourishment we are to receive by feeding on his body and blood by faith. The disposition of mind at the Lord's table

* Hist. Ecc. lib. vii. cap. viii.

is not so much humility as assurance of faith and cheerful thankfulness for the benefits of Christ's death.

Among many other bishops, Sandys, Archbishop of York, had no great opinion either of the discipline or ceremonies of the church, as appears by his last will and testament, in which he observes, "But I am now, and ever have been persuaded, that some of these rites and ceremonies are not expedient for the church now; but that in the church reformed, and in all this time of the gospel, they may better be disused by little and little, more and more urged." * Such a testimony, from the dying lips of one who had been a severe persecutor of honest men, for things which he always thought had better be disused than urged, deserves to be remembered.

Hooker, the most learned defender of the Church of England, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," says, "The positive laws of the church, not being of a moral nature, are mutable, and may be changed or reversed by the same powers that made them. Is there not a necessity now for a change?" &c.

The church has no discretionary power to appoint what ceremonies, and establish what order she pleases, though she may possess some things common to human societies which have this power, viz. to appoint the time, place, and order of

* See Maddox's Vindication.

public worship. If she had a power to appoint what she thought fit, the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Rome may be tolerated, for she considers them necessary and consistent with the laws of Christ; but, after all the arguments used by the supporters of church rites and ceremonies, it is ridiculous and absurd to say that this polity has been established by the Church of England. Every common historian is aware, that the rites and ceremonies of this church originated with princely authority, that they have changed with the caprice and will of kings and queens, that they have been ratified by parliaments, corrupted by pensions, overawed by prerogative, and are now a part of the statute law of the land. But the Church of Christ is not a mere voluntary society; it is a congregation formed and constituted by Christ himself, who is the sole king and law-giver of it, and who has made sufficient support and provision for it, even to the end of the world. I defy the whole bench of bishops, together with all their dependents, to prove, from the New Testament, that this church is empowered to alter or amend the constitution of Christ. Archbishops, archdeacons, deans, canons, and other officials, have been appointed for this purpose. The true church is spiritual, and her ordinances, her privileges, and her censures must be so too. Those who view her in this light, must see that she has no concern with civil rites, property, or

estates, nor any power over the conscience, by the infliction of pains and penalties. The laws of the New Testament are amply sufficient for the direction of the Church, and in cases of no particular rule or injunction, the prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—the officers appointed by Christ for the perfecting of the saints, and for edifying his body—will, with mutual forbearance, appoint, without the necessity of human authority. As Neal justly expresses it, as far as any Church is governed by the laws and precepts of the New Testament, so far it is a Church of Christ; but when it sets up its own bye-laws, as terms of communion, or works the policy of the civil magistrate into its constitution, it is so far a creature of the state.

I cannot, upon any human principles, account for the spirit of infatuation which has induced the bishops and clergy of the Church of England to change the doctrines held in the reign of Elizabeth as essential to eternal salvation, and yet retain inviolate the rites and ceremonies which were at that period, as well as the present, considered by the wise and good as the remnants and symbols of antichrist. The doctrines then held I will subjoin : they were drawn up and subscribed to, by Dr. Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury ; Dr. Hutton, Archbishop of York ; Dr. Hitchen, Bishop of London ; Dr. Young, Bishop of Rochester ; Dr. Vaughan, Bishop of Bangor, and many other

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learned divines, and were reduced into nine propositions, commonly called the “Lambeth Articles,” to which the students in the Universities were strictly enjoined to conform :—

1. That God from eternity has predestinated some persons to life, and reprobated others to death.

2. The moving or efficient cause of predestination to life, is not foreseen faith, or good works, or any other commendable quality in the persons predestinated, but the good will and pleasure of God.

3. The number of the predestinate is fixed, and cannot be lessened or increased.

4. They who are not predestinated to salvation shall necessarily be condemned for their sins.

5. A true, lively, and justifying faith, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, is not extinguished, nor does it fail, or go off either finally or totally.

6. A justified person has a full assurance and certainty of the remission of his sins, and of his everlasting salvation by Christ.

7. Saving grace is not communicated to all men, neither have all men such a measure of divine assistance, that they may be saved if they will.

8. No person can come to Christ unless it be given him, and unless the Father draw him ; and all men are not drawn by the Father, that they may come to Christ.

9. It is not in any one's will and power to be saved.

In the reign of Charles I. the House of Commons made the following protestation :—

“ We, the Commons in Parliament assembled, do claim, protest, and avow for truth, the sense of the articles of religion which were established by Parliament in the thirteenth year of our late Queen Elizabeth, which, by the public act of the Church of England, and by the general and current exposition of the writers of our Church, have been delivered unto us. And we reject the sense of Jesuits and Arminians, and all others that differ from us.”

This protestation, as Dr. Blackburne justly remarks, is equivalent at least to any other resolution of the House. It is found amongst the most authentic records of Parliament ; and whatever force or operation it had the moment it was published, the same it has to this hour, being never revoked or repealed in any succeeding Parliament, nor containing any one particular, which is not in perfect agreement with every part of our present constitution, civil and religious. If it should be affirmed, by our present Arminian bishops, that no interpretation of the Articles, contrary to that which they maintain, has ever been given by authority, and should further object to the power of laymen to make such interpretation, we have only to refer them to the above. Here we find

the Parliament declaring that the current sense of expositors up to the reign of Charles I. was in opposition to the modern interpretation of Jesuits and Arminians. And the same authority that empowered laymen, in the thirteenth of Elizabeth, to establish the articles as the doctrines of the Church of England, gave power, in the time of Charles, to interpret them.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE REDUCTION OF EPISCOPACY, AND OF THE PRESENT LITURGY,
NECESSARY FOR A REFORMED CHURCH, CONCLUDED.

I SHALL here give those views which many great and illustrious Christians, in all ages of the church, have entertained upon religion and Church government; and which are in full accordance with my own :—

OF RELIGION.

1. The Holy Scriptures are absolutely perfect, both as to faith and worship; and whatsoever is enjoined as a part of divine service, that cannot be warranted by the said scriptures, is unlawful.

2. All inventions of men are to be excluded from the exercises of religion.

3. All outward means, instituted to express and set forth the inward worship of God, are parts of divine worship, and ought, therefore, evidently to be prescribed by the word of God.

4. To institute or ordain any mystical rites or ceremonies, and to mingle the same with the rites and ceremonies of God's ordinance, is gross superstition.

OF THE CHURCH.

1. Every congregation or assembly of men, ordinarily joining together in the true worship of God, is a true and visible church of Christ.

2. All churches are, in ecclesiastical matters, equal, and, by the word of God, ought to have the same officers, administrations, orders, and forms of worship.

3. Christ has not subjected any church or congregation to any other superior ecclesiastical jurisdiction than that which is within itself; so that if a whole church or congregation should err in any matters of faith or worship, no other churches or spiritual officers have power to censure or punish them, but are only to counsel and advise them.

4. Every church ought to have her own spiritual officers and ministers resident with her, and those such as are enjoined by Christ in the New Testament, and no other.

5. Every church ought to be at liberty to choose their own spiritual officers.

6. Ecclesiastical officers or ministers in one church, ought not to bear any ecclesiastical office in another; nor are they to forsake their calling without just cause, and such as may be approved of by the congregation.

7. A church, having chosen its spiritual governors, ought to live in all due obedience to them, agreeably to the word of God.

8. The laws and orders of the churches, warranted by the word of God, are not repugnant to civil government, whether monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical; and we renounce all jurisdiction that is repugnant or derogatory to any of these.

OF MINISTERS.

1. The ministers of particular congregations are the highest spiritual officers in the church, over whom there is no superior minister, by divine appointment, but Jesus Christ.

2. There are not, by divine appointment, or in the word of God, any ordinary, national, provincial, or diocesan ministers, to whom the ministers of particular churches are to be subject.

3. No minister ought to exercise or accept of any civil jurisdiction or authority, but ought to be wholly employed in spiritual offices and duties, to that congregation over which he is appointed.

4. The supreme office of the minister is to preach the word publicly to the congregation; and the people of God ought not to acknowledge any for their ministers who are not able, by preaching, to interpret and apply the word of God to them. Consequently, the long list of episcopally-ordained hunting, coursing, cock-fighting, pugilistic, and gambling parsons, are to be decidedly rejected.

5. In public worship, the minister only is to be

OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

1. The civil magistrate has supreme civil power over all persons within his dominions.

2. All ecclesiastical officers, as well as other persons, are therefore punishable by the civil magistrate for civil offences.

3. The pope is an antichrist, because he supports idolatry, and usurps the supremacy over kings and princes. All who defend and support the popish faith and deception are enemies to the king's supremacy.

4. No church officers have power to deprive the king of any branch of his royal prerogative, much less of his supremacy, which is inseparable from him.

5. No ecclesiastical officers have power over the bodies, lives, goods, or liberties, of any person whatever.

6. If a king, after he has held communion with a Christian church, shall turn apostate, or live in a course of open defiance to the laws of God and religion, the church governors are to give over their spiritual charge and tuition of him, which by calling from God and the king they did undertake, and more than this they may not do; for the king still retains his supreme authority, as entirely, and in as ample a manner, as if he were the most Christian prince in the world.

7. We are so far from claiming any supremacy to ourselves, that we exclude from ourselves all

secular pomp and power; holding it a sin to punish men in their bodies, goods, liberties, or lives, for any merely spiritual offence.

MARRIAGE.

In 1653, the solemnizing of matrimony, being considered a civil contract, was put into the hands of justices of the peace, by an ordinance which enacts, “that after the 29th of September, 1653, all persons who shall agree to be married within the commonwealth of England, shall deliver in their names and places of abode, with the names of their parents, guardians, and overseers, to the registrar of the parish where each party lives, who shall publish the *banns* in the church or chapel three several Lord’s days, after the morning service, or else in the market-place three several weeks successively, between the hours of eleven and two, on a market day if the party desire it. The registrar shall make out a certificate of the due performance of one or the other, at the request of the parties concerned, without which they shall not proceed to marriage.

“It is further enacted, that all persons intending to marry shall come before some justice of the peace within the county, city, or town corporate, when publication has been made as aforesaid, with their certificate, and with sufficient proof of the consent of the parents, if either party

be under age, and then the marriage shall proceed in this manner—

“The man to be married shall take the woman by the hand, and distinctly pronounce these words— I, A. B., do here, in the presence of God, the searcher of all hearts, take thee, C. D., for my wedded wife ; and do also, in the presence of God, and before these witnesses, promise to be to thee a loving and faithful husband.

“Then the woman, taking the man by the hand, shall plainly and distinctly pronounce these words— I, C. D., do here, in the presence of God, the searcher of all hearts, take thee, A. B., for my wedded husband ; and do also, in the presence of God, and before these witnesses, promise to be to thee a loving, faithful, and obedient wife.

“After this, the justice may and shall declare the said man and woman to be, from henceforth, husband and wife ; and from and after such consent so expressed, and such declaration made of the same, as to the form of marriage, it shall be good and effectual in law ; and no other marriage whatsoever, within the commonwealth of England, after the 29th of September, 1653, shall be held or accounted a marriage, according to the law of England.”

I shall now add a few propositions, to which I earnestly beg the attention of my countrymen :—

1. In reforming the Church of England, it is necessary to reduce all things to the apostolical institution.

2. No man ought to be admitted into the ministry, but who is capable of preaching.

3. None but such a minister of the word ought to pray publicly in the Church, or administer the sacrament.

4. Popish ordinations are not valid, (consequently, the ordinations of the Church of England are not.)

5. Only canonical scriptures ought to be read publicly in the Church.

6. The public liturgy should be so framed, that there should be no private praying or reading in the Church, but that all the people attend to the prayers of the minister.

7. The care of burying the dead does not belong more to the ministerial office than to the rest of the Church.

8. Equal reverence is due to all canonical scriptures, and to all the names of God ; there is, therefore, no reason why the people should stand at the reading of the Gospel, or bow at the name of Jesus.

9. It is as lawful to sit at the Lord's table, as to kneel or stand.

10. The Lord's Supper ought not to be administered in private, nor should baptism be administered by women, or lay persons.

11. The sign of the cross in baptism is superstitious.

12. It is reasonable and proper, that the parent should offer his own child to baptism, making a confession of that faith he intends to educate it in, without being obliged to answer, in the child's name, "I WILL," "I WILL NOT," "I BELIEVE," and so on.

13. In giving names to children, it is convenient to avoid paganism, as well as the names and offices of Christ, angels, &c.

14. The present mode of marriage is papistical, and, in these times, intolerable.

15. The observation of Lent, and fasting at particular times, are superstitious.

16. The observation of saints'-day festivals is unlawful.

17. In ordaining of ministers, the pronouncing those words, "Receive thou the Holy Ghost," is both ridiculous and wicked.

I do not dispute the lawfulness of a form of prayer, provided due liberty be given to the minister to exercise his own judgment on this subject. But who will sanction the superstitious observance of saints'-days, fast-days, church festivals, and church holidays; the chanting of psalms, and all the paraphernalia of cathedral worship; the sign of the cross in baptism, the baptism of midwives, the use of godfathers and

godmothers to the exclusion of parents from being securities for the education of their children; bowing only at the name of Jesus, and not at that of Christ; the symbol of the ring in marriage, the unholy lives of ministers and bishops, the unscriptural mode of ordaining libertines to the ministry; the system of pluralists, non-residents, tithes, lay patrons, &c. &c. ? These are all the filaments of popery and priestcraft. It should be, and it is, the duty of every Christian man and woman to endeavour to trace the origin of all these abuses, and seek the best mode for their annihilation.

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, not as lords over God’s heritage.” 1 Peter v. 2, 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts xiv. 23.

A subscription to any liturgy, human creeds, or articles, is, however, a grievance; for it is next to impossible to frame many propositions in human language, to which a country or nation can give their hearty concurrence. Some may agree to the doctrines, but object to the words or phrases; others, who admit the chief doctrines of the gospel, may question the more abstruse points of speculation. Good and illustrious men may entertain different views of a subject; and to require subscription to human inventions, may disturb peace of conscience, while it proves no barrier to the igno-

rant and unprincipled. If the fundamental articles of our faith were drawn up in the language of holy scripture, or if those who were appointed to examine into the learning and other qualifications of ministers, were to be judges of their confessions of faith, it would answer a better purpose than subscription to human creeds and articles ; for of what advantage is uniformity in profession without an agreement in principle ?

There is no need that I give further proofs of the necessity of a Reformed Church, or of a proper form of discipline. The fact, that numbers are admitted ministers of the Church of England, whose lives and conversation are infamous, stare us daily in the face. Cant, infidelity, ignorance, and hypocrisy, fill the greater number of our pulpits ; and yet these are the men tolerated by the bishops, while the people are perishing for lack of knowledge.

Let the people, who have hitherto been regarded as members of this establishment, but who, till now, have omitted examining her claims, withdraw immediately from her communion, and no longer be the dupes of corrupt priests and despots. Let every man and woman explode papistical folly and tyranny. Let them unite to enjoy liberty of conscience, and support that Church Reform which is conducive to general spiritual health. I wish to see a Reformation of the Church of England made as perfect as human ingenuity and religion can render it ;

but I would effect this reform without injuring the person of the most obnoxious individual who now supports the tyranny and corruptions of the church. I would recommend to men in power, measures of conciliation. Let them come among us with *healing* in their wings. Let them concede, with cheerfulness, whatever cannot be denied without straining the sense of scripture. Let them shew themselves real friends to true religion and man. This will remove all grievances, satisfy all demands, and turn the spirit of despotism to the spirit of Christian philanthropy.

CHAP. XXXII.

THE PEACE AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

BISHOP STILLINGFLEET, in his "*Irenicum*," goes to prove, that no form of church government is of divine right, and that the church has no power to impose things indifferent. The design of our Saviour was to ease men of their former burdens, and not to lay on more; the duties he required were no other but such as were necessary, just, and reasonable. He that came to take away the insupportable yoke of Jewish ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the necks of his disciples with another instead of it; and it would be strange should the church require more than Christ himself did, and make other conditions of her communion than our Saviour did of discipleship. What possible reason can be given why such things as are sufficient for eternal salvation should not be sufficient for communion with the church? And certainly those things are sufficient for that, which are laid down as the necessary duties of Christianity by our Lord and

Saviour in his word. What ground can there be why Christians should not stand upon the same terms now, that they did in the time of Christ and his apostles? Was not religion sufficiently guarded and fenced in then? Was there ever more true and cordial reverence in the worship of God? What charter hath Christ given the church, to bind men up to more than himself has done; or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day, for keeping such out from communion with his church, to whom he will vouchsafe not only a crown of glory, but it may be *aureolæ*, too, if there be any such thing then?

The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was, only to teach what Christ had commanded them. There is not the least intimation of any power being given to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to, by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God. It is not whether the things commanded and required be lawful or not;—it is not whether indifferences may be determined or no;—it is not how far Christians are bound to submit to a restraint of their Christian liberty, which I now inquire after: but whether they consult the church's peace and unity, who suspend it upon such things. We never read of the apostles making laws but of things necessary, as in Acts xv. 19. It was not

enough with them, that the things would be necessary when they had required them ; but they looked upon an antecedent necessity, either absolutely or for the present state, which was the only ground of their imposing these commands upon the Gentile Christians. But the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matters of law, to which all parties should conform. All that the apostles required as to this, was mutual forbearance and condescension towards each other in them. The apostles valued not *indifferences* at all ; and those things they accounted as *such*, which were of no concernment to their salvation. And what reason is there why men should be tied up so strictly to such things, which they may do or let alone, and yet be very good Christians ? Without all controversy, the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, has been by adding other conditions of church communion than Christ has done. Would there be ever the less peace and unity in a church, if a diversity were allowed as to practices supposed indifferent ?—Yea, there would be so much more, as there was a mutual forbearance and condescension as to such things. The unity of the church is an unity of love and affection, and not a bare uniformity of practice and opinion. There is nothing in the primitive church more deserving our imitation than the admirable temper, moderation, and

condescension which was used in it towards its members. It was never thought worth the while to make any standing laws for rites and customs that had no other original but tradition, much less to suspend men from her communion for not observing them.

My proposals, then, are, with the bishop—That nothing be imposed on the Reformed English Church, as necessary, but what is clearly revealed in the word of God.

That nothing be required or determined, but what is sufficiently known to be indifferent in its own nature.

That whatever is thus determined be in order only to a due performance of what is in general required in the word of God, and not to be looked upon as any part of divine worship or service.

That no sanctions be made, nor mulcts nor penalties be inflicted, on men for their opinions.

That religion be not clogged with ceremonies ; for when they are multiplied too much, though lawful, they eat out the heart, life, and vigour of Christianity.

I close by entreating every individual who is anxious to walk in the path of truth, that he continually prays for the direction of the Holy Spirit, that he values his Bible, that he daily reads it, and searches himself for those treasures of wisdom and knowledge which it contains ; and that he be ever

jealous of trusting his temporal and eternal happiness to the judgment and conduct of others, who, for the most part, from imbibed prejudices or evil designs, represent the most ridiculous, chimerical, absurd, and contradictory opinions to be fundamental articles of the Christian faith.

THE END.

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