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THEOLOGICAL WORKS

IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

THE
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF THE REV.

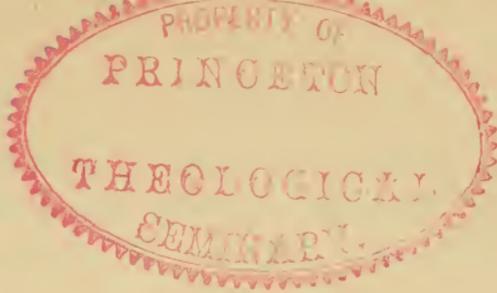
JOHN HOWARD HINTON, M.A.

VOLUME VII.

ECCLESIASTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PIECES.

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—
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PREFACE.

I HAVE been induced to add a Volume to my original scheme, which comprehended but six, because, as the work drew near completion, I found that a considerable portion of my theological writings would not be included in it. I have not now, indeed, swept my portfolio entirely clean of its contents. There are still scattered about sundry Tracts, Circular Letters, Magazine Papers, and Reviews, for which even a seventh Volume does not find room. I have not been ambitious, however, of reprinting every fragment which my pen has produced, and, for the purpose of the present Volume, I have used my best judgment in selecting the materials which I deemed to be of most permanent interest. I trust it will be not less acceptable to my subscribers than the former have been.

The work which I now bring to a conclusion has naturally been to me, not only agreeable, but interesting—I may sincerely say, deeply and devoutly interesting. I am pleased to have been permitted by Divine Providence, and to have been enabled by the kindness of my friends, to revise with my own hand, and to republish in a collected form, my Theological writings dispersed through nearly half a century. I send them

forth to the public in the *hope*—I could almost say, in the *belief*—that they have been, and will yet be, instrumental to the edification of my brethren, and conducive to the glory of God. May both accept them kindly at my hands!

October 16th, 1865.

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ECCLESIASTICAL PIECES.



THE QUESTION
OF
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS
CONSIDERED.

NOTE.

EARLY in the year 1838, the Christian Influence Society—a Society then recently formed in London, and, I believe, but of ephemeral existence—engaged the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., of Edinburgh, to deliver a course of four Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches. The delivery of these Lectures, as was due both to the importance of the subject, the character of the lecturer, and the distinguished patronage under which he appeared, attracted considerable attention, and it was thought right that an answer of equal publicity should be made to them. On the suggestion of some valued friends I undertook this duty, and delivered, at Devonshire Square Chapel, Bishopsgate Street, three Lectures: the first on May 16th, the second on May 30th, and the third on June 14th, 1838. They were reported in the *Penny Pulpit*, and are here given as revised from that publication.

LECTURE I.

IF I have taken the occasion afforded by the recent Lectures of Dr. Chalmers for delivering the present course, it is undoubtedly not through fear of the effect, either of discussion in general, or of this discussion in particular. I am rather glad that the question of National Religious Establishments should be discussed in any and every form; and this for two reasons—partly because I have *not* the spirit of a partisan, but shall rejoice in the progress of truth whatever be the fate of the company with which I am associated—and partly because I *have* the spirit of a partisan, and entertain a conviction that of the beneficial fruits of such discussions we shall have (to use the words of a right reverend

prelate on a recent occasion) “the lion’s share.” We hail the agitation of this question, therefore, in every quarter, and nowhere more than in those elevated regions in which it has now for the first time been mooted, and the inhabitants of which have in no very remarkable degree had their senses hitherto exercised to “discern between good and evil.”

Our opponents having thus spoken, and spoken so loud, it is, of course, both justifiable and imperative on us to speak also. After the appeal already made to the public ear, no complaint can be sustained against us if we do what we can to engage still further attention to the subject. Whatever wrong may attach to the aggressive party in this case does not lie at *our* door ; we are only making our defence.

Now it is worth while to mark at the outset the new position of the question under review. Time was when the propriety—the right principle—of National Establishments of religion was a thing taken for granted, as admitting of no question, or asserted dogmatically, as though every questioner of it was to be borne down by the weight of great names and high authority. But the case *now* assumes a different aspect. The principle of National Religious Establishments is not now, it seems, assumed as incontrovertible ; nor is the controversy expected to be settled by dogmatical assertion and the weight of names. Here is an appeal—not by the adversaries of religious Establishments now (they have made it long ago), but, at last, by *the friends* of religious Establishments here is an appeal made *to the popular mind*. For the first time in the history of the world, that I know of, there have been popular Lectures on behalf of the principle of National Religious Establishments.

There is something very instructive in this. It tells us that the endeavours we have been making to awaken the popular mind on this subject have not been made in vain. There never would have been an appeal to the mind of the people in behalf of the principle of a National Religious Establishment, if it were not that there was in the mind of the people gaining ground a pretty strong feeling against it. We have done our work, it seems, in some measure ; we have not laboured in vain ; and the fact now comes out unquestionably, that the popular mind has been wrought on to such an extent as to impede the exercise of authority in such matters.

We learn, too, from this fact, that even authority—Church

and State authority combined—like Juggernaut's car upon some occasions, sticks fast, and that they can venture no further in opposition to the temper of the public mind. They must try to mollify it; they must try to diminish the asperity of the feeling against National Religious Establishments, by convincing if they can, and by persuading if they cannot convince. The feeling of the nation at large is now allowed to be the standard to which the appeal must be made. Public opinion is to be even of this question the final umpire.

We say "Hear! hear!" to this concession. It ought to be so; we have been endeavouring to effect that it should be so, and our adversaries now tell us that it shall be so. We are glad to have dragged our opponents to this field.

The first effort they make in it is certainly a very determined one. It must have required no little resolution—if it did not rather indicate some huge perplexity—to select as an advocate for religious Establishments in England a member of a church in whose nostrils prelacy (that is to say, the English Establishment) is abhorred, and a divine whom his admiring patrons, for want of apostolic ordination, could not admit into their pulpits. Nor can it have been without sorrowful misgivings of their wisdom, if without keen smarting for their folly, that they have listened to a defence of religious Establishments founded on principles they reject, and fortified by the renunciation of almost all they revere. *They* have maintained the immeasurable superiority of episcopacy over every other form of ecclesiastical polity, and the divine right of its territorial establishment; Dr. Chalmers assures them that it is only one of half a score sects of such nearly equal value, that any one of them might indifferently have been chosen for the State Establishment. *They* have prided themselves upon the fancied possession of a mysterious power derived by unbroken succession from the apostles—a plea which their lauded champion coolly advises them to abandon. *They* have spoken vehemently of the sin of schism, and in terms which Dr. Chalmers affirms fail alike of his sympathy and his comprehension. And these are the things which the friends of the Church of England have caused to be uttered, and which reverends and right reverends, nobles and princes, have heard in the high places of her metropolis!

But Dr. Chalmers holds the *principle* of an Establishment, we are told, and this he has come to defend. It is well. The

principle of Establishments has been attacked ; and here is an acknowledgment that it is in no little peril, since it needs a defence. Clearly this matter requires energy. It is of great importance to *them*; for the fate of Establishments is suspended on the decision, since no idea can be entertained that, when the public shall be generally convinced of the impropriety of religious Establishments, they will long stand. It is of no less importance to *us*; for there is at stake in it the cause of "pure and undefiled religion," on which Establishments are powerfully acting for good or for ill—and, as we think, *for ill*. There is no greater obstacle, in our opinion, to the spread of real religion than the existence of these Establishments ; there could be no greater facility afforded to the increase of real religion than the removal of this obstruction. We, therefore, without its being at all imagined that we contend for the emoluments or the honours, have to say that we strive, as we think, for God—for truth—for the welfare of mankind. We do not say that they are too earnest ; nor ought we to be less earnest than they.

We shall endeavour not to forget, however, that the question of National Religious Establishments is a question of a sacred character. Not that all who take sides on it are pious—manifestly not ; partisans on either side of this question are not all of them men of God ; but some are so—the piety of some is undoubted. To us it is not a question of State-craft, cupidity, or ambition, but a question between Christian brethren. We own them so from whom we differ. We shall neither repeat nor retaliate the harsh and unwarrantable epithets of our Scottish antagonist, but shall endeavour to speak in the spirit of love which we declare towards "all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

As it is Dr. Chalmers's avowed design to vindicate the principle of Establishments, and as it is to be supposed that he has put the subject in the newest and most approved light, it will be proper, though without confining ourselves to his line of argument (which in truth is very partial), to pay some attention to his mode of treating the question.

He very singularly begins by removing an objection which has no manner of relation to his theme. He tells us of "certain religionists" who so hold the doctrine of the Spirit's influence as to supersede the use of means. It is strange if he does not know that the religionists by whom this pre-

posterous notion is held constitute a mere fraction of the Dissenting body, and are as numerous, probably, in the Church as out of it. But, if it were held by us all, what then? It is an argument against exertion in general, but it is none against an Establishment in particular; nor has it ever been used as such, except in the visions of this imaginative divine. We are obliged to him for tearing the flimsy sophism to pieces—which we had often done before him; but he proves nothing by all this in favour of Establishments, unless he can show (which he cannot show) that they are the only mode of exertion for the support of religion.

He then gives us his definition—a very important thing in this as in all controversies, and concerning which he shows a remarkable wariness. His words are these (in the ninth page of his “Lectures”) —“We should assume, then, as the basis of our definition for a religious Establishment, or as the essential property by which to specify and characterize it—*a sure legal provision for the expense of its ministrations.*” And a little lower down—“It is this which forms the essence of an Establishment, and as such must be singled out from among all the other accessories wherewith it may happen to be variegated.”

“*A sure legal provision for the expense of its ministrations!*” There is surely a great defect in this definition. A legal provision is *not* the whole of a national Establishment. There is at least one other element vital and essential; there must be not only national revenue, but national authority, in a National Religious Establishment.

Now of this national authority (which seems to have haunted Dr. Chalmers like a phantom, and which he evidently designs and strives hard to escape, and to steer clear of as a rock on which he would have dreaded shipwreck), we must maintain that it does belong essentially to the idea of a National Religious Establishment—a claim for the authority of the State to be exercised in the religious affairs of the nation, constituting what Dr. Chalmers scornfully denounces as a “lordship over the creed and the conscience.”

Now in proof that, in the idea of a National Religious Establishment, there is fairly and essentially included this element—namely, national authority exercised with reference to the religion of the nation—we adduce, first, the evident theory of all such institutions. For a sovereign or legislature

to institute a National Establishment of a certain religion, is not merely to pay some persons to teach it, but to require other persons to be taught—to require them to submit to the profession of it—to ordain that the nation shall be of that religion. Suppose, for example, that a Mahometan sovereign, having obtained the throne of a country, constitutes a national Establishment of the Mahometan religion; is that anything short of ordaining that the Mahometan religion shall be the religion of the country? This is the theory of Establishments taken up and developed by Hooker (a celebrated writer whom I need no more than name) in his “Ecclesiastical Polity,” who lays it down that, in a National Establishment of religion, every person in the nation is a member of the national church by virtue of his being a member of the nation itself—that the nation is the church, and the church is the nation. And according to the theory of the English national church, we are as much members of the national church, though Dissenters, as the church-people themselves; practically there is an anomaly, but the principle—the theory—is this; and it is by virtue of the theory that we are still belonging to the national church that we are caught hold of to pay church-rates, and so forth. The power that creates such an institution must govern it. Say that a sovereign gives to his people the right of choosing their own ministers, it is his authority that gives them the right, and they hold that religious privilege under his authority. Say that he gives to the ministers the power to choose their own creed, still it is his authority that permits them to choose. There is no framing the theory of a National Establishment, as far as I can see, excluding the idea of authority in religious matters from it.

Then, in the second place, in proof of the same point we cite obvious facts. Look at all such Establishments that are in existence. Take the Church of England. That is a National Religious Establishment, and the authority of the legislature and the sovereign are not things unheard of in it. The head of the Church of England is the sovereign—at the present time the Queen—who is declared, in legal phrase well known, to be “in all matters and causes ecclesiastical supreme.” Not a Bishop can be chosen till she sends her permission to the Chapter to choose one; nor can a Bishop be chosen other than the reverend divine she is pleased to nominate. The

articles of the Church of England and the Book of Common Prayer were not brought into use, nor made of any authority at all, till they had passed through the legislature; they are "established" by Act of Parliament. And so throughout the whole concern. And in this respect the Church of England is no exception to the general rule. Look at the Church in Holland, in France, or wherever else you will; wherever there is a National Establishment of religion, there is palpably, in immense masses and to minute details, the exercise of authority in matters of religion.

Dr. Chalmers, indeed, in a very extraordinary passage, claims the Church of Scotland as an exception to this rule; and, if we wanted to show the good man's incapacity, both for argument and for the statement of facts which must be quite palpable to himself, this passage would be sufficient to do it. He gives us, in the opening of his second Lecture, a long story about a divine of Maryland who had taken fire at the notion of Church and State; and the Doctor very coaxingly says, "Would not you like an endowment yourself?" "O! yes." "And would not you like to have the whole state of Maryland covered with endowed churches of your denomination?" "O! yes, delighted"—says the man. "Well, this is all I mean by a National Religious Establishment." We shall talk more about that by and by: but this man "failed" (says he) "in making the requisite distinction between the act of a government in giving food and raiment to ministers, and the act of a government in assuming a lordship over the creed and the consciences of ministers." And then he gives a passage from one of his old sermons (for so it is quoted—"vol. ii., Sermon 15, uniform edition"), in which he proclaims most marvellously the independence of the Church of Scotland. "There is to each of its members" (says he), "a free and independent voice from within, and from without there is no power or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical;" and then he quotes a celebrated saying of my Lord Chatham, concerning the glory of every man's house that lives in England, that it is "his castle;" and adds—"Not that it is surrounded with walls and battlements; it may be a straw-built shed, every wind of heaven may whistle round it, every element of heaven may enter it; but the king cannot, the king dare not." A pretty notion! when not a meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland can be held without the Royal

Commissioner presiding over it. "And from without" (he says), "there is no power or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical." That is well said. Why, the state and distribution of church patronage in Scotland is so outrageously corrupt and mischievous, that the General Assembly have passed an act to render it somewhat more decorous and conducive to the general good of the parishes; the patrons of the livings, aggrieved by this, have gone to the civil court in Scotland, and the civil court has decided that the General Assembly has no power to make such an act at all, even to regulate the distribution of their own patronage; and, of the thirteen judges, eight have pronounced an opinion that the Church of Scotland is nothing but the creature of the State, and that the sovereign is as truly the head of that church as the sovereign is also the head of the Church of England. I can only suppose that Dr. Chalmers wrote and printed this sermon before this case in the parish of Auchterarder (for that is the place) had occurred; but then, after it had occurred, it was hardly honest of him—at least it was rather forgetful—to reprint it.

But, in further proof of this (that there is an exercise of authority involved in national Establishments of religion), I refer to the fact that State authority in religious matters is now asserted and clung to by the advocates generally of religious Establishments. The exceptions are few—very few. There are a few church-people who do wish that there were no authority of the State exercised in religious matters; but the reasons of most of these are very obvious—they find that it thwarts them in some or other of their designs. Thus we have your conservative church-people, who are very angry indeed, and very much grieved, that there should be any manner of State authority exercised in the church while there is a Liberal ministry in office, but who would hug their chains again if the Tories should come into power; and you have others, very noble and evangelical men, who want to do all the good they can, and they are thwarted in their endeavours, and so they come to feel that State authority in the church is not a very good thing. But, generally, the advocates of religious Establishments even yet contend for, and cling to, the exercise of State authority in matters of religion. Pamphlets are even now written, enforcing the subjection of the subjects of the realm to the established religion upon the

ground of the duty of civil obedience, or obedience to civil rulers. I believe Dr. Brown, in Scotland, has recently, in the "Voluntary" controversy there, written a pamphlet on that principle, enforcing the duty of subjection to the religious Establishment by the duty of obedience to civil rulers. On the same ground we all know it is that Dissenters have so often been charged in a mass with disloyalty. We have had the broad principle laid down, that, if a man be a Dissenter, he cannot be a good subject—that, if he be an alien from the Church, he must be a traitor to the State—that Church and State are one, and, if you do not love the church, you do not love the king. That has been thrown in our teeth many a time. And this is the very feeling of the advocates of church Establishments at this time. They are not, as a body, becoming sick of this argument, or wishing to renounce it; but they cling to it, and are fighting for it.

State authority in matters of religion, therefore, *is* an element of national churches.

Now Dr. Chalmers's definition of National Religious Establishments not including this element, it is altogether defective, and his argument is utterly void. It matters not what he has said; he cannot have said a single word to the purpose, through the entire failure of his definition of a National Religious Establishment.

Dr. Chalmers has not omitted this element inadvertently, or unintentionally; the shrewd Scotchman knew well what he was about. "The thing we deprecate" (he represents his American as saying), "is the authority of the civil magistrate in matters of religion; but we should be thankful to him, or to any one else, for giving us (what he termed) an organized provision for a clergy. Now," says Dr. Chalmers, "this organized provision is truly all that we contend for." So that, with his eyes open, he is keeping clear of this question of State authority in matters of religion.

It is not, then, a National Religious Establishment that the Doctor pleads for. He is not an advocate for this, but wants a thing of his own sort—a Utopian affair, utterly unlike anything that ever did exist in the world, or that ever can exist; for never will there be, or can there be, an immense body of lucratively paid clergymen that shall be exempt from the authority of the State that pays them.

It is not a National Religious Establishment that he pleads

for ; yet he professes to vindicate National Religious Establishments. How strangely must his claim of independency have sounded in the ears of such an audience ! Yet they applauded him. Were they, then, infatuated by his eloquence ? Or are the senses of noblemen and princes so little exercised in the judgment between good and evil that they really did not see the nature of his statement ? Or is there growing up in high quarters a wish for the separation of Church and State ? And are bishops, and nobles, and royal princes, and uncles of the sovereign, forming a conspiracy to pluck from the British crown the jewel of ecclesiastical supremacy ?

Let it be well understood that in this principle we agree with Dr. Chalmers. Independent the Church of Scotland, and every church, ought to be. This is *our* principle ; but, in holding it, the Doctor abandons the entire cause of National Religious Establishments.

In this path, however, other advocates of the system will not follow him. We shall still hear of the claim, though *he* has renounced it ; and it will be as well for us to grapple with those who occupy this ground, before we proceed further in considering the question of expediency as argued by the Doctor.

For this purpose we may take the language of the present Chancellor of the diocese of Winchester—the reverend (and, for ought I know, by virtue of his office the venerable) Dr. Dealtry ; and I take it in the form of a tract circulated by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, entitled “ Religious Establishments tried by the Word of God,” being Tract No. 497. I take it in this form because, I suppose, as it circulates among the people at large, the argument is put in as correct and compact a form as possible. At page 9 are these words :—

“ The legislature of every country is assuredly bound to consult in all things the public welfare. It may doubtless fail in the proper discharge of its functions, but the obligation itself is one which, as a government, it is not at liberty to cast off. Is religion of importance to society ? No Christian will assert the contrary. For what reason, then, is the line to be drawn so broadly between matters of a purely civil and those of a religious nature, that on the one side of the line the authorities of the State are to expatiate in perfect liberty, but are on no account to do good by passing over to the other ?—to be allowed the privilege of enacting wholesome laws for the regulation of secular concerns, but to be prohibited from taking any measure for diffusing that sacred knowledge, and extending those heavenly principles,

which, even as it respects the laws themselves, can alone secure order and obedience?"

Here is the pith of this argument as put by Dr. Dealtry. In short, it is this—The legislature of every country is bound to consult in all things the public welfare; religion is for the public welfare of a country; and therefore the legislature of every country is bound to take care of religion.

There is candour in putting the proposition thus generally—in speaking of the legislature “of every country” as bound to do this. Sometimes we hear of the obligation of *pious* princes and statesmen. The question, however, relates to the obligation of princes and legislators as such, inasmuch as it is out of their position as rulers that the alleged right and duty arise; these must pertain to all rulers or to none. So that the only fair form in which the question can be put is this—Whether the right and obligation of attending to the religion of a nation belong to rulers as such, and to all rulers. So Dr. Dealtry has had the candour to put it: “The legislature of *every country* is assuredly bound to consult in all things the public welfare.”

This first sentence contains an important phrase—“*in all things* ;” “the legislature of every country is assuredly bound to consult *in all things* the public welfare.” This we deny. We limit this phrase; “the legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare in all things” *civil*, but in no other things. It could not be supposed that we should admit in the first place that “the legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare in all things,” and then think that afterwards we could make an exception of religion. It is here we make our exception, where Dr. Dealtry seems little to have anticipated it. “The legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare” in all matters civil, but not in matters religious.

“Now,” says Dr. Dealtry, “for what reason is this line drawn so broadly between matters civil and matters religious?” We will tell him.

First, because religious matters are wholly beyond the just scope and design of human governments. There were, indeed, times when it was maintained as an incontrovertible proposition that kings had “a divine right” to reign; and, when it was admitted that kings had their right to reign direct from God, it might be pretended, perhaps, that that right

divine extended to religious, as well as to other matters. But I do not know that there are any politicians who hold the *jus divinum*,

“The right divine of kings to govern wrong,”

in this day. Now the theory of government, apart from the exploded notion of the divine right of kings, excludes religious matters. Government is a system of restriction on our natural rights; that is to say, under a government our natural rights are limited. Our right to the soil, our right to food, and various other rights, as natural rights are all equal; but rights of property are limitations upon the rights of nature: and government is altogether a system of restriction upon our natural rights, to which every man submits, and surrenders a portion of his own natural rights for the purpose of securing the rest. The government is conceived of as saying, You all agree to surrender each a portion of your natural rights, and to bow your necks to a general but useful restriction; and the State, or the government, will feel itself bound to secure you all in the possession of the remainder of your rights, or that portion which you do not resign. Government is thus a system of restriction upon our natural rights, every individual giving up a part for the sake of securing the rest. But it is only our *civil* rights a portion of which we thus surrender. None of us mean to surrender any portion of our moral or our religious rights into the hands of any person whatsoever. None of us are willing to make any such sacrifice. We might not, if we would; we could not, if we would. God does not permit it; our highest interest would not permit it; our obligation to God would not permit it; nor could it be carried out, even if we were to try it. Nor has the State anything to give us in return for such a sacrifice, if we were to make it. The government, therefore, in this respect receiving no trust, is under no obligation to exercise care. According to the theory of government, its whole care is to be confined to the civil welfare of the community.

We draw this broad line of distinction between civil and religious matters, secondly, because religious matters are practically beyond the reach of human governments. Religion is essentially a matter of opinion—opinions issuing in conduct—but not of conduct apart from opinions. Religion

is essentially a decision of the judgment; and, as such, it cannot be reached by the machinery of human governments. They do not attempt to reach any other matter of opinion; no government passes a law that all philosophers shall be Baconians, or that all logicians shall be Aristotelians; it would be preposterous, manifestly, that they should. And it is quite as preposterous to pass any law that all the subjects of a nation shall be either Moslems, or Christians, or Buddhists. The matter cannot be reached; and the actual effect of all such enactments is, not the production of opinion, but the production of conformity. They touch the outward conduct; they say, "You must go to church," and they may contrive to make you go; but when they say, "You must entertain such and such views of God, and Christ, and eternity," they can make no hand at it at all; they cannot touch it.

We draw this broad line between things civil and things religious, thirdly, because the processes of human legislation are, in religious matters, utterly inapplicable and mischievous. Laws are worth nothing which have no sanction. There are, accordingly, rewards and punishments attached to all human laws. But what can be made of the attaching of human rewards and penalties, or human sanctions, to religious virtue or infidelity? Propose a bishopric to a man for becoming a Christian, or enact a dungeon for a man for being an atheist. Abhorred appeal to the understanding and conscience of a man! Abhorred appeal! bringing into operation the worst motives, and tending to make of a nation nothing but a nation of hypocrites. And there are no sanctions at the disposal of human governments that are any way applicable to the case, or that can work otherwise than with utter mischief.

We draw this line between things civil and religious, fourthly, because in religious matters the authority of God is paramount and exclusive. To no other being are we responsible for our conduct in religious matters; to no other are we bound to listen. For human authority to interfere, therefore, is to supersede his authority—which man ought not to do, and which God will not permit. We owe no man any reason why we entertain our religious views, or make our religious determinations; we are bound to render no man an account, nor to attach authority to the voice of any man

in that which he teaches. We are entitled to ask, "What saith the Lord?" and to maintain our incredulity and hold ourselves aloof, till we hear it answered, "Thus saith the Lord." No man has any business to demand of me of what religion I am; and, if by any means he can guess and find out of what religion I am, he has no business either to reward or to punish me for it. There is no just dominion over conscience but God's dominion; everything that assumes it in any measure is essentially, and of necessity, a tyranny.

We draw this line of distinction between matters civil and religious, fifthly, because our decision in religious matters involves a responsibility which the State cannot assume. If the government dictate my religion, it ought to secure me against the consequences of a wrong choice. I have a soul to be saved; and, if the government tell me, We have established a clergyman, and we have required you to be of a certain religion, I ask in reply, Will you, or the clergyman, be responsible for the safety of my soul; and, if I am to go to hell at last, will you go in my stead? If you will not, then I say, Hold your tongue; let me take care of my own soul, and, if I perish, be responsible for my own condition—as I must be. You will recollect, perhaps, that on certain occasions the church has put out this very notion. In order to make people quiet in their parishes, the clergy have been found saying, "Why should you be careful about your soul? Keep to your church, and trust to us; we will take care of your soul." This has been said in as many words. Now this pretension is a most awful and horrible pretension; but it is involved of necessity in the constitution of a National Religious Establishment. And, seeing that such responsibility cannot in point of fact be assumed—that no State, and no clergyman, and no set of clergymen, can be responsible, or secure me against the consequences of a wrong choice in religion—they ought not to attempt to dictate to me what kind of religion I should adopt, or reject.

And we draw this line of distinction between civil and religious matters, sixthly, because, if authority in religious matters be allowed to governments, it sanctions the establishment of all false religions. Governors, if they ought to act at all, ought to act honestly. It is of no use to say that a government ought to establish *Christianity*. Ought a government to establish Christianity which believes that

Mahometanism is the true religion? Such a government, I should suppose, ought to establish, if any religion, the Mahometan religion. Then see what we should have, if such was to be the case over the whole earth. Here are "lords many and gods many," and they are all of them taking this province of deciding on the religion of their subjects; the Sultan commands his people to be Mahometans, and the Emperor of China commands his to be of the religion of Confucius; and of the rulers in every place each is commanding his subjects to be of this and that religion, establishing a thousand false religions, while there may be a governor or two that establish the true. And this is sanctioned by the principle that governors have a right and a duty to care for the religion of their subjects. You are not entitled to say to them, "All you governors and rulers that are establishing false religions are doing wrong;" they are all fulfilling their duty, carrying out the principle laid down by the Chancellor of the diocese of Winchester as the principle of National Religious Establishments.

Such are our reasons for drawing the line broadly between civil and religious matters.

What are Dr. Dealtry's reasons for obliterating it? Why would he say there should be no such line? These are his reasons.

First, the necessity of oaths in civil proceedings. This is a strange notion; but it really is the main pith of his argument, and therefore it is necessary to take some notice of it.

"It is difficult to imagine," says Dr. Dealtry, "that those who exclude the magistrate from all concern between man and his Maker, and require him to abstain entirely from interference in religion, can have well considered the length to which that principle will carry them. Without something, for instance, in the nature of an oath—some appeal to Almighty God as to One who knows the truth, and will punish falsehood—no man could have the security of a moment either for property or for life, and the framework of society would be dissolved. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, with a view to the welfare of a nation, that the sanctity of an oath should be respected; and hence that all classes of subjects, from the highest to the lowest, should have a just sense of their accountableness to God."

And therefore there should be an Establishment of religion, with about five millions a year and near 20,000 clergymen, to teach people the sanctity of an oath! An expensive apparatus for the quantity of security for truth that oaths

give us. Does Dr. Dealtry, then, think that oaths are a security for truth? There are some gentlemen of the law who could tell him a very contrary tale. Is he prepared to say that there is no truth in civil transactions but where there are oaths? Or does he believe that all who swear oaths have a just sense of their accountableness to God therein? Or does he think that this sense of accountableness to God is practically instilled into the population by a national Establishment of religion? Or what would be done by a Pagan Establishment—because it is not only an Establishment of Christianity that we talk of, but his argument must apply to an Establishment of idolatry; and would he insist upon having an Establishment of idolatry in order that people might learn the sanctity of oaths for the security of civil property?

His second argument is this—the duty of parents in relation to their children. He thus writes:—

“It was doubtless from the beginning the duty of every master of a family to bring up his children, and to train his household, in the fear of the Lord.”

And from this he goes on to argue that a nation is but a large family, and that what is the duty of a parent in a family is equally the duty of a king upon his throne. But admitting this—that it is the duty of all parents to train up their family in the fear of the Lord, there is no exercise of authority in religious matters in this. This is a mere matter of instruction. The question is whether parents have a right to *dictate* the religion of their children, as the State claims to dictate the religion of its subjects. We say, No; parents have only to put their children into the best position for judging for themselves, and then to persuade them to what they believe to be the truth. To talk of *Christian* parents, and to say it is their duty to dictate to their children, seems very pleasant because they would dictate the true religion; but we are speaking of the right of parents universally, and if we allow Pagan parents the right to dictate to their children, what then? We know, on the very contrary, that our missionaries go forth complaining of such a dictation, and calling for a free exercise of the judgment of the children. And besides, all attempts at authority in religious matters on the part of parents would be just as

futile, as unrighteous, and as open to objection, as on the part of kings.

Dr. Dealtry's third argument is the Jewish national Establishment.

"Here," says he, speaking of the Jewish National Establishment, "was a religious Establishment most intimately connected, and even incorporated, with the State; and, unless it can be shown that the adoption of such a system under the new dispensation contradicts some positive command, or is opposed to some moral principle, the question has been here settled by Jehovah himself."

Now this is a very instructive reference, and shows what kind of institution the friends of Establishments hanker after, and how much authority they would like. This Jewish Establishment exercised a cruel and tremendous authority, and it is an Establishment like that, it seems, after all, if they could get it, that our churchmen would be fond of. But, even if this were a *church* Establishment, we say it was God's own doing. Dr. Dealtry asks triumphantly, "Did the Almighty forbid the civil authorities to interfere with his church?" To be sure he did; he smote Uzzah for putting his finger upon the ark, and he limited the civil authority in all cases by his own express directions. For the interference of civil authorities in religious matters the Jewish economy presents no manner of pretence. God did it all. God does nothing of the kind now; if he did, we would not utter a word, or cherish a feeling, of resistance; but there is no alternative in religious matters between a theocracy and a tyranny, if there be authority exercised at all.

We deny, however, that the Jewish Establishment was a *religious* Establishment in any sense. It was a typical Establishment, and therefore necessarily a secular one. You cannot possibly make spiritual things to be the types of spiritual things; nothing but carnal things can become types of spiritual things; and, as everybody admits that the Jewish system was a system of types, so of necessity it was a system of temporal things, a system of shadows and not of substances. This whole subject has been treated admirably and conclusively by a Scotchman of great name, one of the Erskines, in his "Three Dissertations;" one of them is on the character of the Jewish economy, and he shows that it was a secular, and not a spiritual, system. There were no

places of worship except the one at Jerusalem, if worship it was—there were no institutions of instruction—there was no use of the Sabbath day for teaching the people, or for edification—no synagogues throughout the land until just before the time of Jesus Christ, and not of God's appointment nor Mosaic institution—and there were no religious results from either obedience or disobedience to the Jewish law. All that there was of religion was to be found in the exercise of the individual's mind upon the typical character and spiritual import of the Jewish ordinances, and the oracles of truth in their possession. The Jewish Establishment, therefore, was (as we affirm) not a religious Establishment at all. It affords no example of one. The whole argument founded upon this fails.

And more than this, the whole subject of National Religious Establishments is thus left to be treated anew by Christ and his apostles; and hence there is no force in Dr. Dealtry's chief argument, that reference to it by them was unnecessary. For, when we ask, What have Christ and his apostles said about religious Establishments? what we are told in answer is this, "Why should they dwell upon the duties of Christian rulers when there were no Christian rulers in existence, and especially when the obligations of pious princes were so clearly to be seen in the Old Testament? There was no need for our Lord to refer to it; it was so manifest in the Jewish Establishment." But, if that were not a religious Establishment, then it *was* necessary that, if our Lord or his apostles had anything to say about such institutions, they should have said it (which Dr. Dealtry admits they did not do), and not have passed it over in silence.

In the last place he says, that the general Christian obligation of doing all they can for Christ and for his cause requires pious princes to establish Christianity. But now the question is not about *pious* princes; the question is whether princes *universally* have a right and duty to interfere with the religion of their subjects. This last argument can apply only to *pious* rulers; it is, therefore, quite beside the mark, the question we have being one relating to all rulers, and not merely to pious ones.

And besides this, even with pious rulers (to whom this remark may be applicable, that they should do all they can for Christ), their obligation must stop short at the limit

between power and persuasion. Men may be obliged to do all they can for Christ, but they must not do wrong for Christ; they must not transgress the proper limit and boundary of duty under the alleged force of the greatness of their obligation; the weapons that are "carnal" must not be taken up. There must be a limit observed, even by pious princes; they may persuade, but they ought not to dictate; they may set examples and use Christian influence, but they are not to become "lords over God's heritage," nor to enact laws about religion, however wholesome.

Now this is the whole of Dr. Dealtry's argument in support of his position that a legislature is entitled and required to look to the religious welfare of the community.

Thus we endeavour to make out the general principle, that human governments ought *not* to meddle with religious affairs. If we do make this out, we apply this general principle to the particular case of Christianity, and say that human governments ought not to enact laws in relation to Christianity; be they *Christian* princes and *Christian* legislators, or what else, it is no part of their duty to enact laws concerning the religion of their subjects, not even concerning Christianity. National Establishments of religion, therefore, being founded upon laws concerning religion, are utterly wrong.

This conclusion seems painful to our brethren (that Christian governments may not establish Christianity), inasmuch as they are many of them deeply concerned for the best interests of their fellow-men. An Establishment (they tell us) must do so much good. Well, we are not unconcerned about the good of the country; but, after all, this is not the first consideration. If it is wrong it may not be. We are not called upon to argue the expediency. Whatever is *right* should be done; and, if there be less good done without an Establishment than might have been done with one, the blame of that will not rest upon us, but upon that great, and holy, and gracious God who can well bear the blame, and in subordination to whose will we have refused to enact laws relating to religion.

We are willing, however, to meet the combat upon the lower ground of expediency. We will proceed to do so in the following Lecture; and, as we have seen that our shrewd Scotchman has taken care to avoid Scylla, we will then see whether he steers equally clear of Charybdis.

LECTURE II.

THE advocates of National Religious Establishments dwell largely on their *expediency*. They insist upon it that a host of endowed teachers, with territorial allotments of the population, constitute the best and easiest—nay, the only possible—way of diffusing Christianity through a nation. Hence they maintain religious Establishments to be, not only useful and important, but indispensable. They identify their “machinery” with the effective support, if not with the continued existence, of the Christian religion in the land; and, under the influence of this assumption, they suffer their imagination to generate frightful apprehensions of the designs of those who take different views, and of the ruinous consequences of our success. “We are,” to use the courteous language of our northern brother, “machine-breakers; far more mischievous, but hardly more intelligent, than the machine-breakers of Kent, the frame-breakers of Leicestershire, or the incendiaries of the northern and midland counties of England” (p. 23).

It is useless, in controversy, to affirm what will not be believed. I shall not take the trouble, therefore, of saying that, whatever may be the views of *some* agitators of this question, *we* are as warmly concerned for the support of Christianity as our opponents; and that what we want is, not to obstruct, but to forward her triumphs. The question, however, is not one of persons, but of things. And our discussion of it is not to be set aside by imputations, however grievous, which, if not groundless to the satisfaction of others, are so at least to our own.

It would be easy for us to reply to such imputations, by asserting that those who plead for religious Establishments care for the fleece rather than the flock; that the thing which is expedient in their view (and, indeed, indispensable) is the multiplying of places of emolument and power, which may be obtained without merit, and held without labour. But this would not be to the purpose. That there are many such persons among the advocates of Establishments no one will deny; but to us, in this argument, they are as though they were not. We admit with joyfulness that there are on

the same side men of devoted piety and zeal for God; and we reason *with them*.

To proceed then with our discussion. The advocates of religious Establishments affirm that they are expedient. We will presently examine this plea. But, before we do this, let the position of it be properly noted. As an argument for Establishments it holds only a secondary rank. National Religious Establishments involve a question of *principle*, as well as a question of *expediency*. We have to ask, not only are they useful, but are they right? And, in all controversies, the argument from principle is far more weighty than that from expediency. Nor is it not only the more weighty of the two; it requires to be in all cases decisive of the question at issue. To argue from expediency for doing what is shown to be wrong, is to say, "Let us do evil that good may come;" a maxim utterly repudiated from all sound systems of morals. Even if the argument from expediency on behalf of national churches could be sustained, therefore, they would not be vindicated, unless they could also be proved *to be right*.

Now in this view we took up religious Establishments in our former Lecture; and we endeavoured to show that, in point of principle, they are not right, but *wrong*. Involving, as they necessarily do, an attempt at "lordship over creeds and consciences," they aim at objects for which human governments never were designed, to which they never can practically extend, and for which they possess no appropriate or admissible sanctions; they claim to dictate where they cannot meet the consequences of error; they supersede the paramount, exclusive, and only rightful authority of the Most High; and they give their sanction to the multifarious forms of false religion, as well as, by an occasional accident, to the true. National Religious Establishments, therefore, are at once a transgression of all just rules of government, and a violation of the most sacred rights both of the creature and the Creator: they are institutions, consequently, which ought never to have been created, and which ought no longer to exist. To tell us they are useful is nothing to the purpose. If they *are* useful, they are equally to be denounced *because they are wrong*. Nor does it move us to speak, in terms of whatever pathos, of the good which will be lost, or the mischiefs which will ensue, if

these institutions should disappear. Should the lamentable picture be true, *we* are not accountable for it. The mischief does not lie at our door, but at our Maker's. It is *He* who is responsible for the results of *doing right*, because he has made it imperative on us; and, doubtless, he will be far better pleased with those who, leaving results in his hands, render him the honour of an implicit obedience, than with those who, with an obtrusive care over what does not pertain to them, at once violate his commandments and infringe upon his prerogative.

The question of principle in regard to religious Establishments being decided in the negative, we are not called upon to argue the question of expediency at all. We have a right to dismiss it unheard. But we will not insist upon our right. We will hear, and hear patiently, what can be said on this subject. We believe that we have the best of the argument, even on this secondary and inferior ground.

Religious Establishments, we are told, are expedient. Now there is a *general* principle upon which we are warranted to settle the expediency of things. It may be laid down as a maxim admitting of no controversy, that *whatever is right is expedient*. The foundations of this sentiment are laid deep in the divine administration. It was for God to link duty and happiness together, rectitude and usefulness; and he would have failed in one of the most essential elements of a moral system if he had not effectually done so. As a general principle no one questions it. It is a postulate in moral science. Now this principle must be applicable to religious Establishments, as well as to all other modes of human action; and its application is fatal to them. They claim to be expedient; but we are sure they are not expedient, because they are not right. The things that are really expedient are the things that are right, and only those. Until it can be shown that religious Establishments are right, therefore, it cannot be truly affirmed that they are expedient; their alleged expediency is rather to be taken as an illusion—a semblance derived from imposing appearances, aided by erroneous judgments and fallacious anticipations.

For the further consideration of the expediency of national churches, however, we are willing to come down from the high ground of general principle, and to argue the question on the particular facts of the case.

Religious Establishments are expedient—this is the assertion. Of course, we understand this of religious Establishments *universally*. It means that it is expedient for all governors, in every land and in every age, to institute religious Establishments; and this because such Establishments have great power to diffuse the religious systems so established through the countries respectively, and to maintain their predominance there—the effect of this being that idolatry, fanaticism, and superstition have been propagated throughout almost the whole world, and that these enemies to God and man have entrenched themselves in the said religious Establishments, as in fortresses all but impregnable! Why, this is one of the most painful and deplorable aspects of the world, and presents some of the most afflicting obstacles to the diffusion of the Gospel. Far better would it have been if rulers would have let the religion of their subjects alone, and have left them unshackled by ecclesiastical fetters, until they should be called into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And yet, with all this as the direct result of the institution of National Religious Establishments, there are good people who maintain *their expediency!*

We shall be told that this is stating the question too broadly; and that our brethren do not mean to contend for the expediency of *all* religious Establishments, but of an Establishment of *Christianity* only. I must maintain, however, that, by thus broadly stating it, I have only done justice to the argument. *The question* before us is that of the expediency of religious Establishments in general, and not of the Establishment of any system of religion in particular. It is as the right and duty of “the legislature of *every* country,” that the creation of such Establishments is brought forward by Dr. Dealtry; and, of course, the expediency must be co-extensive with the obligation. If our brethren wish us to give them credit for any soundness of argument, they will never attempt to tell us that what is obligatory in a hundred cases can be expedient only in one. Were the rulers of the earth to be imagined as learning their duty from the Chancellor of the diocese of Winchester, we can readily conceive of them as assenting to his declaration of their universal right and obligation to institute religious Establishments; but with what amazement would

they learn that he confined the *expediency* of such an Establishment to the solitary case of Christianity!

Nor would they be long in finding him an answer. "You confine the expediency of an Establishment to Christianity," they would tell him, "because that is *your* religion, and you think it true. These are *our* religions, mine, and mine, and mine; we think them true, and denounce yours as baseless, infatuated, and barbarian." Every sovereign for himself, therefore, finds the same reason for establishing his religion as Dr. Dealtry and Dr. Chalmers do for establishing theirs. So that the question of religious Establishments universally—the Establishment of Mahometanism, and of Paganism in every form—cannot be separated from that of the Establishment of Christianity. You cannot affirm the expediency of one, without affirming the expediency of all; and to affirm the expediency of all is impossible.

But we will let our brethren escape from this dilemma also; and permit them, for the sake of argument, to put the case in their own way. The Establishment of Christianity is expedient. This they are quite sure of. Such are the excellence and importance of this system of religion, that its diffusion must be infinitely beneficial; and so abundant and influential are the means of diffusing it which are at the disposal of government, that they ought without scruple to be employed. Indeed, the multitude, the poverty, and the apathy, of the people are so great, that by no other "machinery" can they be "overtaken." Such are the allegations on behalf of religious Establishments; in one word, they *can* evangelize a country—and *they alone*.

In treating the case thus put forth on behalf of an Establishment of Christianity, we shall reserve for future consideration the question whether such an institution be the *only* effectual means of diffusing the light and power of the Gospel; and confine ourselves to inquiring, at present, whether an Establishment *can do it at all*. This is easily assumed, but some little difficulty may be found connected with the proof.

I might say, indeed, that, if a National Establishment of Christianity *were* able to carry its vital power through the whole land, it would do so at no inconsiderable cost. I do not now mean the pecuniary cost. There are social mis-

chiefs inseparable from the working of an Establishment, which make a very perceptible deduction even from the greatest benefits which may be supposed to be conferred by it. To some of these I shall have occasion to refer hereafter. I mention the subject now, only to have it remembered that, if a national church should be found to do good, it is not good unalloyed. But we will not now press this consideration. We will admit that, in the obtaining of so great an end as the effective diffusion of the Gospel, we ought unfeignedly to rejoice; and that, if it be only by self-denials and sacrifices it can be attained, we ought, without murmuring, to submit to them.

But *can* an Establishment of Christianity evangelize the country, and so realize the benefit in the anticipation of which we are told to rejoice? In order to reply to this, we ask two other questions. First, How is a pure Establishment to be secured? And, secondly, What are the elements of its power?

I. Our first question is, *How is a pure Establishment of Christianity to be secured?* With such an Establishment, pure in doctrine, already existing, it might seem needless, perhaps, to make such an inquiry. But we are clearly entitled to go back, for the sake of the argument, to a time when it did not exist, and to ascertain how the great questions connected with the origination of such an institution may be met and determined. This Dr. Chalmers evidently admits; since he devotes his fourth Lecture to a consideration of the circumstances by which a government should be guided in this matter.

We set before ourselves in imagination, then, a country in which no religious, or, at all events, no Christian, Establishment as yet exists. Its rulers, being Christian, deem it their duty to establish Christianity. But *what form of Christianity?* If there was a period when no perplexity would have existed on this point, it was a very brief one; since the professors of Christianity very early broke up into rival sects, and formed influential parties. It is obviously so now. The generic term *Christian* comprehends the Papist and the Protestant; the Arian, the Trinitarian, and the Unitarian; the Episcopalian and Presbyterian; the Congregationalist and the Methodist; with many varieties

besides. Which of these forms of Christianity shall the government establish? Is there to be supposed in kings, queens, and statesmen, a competency to determine these rival claims? If sovereigns and politicians may be supposed enlightened enough to discern the broad differences between Christianity and *Paganism*, or disinterested enough to eschew the despotic power secured to them by the religion of the Prophet; can they enter satisfactorily into the doctrine of the Trinity, the divine right of episcopacy, and the succession to the chair of St. Peter? Or is there a living creature who attaches a religious importance to these tenets at all, who would confide a decision upon them to such hands? If sovereigns and statesmen did decide, what should we have but a chaos of blunders? Or if, as is far more probable, the decision would be made by some courtly priest, then what becomes of the fiction, that "a faith is to be selected" (I use Dr. Chalmers's words) "*by the government*"?

It is plainly impossible that a government should establish Christianity, without adopting one of the Christian sects. And the decision here is as difficult, and the danger as great, as if the choice lay among the varieties of Paganism. Popery and Protestantism charge each other with deadly errors. Trinitarians hold themselves at vital difference with Unitarians. So that government is in danger of erecting a *Christian* Establishment of so pernicious a character as to be ruinous to the souls of men. What are governors—all unused as they are to theological studies—what are governors to do in this dilemma? Or what is to be the security of subjects that even Christian statesmen do not commit on their behalf a perilous and irreparable error?

Dr. Chalmers is quite sensible of the difficulty we are insisting on.

"We are aware," says he, "of the summary and contemptuous rejection to which this proposition is liable—as if it would transform the senate-house into an arena of theological conflict, and senators into wrangling polemics, who, to be accomplished for their task, would need to grapple with whole libraries, with the tomes of mighty controversialists in former ages, or at least, it may be thought, to be deep read, both in the fathers of the Christian church, and in the fathers of our own reformation" (p. 117).

And what is his remedy? It is, in the first place, to separate the question he deems most easy of decision, that

between Popery and Protestantism, and to dispose of it singly. "This," he tells us, "is a question that might be rightly entertained, and rightly decided, in any assembly of well-educated Englishmen" (p. 117), not excepting the Houses of Parliament. He assures us, indeed, that he "could not imagine a more testing evidence of an incompetent and vulgarized Parliament, than that it should not be competent to decide the question between the merits of Protestantism and Popery" (p. 118). Yet he does not seem to be quite sure that the British Parliament of the present age will not "endow Popery;" for he expresses his hope that, if such a calamity should happen, "there is still enough, not of fiery zeal, but of calm, resolute, and withal enlightened principle in the land, to resent the outrage—enough of energy in the revolted sense of this great country to meet and to overbear it" (p. 120).

Let me be excused for stopping here a moment, to observe that this is a strange way of designating and receiving what Dr. Chalmers must acknowledge to be a legitimate use of legislative prerogative. He first lays it down that the State should endow Christian ministers; and then he recommends that, if they happen to endow one particular set of Christian ministers, the people should "resent" it as an "outrage," and "overbear it" as a law. He is evidently afraid of his own principle; the meaning of which, as interpreted by himself, is, "You may establish Christianity, *provided you take my form of it.*" It is only for every denomination of Christians to follow his example, and then the rulers' prerogative of establishing Christianity, of which he is the advocate, will, upon his own authority, be given to the winds.

But, to return. That even a British Parliament, in the nineteenth century, should "endow Popery," is not (in Dr. Chalmers's opinion) quite impossible. What, then, must be thought of the same body in former times? At how many seasons, and for how long a period, would this have been their certain choice? Our northern antagonist, it is true, pronounces them, in consequence, "incompetent and vulgarized;" *but they were the legislators;* and he affirms it to be expedient that Christianity should be established by the legislature—by a body, that is to say, branded by his own hand with "incompetency"!

So much for our security against Popery in the formation of a religious Establishment, even by a Christian government. But this is only one of the dangers attending such an experiment. Supposing the government to have decided for Protestantism, *which of the Protestant sects shall it endow?*

“On what principle,” says Dr. Chalmers, “ought the selection to be made? We have already seen that the principle is a very obvious one, and respecting which even statesmen, if but men of large and liberal education, should feel no difficulty, on which to reject that church which would subordinate the authority of Scripture to the authority of man—or even place the decisions of their own sovereign pontiff on the same level with the declarations of the Bible. But there are other churches, other ecclesiastical bodies, that have all agreed in abjuring this corruption, and are alike free from any participation in it. Many, we should say the great majority, of our Protestant sects, hold the authority of Scripture paramount to all other authority; and are so far agreed in the interpretation of it, as to hold the same fundamental tenets, and, while differing in circumstantials, to be at one on all the great and essential articles of faith. The government may be at no loss for reasons to eject Popery; but it may be at great loss for reasons to determine its preference of one shade or variety of Protestantism over all the rest—and that, too, in very proportion to the nearness of their agreement with each other” (p. 167).

This question, “full of perplexity” as the Doctor admits it “may seem,” he nevertheless thinks may be “easily disposed of;” and he attains this desirable end by declaring that most of the Protestant sects—“the great majority”—“nine-tenths” of them—are so good, and so much alike, that there is nothing to choose between them.

“We hear,” says the Doctor, “of their common faith, that is, of their agreement with the church in all vital and essential topics; and this, in opposition to the bigots within the Establishment, we heartily accord to the great majority of the Dissenters in both parts of the island. But, if they agree in all that is essential, what is the character of the topics on which they differ? There can be no other reply to this than that they must be the non-essentials of Christianity” (p. 174).

And therefore the State may take any one of them indifferently; any one being good enough for the honours and emoluments of an Establishment, and none so much better than its fellows as to deserve a preference. This is not very complimentary, certainly, to either of the “party-coloured varieties” (I use the Doctor’s epithets) which have happened

to be enthroned in the high places of England and Scotland. According to him, the divine right and apostolical succession of Episcopacy, and the solemn league and covenant of Presbyterianism, are nothing more than the "caprices, or whimsical peculiarities, in which, in the very wantonness of freedom, men have chosen to besport themselves." O fie! Dr. Chalmers.

But the entire statement (begging the Doctor's pardon) is an evasion of the difficulty. To be of any force, his argument required him to affirm that not only *most*, but *all* the Protestant sects are substantially alike. Even if matters of church polity in which Protestants differ might be reckoned immaterial (in which certainly some of them would not concur), there are diversities of unquestionable moment; of which the Socinian controversy may supply an example. Dr. Chalmers will not pretend that this (to use his own term) is a "minute" or "paltry" difference. But what is to guide members of Parliament and hereditary legislators to a right decision upon it? If they manage but badly such profound subjects as the doctrines of the Trinity and vicarious sacrifice, he may again vent his wrath, by pronouncing them "incompetent and vulgarized;" but still *they are the legislators*, and as such it is expedient, according to him, that they should establish Christianity. What pledge can he give us that they shall not establish a Socinian Christianity?

But this matter is not one of speculation merely, the lights of history are shed on it. When Constantine, whose conduct the Doctor so warmly eulogizes, established Christianity, it soon became a question which of the Christian sects should bask in the sunshine of courtly patronage; and the verdict of the State was then given in favour of the Arian heresy. Sovereign after sovereign has established Popery over almost the whole of Europe; and that the churches of England and Scotland are not Popish now has arisen from causes very different from either the piety or the policy of the governing powers. These are the *actual fruits* of confiding the establishment of Christianity to governments; a measure which, therefore, far from being expedient, either in theory or in practice, is one of tremendous hazard—it may be said, of inevitable mischief. *A pure Establishment cannot be secured*; it is better, therefore, that none should be created.

II. But, supposing a pure Establishment were secured, *what are the elements of its power?* This is the second question we proposed to consider. A religious Establishment pure in doctrine, as those of the British islands are in the main admitted to be, is able, we are told, to carry the light and power of Christianity "through all the families of the land." If we ask by what means, we are referred to its "machinery"—its cutting up the country into parishes, or other sections, and consigning the "Christian surveillance" of the population of each section to an endowed minister charged with their instruction.

Now we might question—and we shall hereafter question—the adaptation of this machinery. But, for the present, we will admit its adaptation. And then we say, that at least one condition is necessary to its working out the design—*the ministers must be pious men*. If, on the contrary, it should happen that some—a large proportion—or nearly the whole—of the teachers should be ignorant of the religion they are to teach, or unconcerned about the welfare of the souls committed to their charge; if it should happen that they loved sinecures and pluralities more than self-denying labour; or gambling, fox-hunting, and politics, more than the preaching of the Gospel; I say that then a religious Establishment would be, not a blessing, but a curse. And Dr. Chalmers acknowledges that an Establishment may be a most effective instrument of conveyance for evil as well as good, for a corrupt as well as scriptural theology (p. 18). We ask, then, *Does a National Religious Establishment afford any guarantee that this shall not be the character of her ministers?*

Who is to appoint them? This question might be asked as one of theory. On the principle of a national Establishment, who *ought* to appoint them? Doubtless the government, who pay them. And, if this were to be the fact, what would follow from it, but what now actually follows to a great and deplorable extent, that ecclesiastical appointments would be made on political grounds, and that men would be made priests, not because of their meritorious adaptation to the duties of their office, but as an inducement to political devotion and a reward for political service? Will any man maintain the expediency of this?

An instructive view of the rules which, as by a tacit but

well-understood convention, are come into operation in relation to the church patronage held by the government, is exhibited in the life (recently published) of the late Bishop of Norwich, by his son, Archdeacon Bathurst. The Venerable Archdeacon complains bitterly that the Bishop's political services had not been rewarded by ecclesiastical promotion, not only for the Bishop himself, but for his family also. He, neglected man! is pining on a preferment of two thousand per annum! He had a brother who shot himself, and he lays the blame of this upon the "ungrateful" statesmen who, to a younger son of a political partisan, would give nothing more than a living of five hundred a year!

Or, if we take the matter, not as it *ought* to be, but *as it is*, and look at ecclesiastical patronage as dispersed through the various hands which now possess it, the result will be similar. Livings in the gift of colleges go in rotation; so that it is a mere lottery whether you have a wise man or a fool, with the chances in relation to spiritual wisdom much in favour of the latter. Livings in the gift of private persons are notoriously held for family aggrandizement; and, if there be no son, or other relation, to enjoy them, the next presentation is often sold by auction to the highest bidder. Instances of the faithful and conscientious use of church patronage are comparatively rare, and form only a small exception to an almost universal rule. Than the unblushing abuse of it nothing can be either more scandalous or more mischievous, as Dr. Chalmers well knows, and doubtless bitterly deploras.

In such a state of things, the ministers of the national church—with whatever exceptions—can, generally, be nothing but a set of worldly men; at once ignorant and incapable, and not in any respect fitted for the high and holy duties of the office assigned to them. And so it has been in fact. With the very great improvement which has taken place in the Church of England within the last few years, out of her twenty thousand clergy not more than two thousand are believed now to be evangelical. One in ten is a small proportion. But there have been long seasons when there was not one in a thousand; when, therefore, to use Dr. Chalmers's own words, the boasted "machinery" "subverted the propagation of corruption and error;" "furnished evil with all facilities for its rapid march and full circulation through

the families of the land;" and conveyed a "moral poison, by which to vitiate the hearts and habits of the people" (pp. 19, 20). And yet it is expedient, we are told, that there should be a National Establishment of Christianity!

The corrupt use of ecclesiastical patronage is an evil, not only great, but *incurable*. It is *impossible* to put the disposal of fifteen thousand benefices and dignities into safe hands. No parties can be found to whom such a vast trust could be confided with any security, or with any probability, of its being faithfully employed, or without the certainty of its being abused. Fidelity in such a matter requires a high appreciation of the spiritual interests of men, a solemn sense of responsibility, and a readiness and extent of self-denial, which might not always be found in the sincerely pious, and which is assuredly far above the ordinary level of statesmen and church patrons. No such patronage, therefore, ought to have been created; or, which is the same thing, there should have been no National Establishment of Christianity. The inevitable abuse of church patronage is a radical and fundamental objection to Establishments of which no ingenuity can rid them—a millstone about the neck of the Utopian fair one, which may well sink her in the depths of the sea.

There is yet another aspect of this case. Concerning the ministers of a national church we have asked, on the one hand, Who is to appoint them? we now ask, on the other, *Who will be attracted?* The men who are *wanted* are men of fervent piety, self-denying zeal, and untiring industry; the workman being, undoubtedly, worthy of his hire. But, in the first place, here is no manner of necessity for the work being done at all. The holder of a living is under no responsibility for performing more than a cursory routine of services, and even these he may perform by a cheaply paid curate. If he likes to renounce the toil, and enjoy the income; to delight himself in the honour of his clerical station, and to mix in gay or elevated society, he may. Nay, if he likes to live in licentiousness and debaucheries, he may; if he will only avoid those faults of extreme grossness by which the average tone of morals would be scandalized. Here is nothing, therefore, to repel the ungodly from the clerical office, or to obstruct his entrance into it. Everything may easily enough be harmonized with his tastes and indulgences.

On the contrary, there is much to attract men of this stamp. There are genteel livings for men who dislike work, or who never could succeed in it; a passport through the polite world, and an opportunity of gratifying every desire, without toiling for the means, or being answerable for the use of them. The incomes vary from a few scores to many thousands of pounds sterling per annum; the lowest being prizes to the poor, the highest having attractions for the rich and noble. While some repose in a single benefice, others luxuriate in several; while some have preferment *with* cure of souls, others find still more agreeable promotion *without* it; canonries and prebends afford full "leisure" (according to Dr. Chalmers) "for pious authorship" (!) (the canon-residentiary of St. Paul's and Peter Plymley's Letters, to wit); some become bishops, and some archbishops, both being also peers of the realm; and every man has before him the hope that, if he plays his cards well, he may rise, from however humble a station, to the highest altitudes in the church. Now we do not say that pious men are bound to eschew all these advantages, or to carry the "*nolo episcopari*" always to a practical fulfilment. Neither do we say that, in the midst of such circumstances, pious men may not do, or have not done, their duty nobly. But we do say that such a state of things holds out inducements to the ministerial office which other than pious men are liable to feel and that shoals of such men are constantly attracted by them. It appeals directly to the indolence, the ambition, and the cupidity, of mankind. The church, in this aspect, presents an inviting career to men who have none but secular and selfish aims; and the clerical profession, so baited, is eminently adapted to become, what it is known to have become in fact, an incitement to the aspiring among the middling and lower orders, and a resource for the needy—a sort of Refuge for the Destitute—among the aristocracy. High and low, in a word, combine in regarding the wealth of the church as a vast carcass, on which, like birds of prey, they are entitled to gorge themselves till they can hold no more.

And this, again, like the former, is an evil *inseparable* from National Religious Establishments. It may vary in amount, according to the wealth of Establishments respectively, but in proportion to their wealth is the mischief.

Here is, then, not only no security for a faithful ministry, but no possibility of a faithful ministry, otherwise than occasionally and accidentally. With such inducements to the clerical office, the clergy generally *must* be worldly men. And, if the clergy be worldly men, it matters not how thickly you stud the country with them—*they cannot propagate religion.* To the actual existence of such a state of things, not in the Church of England only, but under the influence of Christian Establishments generally, their hardy champion himself may be cited as an unwilling but decisive witness. With many opportunities and much necessity for it, he nowhere ventures to affirm the fidelity of a State-clergy in a single instance. He nowhere ventures to deny their universal corruption; but, when he approaches this subject, feeling, it would seem, that he is on tender ground, he carefully asserts that this corruption is “*not necessary;*” that State endowments of religious teachers *may* be consistent with pure motives and self-denying zeal. And this is all on which he can venture! He tacitly admits the mischievous tendency of the system, and the actual mischievous result; but he thinks the clergy *may* be saved, “so as by fire.” The possibility of miracles we do not deny, but we know of no reason to expect them. It is for us rather to go by experience, a far safer guide than speculation; and since in all ages, and under all circumstances, a clergy endowed by the State *have been* corrupt, and are so to the present time—*with unfrequent exceptions only*—there can be no error in concluding that, in the present condition of human nature, it *cannot* be otherwise.

Let us now sum up the argument. An Establishment *can* evangelize a country, says Dr. Chalmers, since she can stud it with teachers. We say, on the contrary, an Establishment *cannot* evangelize a country, since she cannot provide teachers fitted for the task. And let us appeal for a confirmation of our conclusions respectively to the testimony of facts. Whether an Establishment can or cannot diffuse Christianity through a land, surely ought not now to be a matter of speculation. The experiment has been tried long enough, one would think, to warrant a decision of the question. The pure, apostolical Church of England, for example, as Protestant and reformed, has been adopted by the State for about three hundred years; and, if it was

one of the properties of such an Establishment to diffuse universally a vital piety, we should surely in such a lengthened period see some signs of its fulfilment. But we know, on the contrary, that, during the greater part of this time, the progress of religion within and by means of the Establishment was deplorably slow, if perceptible at all; and that the revival within it during the last fifty years is merely the reaction of the revival without. It is not too much to say that the church, instead of even helping forward the cause of pure and undefiled religion, has been the great bulwark of popular ignorance and vice, and has done more to retard the advance of godliness than all causes besides. In Scotland the case, if less aggravated, is not essentially different. But what is it in Ireland? where bishops were so thick that it became necessary to sweep away ten of them by one Act of Parliament; through a great part of which churches and priests are almost as numerous as people to attend on them; and where yet ignorance, vice, and irreligion, stalk abroad like giants, as in mockery of the richest church in the world! An Establishment can evangelize a country! Then shame be to ye, Establishments of England, Scotland, and Ireland, that ye have left the dark places of the land in darkness until now, and in a darkness too often aggravated alike by the pretensions and the incapacity of the priests ye have endowed!

It might be thought that the case thus made out, not *for*, but *against*, the expediency of national churches, would appeal with no inconsiderable force to the wise and the good *within their pale*; but, however this may be, with such facts before our eyes it is in vain to call upon *us* to believe that National Religious Establishments can fulfil the boast which is made on their behalf. And, if they cannot do this, then we become well entitled to speak of the nuisances and mischiefs with which they are connected. For the sake of a country's evangelization we might have borne with them; but, if this cannot be obtained, the only reason for endurance is taken away. Useless as it is for the religious instruction of the people, why should we look with complacency on an institution which is essentially a tyranny over conscience; and which, being founded in wrong, scatters public and social mischiefs through the whole sphere of its influence? For this there is created a privileged sect, a dominant and

domineering priesthood, and a spirit of haughty church ascendancy, trampling on all other religious communities, although, according to their own champion, every one of them is as worthy of honour. For this there is extorted from us our money, and wrested from us our civil rights; while our honour even is not left us untarnished with a gratuitous suspicion of disloyalty. For this there is established a bitter political party—for such a State-clergy inevitably become—hostile to popular rights, hating a liberal administration, adverse to all improvement, deaf to all calls of humanity and justice, and clamorous only when they cry, Give, give! And because such an institution is called a religious Establishment, it is to be smiled upon and revered! How much are these mouldering monuments of ancient priestcraft indebted to the artifice of giving noble names, and blessed semblances, to atrocious things! And how truly, when names and things come to be identical, will they receive the unmitigated rebuke of abashed and repentant nations!

LECTURE III.

HAVING, in our first Lecture, discussed the *principle* of National Religious Establishments, we took up in the second their *expediency*. Their advocates, we found, set up a claim on their behalf that *they are able* to evangelize a country, and *they alone*. We separated the former part of this claim from the latter, and endeavoured to show that, whether it could be done by any other means or not, the evangelization of a country *could not* be effected by a National Establishment. A most pregnant instance in confirmation of our argument has presented itself since the delivery of that Lecture, in the melancholy outbreak of religious fanaticism which has occurred in the neighbourhood of Canterbury. Courtenay, it seems, was a madman; and against the recurrence of such forms of insanity as his there is, of course, no guarantee. But his followers were not insane, nor were they at all

below the level of general knowledge and religious culture characterizing the agricultural population generally, whether peasants or farmers; not a few persons, however, of both these classes, believed in Courtenay's divinity, and hailed him as their saviour! Nothing can be more profound, or more touchingly genuine, than the confidence they reposed in him, and the worship they addressed to him. And who were these people? Were they heathens, inhabitants of a land immersed in Mahometan or Pagan superstition? No. They dwelt in a Christian country, within the pale of a National Establishment of that holy religion, under the constant instruction of well-endowed priests, and within sight, if not under the shadow, of a cathedral in which was the throne of an archbishop, together with stalls for prebendaries, and seats for canons and other ecclesiastics almost without end! And similar had been the residence of their fathers for ages. But this is the machinery of such mighty power, according to Dr. Chalmers, to carry the light and life of Christianity "through all the families of the land." How comes it, then, we ask, to have answered its purpose no better? Whence is it, that ignorance and superstition almost incredible have descended unmodified from generation to generation, so that the fanaticism of the nineteenth century bears an almost exact resemblance to that of the same region six hundred years ago? Whence is this, but that National Religious Establishments are powerless for the diffusion of religion; that gorgeous edifices and rich foundations are to the clergy what old elms are to the rooks and steeples to the jackdaws, places to breed in, to fatten, and to sleep; and that irreligion of every kind has no securer nestling-place, or more thriving nursery, than in the very midst of those State-pampered dignitaries whose pious leisure is theoretically devoted to its extermination? We might here content ourselves. To have established this is to have decided the controversy; since the capability of national churches to diffuse Christianity is the only ground on which, with the wise and good, the vindication of them is attempted.

It will be present in your recollection, however, that what we have asserted of National Establishments—namely, that they cannot effectually diffuse the Gospel, is, by the advocates of those institutions, asserted of all modes of religious exertion besides. We say they cannot; they say we cannot.

And, if both affirmations are true, our discussion places Christianity in this unfortunate dilemma—that its thorough diffusion is impossible, there being no means by which it can be effected. Such a conclusion is not only most melancholy, but incredible. And as, for the sake of avoiding it, we are not at all disposed to revoke the sentence we have passed on national Establishments, we are called upon, perhaps, to say whether we admit the allegations of our opponents when they assert the incapacity of a different system. Now we say without scruple that we do not admit these allegations; that, while piety cannot be extended “through all the families of the land” by an Establishment, this may (under the blessing of God) be done by other methods, which are at once of mighty energy for their end, and altogether free from those weighty objections which hang, like inevitable doom, about the neck of national churches.

We shall most effectually make our way good in this matter, by first repelling the attacks which have been made against unestablished modes of spreading the Gospel; and those made by Dr. Chalmers more particularly, as, at the present moment, urged with the greatest force, and engaging the chief attention.

1. Our northern assailant falls foul, in the first place, of “the system of a free trade in Christianity,” which he says the Dissenters have adopted, “as the grand specific on the strength of which they may dispense with a National Establishment of religion” (p. 72), and which he vehemently affirms is not sufficient for such a purpose.

Now, really, it is quite news to a great many, and perhaps to all of us, that we have adopted “the system of a free trade in Christianity.” In all likelihood, very few of us even understand what that system is. We must be indebted to Dr. Chalmers for explaining it to us before we can say whether we adopt it or not. Hear, then, his exposition of it.

“By the system of a free trade in commerce, its various exchanges are left to the pure operation of demand and supply; and these two, it is thought, should be permitted without interference to regulate and qualify each other. When the demand for any particular commodity increases, it will be the interest of the dealers to provide it in larger quantity than before; or, when the demand is lessened, it will be their care to reduce the supply accordingly—so as that the market shall not be overstocked with any article beyond the extent to which it is sought after. It admits, we hold, of the clearest

demonstration, that it is unwise to interfere with this law of action and reaction—or, as it may be termed, with this natural law of political economy. The supply rises and falls just as the demand rises and falls. Government should make no attempt to restrain the supply beneath this point by means of a prohibition, or to encourage it above this point by means of a bounty. Such an interference is an offence to all wise and enlightened economists; and resented by them, as a disturbing force that would violate the harmonies of a beautiful and well-going mechanism” (pp. 39, 40).

This is “the system of a free trade.” But who says this is the system of Nonconformity? Was this principle laid down by Owen, Baxter, and Howe? Was it held by Watts, Doddridge, and Kiffin? Was it the stronghold of Towgood and Graham? Or has it been put forth by Conder and Binney? It has been broached by none of them; nor does Dr. Chalmers give the name of a single Dissenter out of whose mouth it has been heard through the entire controversy. Who is it, then, that has advocated “a free trade in Christianity”? The following gentlemen—“Turgot, Smith, and others” (p. 42). “Turgot, Smith, and others”? Who are these? These are not the fathers of Nonconformity, nor are their names endeared to us by fond and hallowed associations. Turgot was a Frenchman, of whom we know nothing. As for Smith, we do know something of the name of Smith; but, gentle hearer, you must not imagine it to be John Pye Smith, *nomen præclarum*, whom Chalmers has in his eye; it is a Dr. Adam Smith, from the far north. And for the “others” whom he mentions, they constitute, it seems, *ignobile pecus*, a base herd, whose names are not worth his giving nor our inquiring after. And I ask not only *who*, but *what* are these men? Are they Dissenters? No. Are they theologians? No. What, then, are they? Writers and speculators on political economy! By what rule, I demand, are these men understood as laying down the basis of dissent, and setting forth the principles of Dissenters?

But let us look at the principle of free trade now that it is propounded to us, and see whether we do adopt it or not. It is, we are told, that, with respect to articles of commerce—such as tea and sugar, for example—the demand should be left to regulate the supply; and that government should not interfere either to encourage or discourage the trade, whether by duties or by bounties.

“At this rate,” says Dr. Chalmers, “the supply, whether as respects its amount upon the whole, or the proportion of it in various places, will be made to suit the taste of the customers. It will betake itself to those places where there is what economists term an effective demand for it—that is, where there is wealth enough and will enough to ensure a remunerating price for the expense of its preparation. A free trade in commerce is sure to avoid or abandon those places where, whether from the languor of the demand or the poverty of the inhabitants, it would be exposed to a losing trade. By a free trade in Christianity let the lessons of the Gospel follow the same law of movement; and these lessons will cease to be taught in every place where there is either not enough of liking for the thing, or not enough of money for the purchase of it” (pp. 40, 41).

Now we say in a moment, that, if this be the “free trade in Christianity,” it never has been, and never shall be, either our principle or our practice. We repudiate and abhor it. We complain, too, that an act of grosser injustice was never done to an adversary in any controversy, than has been done to the Dissenters by Dr. Chalmers’s attempt to fasten the “free trade principle” upon them. But he argues blindfold, and we will impute it to no ill design. Yet how could any man imagine it was our principle, who could describe our conduct so accurately as in the following instances?

“There now seems on all hands a strong practical sense, if not an explicit and avowed one, of the insufficiency of the free trade system for the supply of the world with the lessons of Christianity. This has long been acknowledged, or, at least, acted upon, in the business of foreign missions, or in the business of supplying foreign parts with the knowledge of the Gospel. Instead of waiting till the demand for Christianity comes of its own accord, from men ready with an indemnifying or remunerating price to cover all the expenses of bringing it to their shore, the dispensers of Christianity go forth on their missionary voyage in quest of men to whom they might offer the pearl of greatest value, and on whom to urge the acceptance of it without money and without price. Instead of discerning in this process any of the methods of ordinary trade, there is here a reversal of all its principles; and, what comes nearer to the point at issue, there is a like reversal of them in the home as in the foreign missionary enterprise. We have the Home Missionary Society, that would never have been thought of but for the experimental feeling of destitution and depravity at our own doors, which required the very same treatment with the heathenism of distant lands. . . . The agents of this Society, the men who labour under them in the streets of our city or the villages of our country population, are not maintained on the principle of a market—do not receive their necessary hire in the shape of equivalents from those who are benefited by them; but in the shape of a bounty from those who employ them. We say that all they who have become parties in such an institution” (that is, the

entire body of Dissenters), "stand committed . . . against the system of a free trade in Christianity" (pp. 71, 73).

The principle of a "free trade in Christianity" being disclaimed by us, all the rhetoric which the Doctor employs on the exposure of its insufficiency is, of course, thrown away. No doubt it is perfectly true, that there is in mankind "no natural hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" that they are sunk into a state of desperate and cherished apathy in relation to spiritual things; and that, left to themselves, they will never seek after a supply of Gospel truth. No inference can be more certain than that which Dr. Chalmers derives from this state of things—namely, that, if mankind are ever to possess the Gospel, *it must be carried to them*. But this proves nothing *against us*. It is rather our vindication. This is the very principle we have been holding, and the very thing we have been doing. This is "the head and front of our offending," that we have been running everywhere preaching the Gospel; regarding neither the sacred boundaries of parishes, nor the equally sacred slumbers of incumbents. And here, all on a sudden, and certainly without intending it, our great antagonist supplies us, in the very midst of the enemies' camp, with a triumphant vindication! *We thank him*.

His argument, however, is far from working equally well for the Establishments he wishes to defend. From the acknowledged indifference of men to their spiritual wants, it obviously results, not only that the Gospel should be carried to them, but that it should be carried to them in the quickest and most copious manner—by all available means, and by all capable hands. This would be an argument for National Religious Establishments, *if they fulfilled this condition*. But they do not, and cannot fulfil it. In the first place, they have no aptitude at perceiving or appreciating a state of spiritual destitution. They generate, on the contrary, a tenacious disposition to overlook it, and even to deny its existence; inasmuch as it is inconsistent with the theory of a National Establishment, which assumes that the religious interests of the nation are adequately cared for, and implies a charge of neglect or incompetency in some of the numerous functionaries on whom this care is practically devolved. And when a state of spiritual destitution is ascertained and acknowledged, the remedial efforts of an Establishment are

exceedingly difficult and tardy. If they move at all, with the inevitable fate of great bodies, they move slowly; while ignorance and sin, in their work of destruction, are eminently rapid. And, being what they are, even the most vigorous movements of religious Establishments can be of but little avail; since the instruction they provide, like the teachers they send, is without any guarantee of its purity. To all this it must be added, that they have no readiness to avail themselves of co-operation for the attainment of the desired end; but, on the contrary, have a tendency to hinder and repress it. Wherever you may attempt to preach the Gospel, you are within the limits of some parish; and you are met by rector, vicar, or curate, who says: "I am intrusted with the care of these souls; it is my business, and not yours; you are intruding on the sphere of my labour, and infringing on my prerogative." This remonstrance is sometimes very warmly and unceremoniously pressed; as it has recently been, to my own knowledge, in the parish of Aldermaston, in the heart of Berkshire, where popular insult and violence, of the most loathsome and appalling kinds, have been used to second and enforce it. In this manner the Establishment of Christianity extensively *prevents* the Gospel from being preached to the perishing, and shuts them up in a hopeless darkness. If there were no national church, Aldermaston, and a thousand villages besides, might be evangelized; but now they cannot—and the only reason why they cannot is *that there is a State parson in each of them!*

Certainly another view of the principle of "free trade" may be taken, besides that with which Dr. Chalmers has entertained us. If it means that, by government bounties, "the market shall not be overstocked with any article, beyond the extent to which it is sought after," it clearly means also, that no person shall be prevented from taking his goods there at his own risk, to see whether he can dispose of them or not. If free trade is opposed, on the one hand, to a system of bounties, it is, on the other, equally opposed to monopolies. In this view (which it evidently did not suit Dr. Chalmers's purpose to explain) we are willing to admit that "a free trade in Christianity" would be very acceptable to the Dissenters. A State-church is essentially a monopoly, and has all the evils of a monopoly in their most irritating and mischievous forms.

Although it is not for money nor for price, yet there is a principle, even in spiritual things, on which a demand will create supply. The ungodly, we are told, are careless about religion, and will not pay for its ministrations. Very well. Then let the men of the world, whose only object is gain, abandon them. But there are other men in the world besides these; men of heartfelt piety and Christian benevolence, to whom necessity and destitution—ay, to whom ignorance and apathy themselves—make an appeal which cannot be resisted. There are men who will preach the Gospel without being paid for it, otherwise than by the approbation of the God whom they serve. Of how many evidences of this must Dr. Chalmers have been aware! What warm eulogiums does he in this very volume pour out on this admirable zeal! And yet he pleads for Establishments, which forbid its action and fence it in on every side! A striking example has recently been furnished to us. The public heard with delight of the conduct of some devoted clergy of the Church of Ireland, who, panting to save the lost, formed a lovely and noble institution, the Irish Church Home Missionary Society; deeming, as well they might, that, in such a country, and in such an age, the rules of ecclesiastical discipline would not be rigorously enforced against so apostolical a work of faith and labour of love. But they were mistaken. An incumbent prosecutes his brother priest for uncanonically preaching in his parish, and the Ecclesiastical Court declares the whole society, and all its operations, unlawful. This is resisting a free trade in Christianity with a vengeance! Here is demand creating supply; and the monopolists of the State-church keep it out of the market! They will neither give the bread of life themselves, nor let any one else give it! And this is the system which Dr. Chalmers strives to uphold!

2. After having disposed of the "political economists," Dr. Chalmers directs his battery against the "Voluntaries;" who, he tells us, differ from the "free-trade" men in being ready to convey to their perishing fellow-sinners, by the aid of Christian benevolence, more of the Gospel than they might be able or willing to pay for. These persons have lately been making such a noise in Scotland, and have so sturdily resisted the demand for church-extension there, that there can be no room to question either the good will or the

intended vigour of the attack. And what think you is the substance of it? A vehement and laboured affirmation that the abettors of the voluntary principle hold also the very principle of Establishments! You shall have this startling accusation in the Doctor's own words.

“Innumerable are the appeals made by the Voluntaries themselves to the generosity of the public, in behalf of their labouring congregations; and the call is responded to by thousands, who feel that to give for the religious education of the people is the best and most productive of all benevolence—and their contributions, whether from an impulse of piety or of patriotism, are not more willingly made by the one party than they are welcomed by the other. It is not very discriminating, we think, thus to hail the liberalities of private individuals, and to refuse or regard them as incompetent and wrong, when they are congregated in the form of one great liberality from the State. . . . A parliamentary vote in aid of religious education is, both in principle and effect, but an example of the voluntary principle” (pp. 91, 93).

So, quoth the champion of Establishments, “our cause is practically and substantially gained, for this external voluntarism, so far from being in conflict with the principle of a National Establishment, is in perfect and precise accordance therewith” (p. 94).

When Dr. Chalmers speaks of his cause being “practically and substantially gained,” he shows the characteristic tact of his country; since he evidently means, that he has entangled the Voluntaries in such a manner that they can no longer object to a grant to the Kirk of Scotland out of the national revenue. And we will confess that it would have been a triumph warranting a little self-gratulation, *had he achieved it*. But we have a word or two to say before we admit this conclusion.

In order to make out his case, he seems to affirm that there is no difference between a grant from the government and the liberality of individuals. “A parliamentary vote,” says he, “is, both in principle and effect, but an example of the voluntary principle.” Now it might naturally be supposed that he would rest this assertion on an implied comparison between individuals and governments; to the effect that, as single persons might give what they pleased of their property, so the aggregate of persons constituting a government might, as a government, give what they pleased of the property of the nation. It would have been easy to reply

to such a representation, that the national revenues are not the property of governors in the same way in which an individual person's property is his own; that they belong to statesmen only in trust for the purposes of the nation's welfare, and in accordance with the true design of secular governments. If rulers *give*, let them give as individuals, that they may give what is their own; but, if they give out of the public purse, they give what is another's, what in part is *mine*, and what they have no business to be liberal with. If Dr. Chalmers, or any other person, wants any of my money *in a way of religious benevolence*, I am the person whom he should ask. Why should he ask Lord Melbourne for it? Or who is Lord Melbourne, that he should presume to give it? I should call this no sample of the voluntary principle, but one of violence and robbery.

In truth, however, Dr. Chalmers spares us the trouble of this reply, inasmuch as he rests his assertion upon a totally different ground. When his language is closely examined, it is found to be selected with great care, and adapted to a special modification of his general argument. He had been laying down the general duty of *governments* to endow the teachers of religion. But on this occasion we hear nothing of the government, but all about the *parliament*,—one kind of government, certainly, but far from being a type of the whole class. And the reason for his using this term is, that he founds his assertion of the identity of a parliamentary grant and a voluntary gift upon the fiction that Parliament expresses the will of the people.

“For in truth,” says he, “the very spirit which prompts the individual gift needs only to be strong enough and general enough to call forth a gift from the treasury. This were but one of the many examples in which the voice of a country is found to have an influential control over the acts of a government. Let the sentiment prevail that it is good to pay for the Christian instruction of those who either cannot or will not pay for it themselves; and a government, when adding its own great national subscription to those of the many individuals who have preceded and pointed out the way to it, is not thwarting the sentiment by which they were actuated, but only giving further expression, or larger and more lasting effect, to it. There is no fear lest a popular government, like ours, will award a grant for the erection or endowment of churches, till they anticipate a virtual ratification of the deed and a preponderance of feeling in its favour from without—or till encouraged to the measure, if not by the universal majority of tax-payers, at least by that class of them whose larger payments constitute the vast majority of by far the larger part

of the revenue of the nation. In as far, then, as they are concerned, we behold in an ecclesiastical provision by the State an example of external voluntaryism, or a willing public contributing of their wealth to the Christian instruction of the common people through the medium of a willing government" (p. 92).

This sudden deference of the champion of national churches to the feelings of the people is highly gratifying; although, certainly, one can see the reason of it—namely, that, in England, the people hold the strings of the public purse. Had it been in the power of Lord Melbourne to endow a few hundred ministers of the Scottish Kirk *without* permission of Parliament, the Doctor would no doubt have proved the identity of such a grant with the voluntary principle by a totally different process. But it is well—and somewhat of a novelty, moreover—to have the feelings of the people regarded at all by the oligarchs of religious Establishments; nor will we scrutinize too closely the motives of this promising deference. And we think we can tell Dr. Chalmers that, if the feelings of the people of England, Scotland, and Ireland, *are* consulted and expressed in reference to the scheme of church extension in the north, there is neither "fear" for us, nor hope for him, that the British Parliament will lend themselves to it. Should they do so, it will be in violation of the feelings, and the strong feelings, too, of a large part—I may say of the majority—of the inhabitants of the three kingdoms; and, if there be any sincerity in the apparent deference with which he affects to treat the feelings of the people—if it is only as a gift from a *willing* nation that he could justify a grant from the treasury—we may hope that he will refuse an endowment which they do not sanction, and which to them will be a matter, not of "voluntaryism," but of coercion.

We have further to remark on this subject, that, by introducing this appeal to the feelings of the people, and pleading for a treasury grant only when, and because, it will be an expression of the national will, Dr. Chalmers entirely shifts the ground of his argument, and overthrows all he has done before. He has previously been depicting the people as immersed in ignorance and sunk in apathy, and this to such an extent that they never could be expected to pay for the ministrations of Christian teachers, nor even to welcome them when gratuitously pressed upon their regard: and

hence he inferred the duty of *government* to "select a faith" for the people, and to endow a host of teachers without any regard to the popular voice. But a vast change has suddenly taken place on this same people, as by the wand of a magician. It is now a public in which "the sentiment prevails, that it is good to pay for the Christian instruction of those who cannot, or will not, pay for it themselves;" "a willing public, contributing of their wealth to the Christian instruction of the common people." And it is now *only* on the ground of such a state of enlightened and fruitful piety among the nation at large, that he pretends to justify an application of the national resources to religious purposes. "There is no fear," says he, "that a popular government, like ours, will award a grant for the erection or endowment of churches, till they anticipate a virtual ratification of the deed by a preponderance of feeling in its favour from without." The decision thus thrown by Dr. Chalmers into the hands of the people is clearly, by his own argument, taken out of the hands of the government, in which he had formerly placed it. We tell sovereigns and statesmen, therefore, that they are *not* entitled to "select a faith" for their subjects, and to endow teachers of the faith they have selected. They ought to leave it to the people, and do as *they* may bid them. Do they ask who is our authority?—The Reverend Thomas Chalmers, doctor in divinity, and lecturer to the court, bishops, ministers, parliament, and royal family of England, "on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches."

But what now becomes of his accusation, that the abettors of voluntary liberality hold the money principle of Establishments? That principle is, and always has been, that rulers may endow religious teachers with public money, whether the people approve of it or not; to which principle no man can pretend for a moment that the practice of voluntary contribution gives the slightest sanction. We do not, therefore, hold the principle of Establishments. But neither does Dr. Chalmers. He will have treasury grants *only if* the nation be willing. Behold him, therefore, a convert to "Voluntaryism!" There is, indeed, a change, and a marvellous one; but it is not that *we* have come round to *his* principle, but that *he* has come round to *ours*. Give me "a willing nation," says this chameleon of a reasoner; and so say we—Give us "a willing nation"—that is, a nation *every*

individual in which is willing for the public revenue to be so applied; for, if there remained one unwilling, *to him* it would be an act of oppression and wrong of which a genuine "voluntary" would never be guilty. But never, surely, could a more preposterous notion be entertained, than that an entire "nation" should be "willing" to spend large sums of its money annually in the endowment of a religious sect, privileged at once to slumber over the important duty it monopolizes, and, in its waking moments, to scowl and trample on all besides.

It is evident that this laboured attack on the voluntaries is directed, not against their principles, but only against their consistency. "You oppose a treasury grant to us," says Dr. Chalmers, "but you ought not; since you appeal to the liberality of individuals, and we only appeal to the liberality of the nation." Now, if this is anything more than hypocrisy, it is an acknowledgment that *in principle* we are right, and that the Doctor is concurrent with us. We make a gratifying record of this fact.

3. Our determined antagonist meets us at another point. He proclaims that voluntary churches cannot "localize," a process without which the whole of an ignorant population cannot be "overtaken." Hence he contends for an Establishment, because it may—and should—be made "territorial." Hear his own words.

"And first, as to what is meant by a territorial Establishment. The circumstance of its being an Establishment involves in it a legal provision for the clergyman. But, over and above this, suppose that, in return for this provision, this clergyman has a certain geographical district, whether in town or country, assigned to him; and that he is expected to take an ecclesiastical cognizance of all the families within its limits. To perfect this arrangement, they must stand so related to his church as to have a right of preference over all extra-parochial families to the occupation of its sittings; and he, on the other hand, should be so related to his parish as, if not, to have a right of entry into all the houses, at least to be bound in point of duty to make a tender to every householder who is willing to receive him of such ecclesiastical attentions and services as his time will permit him to bestow, and which might be conducive to the Christian good of himself and of his family. In other words, he is bound to superadd, as far as the people will let him, week-day and household to his Sabbath-day and pulpit ministrations. He is the minister, not of a congregation only, as far the greater number of our unendowed ministers are, but he is the minister both of a congregation and a parish" (pp. 135, 136).

“What we want is to place his church in the middle of such a territory as we have now specified, and to lay upon him a task for the accomplishment of which we would allow him the labour and perseverance of a whole life-time; not to fill his church any how, but to fill his church out of that district. We should give him the charge over head of one and all of its families, and tell him that, instead of seeking hearers from without, he should so shape and regulate his movements that, as far as possible, his church-room might all be taken up by hearers from within. It is this peculiar relation between his church and its contiguous householders, all placed within certain geographical limits, that distinguishes him from the others as a territorial minister. And let the whole country be parcelled out into such districts and parishes, with an endowed clergyman so assigned to each, and each small enough to be overtaken by the attentions of one clergyman—we should thus, as far as its machinery is concerned, have the perfect example of a territorial Establishment” (pp. 142, 143).

He then goes on to say that in such sections every minister should apply himself to courteous domestic instruction; and he takes great pains to assure us of the civility with which such kindly visitations will be received—a fact which, he thinks, so far as relates to England at least, was *discovered* by himself in the year 1822, when (as he minutely informs us) he made “a small household survey, in the worst part of the parish of St. Giles’s, in London, in company with Mr. Joseph Butterworth, who then lived in Russell Square.” Let no one despise these details. Great discoveries should always be recorded with full particulars.

Gravely, however, we admit the undoubted facility, and the vast importance, of the kindly visitation which the Doctor has so well described. We concur with him entirely in his estimate of the effects which may be anticipated from it. But we marvel much how he argues from these grounds to either the necessity or the expediency of territorial religious allotments by the State. These are clearly *unnecessary* for the end designed. Religious teachers can certainly “make a tender” of their counsels at every house without being either appointed or paid by the State, and with every probability of being as well received. And it wants nothing but to act upon a plan, and to act in concert, for unendowed and unappointed ministers to secure the actual visitation of every family that will permit it. The territorial machinery is, therefore, altogether needless; and this consideration alone ought to be sufficient to set it aside. But, besides being needless, it is also mischievous; and a brief survey of the

evils which it both naturally and necessarily involves, will serve to set in a fairer light those voluntary efforts which Dr. Chalmers evidently wishes altogether to supersede.

1. State allotments of the population to religious instructors involve the exercise of an authority quite inadmissible. A minister thus placed in a parish appears before the people in the name and behalf of the government who send him, and, *as a teacher*, is armed with the authority of the State. He will naturally speak of himself as an authorized teacher, and as authorized to teach them, his parishioners. His authority to teach implies, of course, their duty, and their duty as originating from civil governors, to submit to his teaching; and the absence of any right or authority on their part to refuse or question his instructions. He comes with "the faith selected for them" by the government; to dictate their religion, therefore, and practically to deny and take away the right of private judgment in relation to it. All this is wrong—essentially and heinously wrong—and cannot be tolerated for a moment. We acknowledge that a teacher of religion *may* possess authority; but, when we meet with one who makes such a pretension, we ask him, in the words which were once most justly addressed to the Teacher sent from God, "Who gave thee this authority?" If he says, and proves his words, that Jesus Christ has given him authority, I own his credentials; but, if he presents me with an Act of Parliament to show authority derived from the State, I tear his parchment, and repudiate at once both the sender and the sent, with a rebuke by which presumption not very dissimilar was long ago effectually abashed—"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but *who are ye?*"

2. Such a method obstructs the salutary exercise of the mind. Above all subjects, religion calls for a vigorous exercise of the rational powers. Its appeal is to the understanding, that it may reach the conscience and the heart. It requires every man to think, feel, and act, for himself. The State-allotment of authorized teachers directly diminishes the force of this appeal, and tends to make it altogether nugatory. Instead of being thrown upon the determination of your own religious views and character, here is "a faith" and mode of piety selected for you by the government—determined to be right, therefore, before you can ask a single question about it—and a minister sent down by the govern-

ment expressly to take charge of your religion according to this method, and do it for you. You have, consequently, neither to inquire, nor to choose, nor to think; but to yield yourself to the hands of the parish priest, and keep to the ways of your parish church—then, you are told, all will be well. What a fearful opiate to the heart is this! What multitudes must live and die—have lived and died—in slumber, under such a system!

3. The territorial State-clergy scheme brings into operation a class of inferior and unworthy motives. Under it, people are not left to the influences of truth and consideration, to entertain one or the other view, as such influences may be cherished or repelled by them; but motives of secular interest are introduced. A bounty is offered on adhesion to the national religion, both as opposed to no religion at all, and to such other forms of religion as may co-exist with it. If you belong to “the church,” you are looked on complacently by all the State authorities; your trade is unobstructed; your reputation is untarnished; you are eligible to offices of honour and emolument, and admissible to charities and almshouses. But will all these things be so if you are a Dissenter? O no! The very reverse, as has often been keenly felt. So that here is a set of worldly motives employed to induce people to be religious, and to be of one religion rather than another—or, rather, to induce people to profess this religion, whether they understand and approve it or not. Truth, and true religion, scorn such an appeal. It is a mere bounty on falsehood and hypocrisy.

4. This method, further, is unjust to Christians of other denominations. The secular benefits attached to the professors of the Established sect are, of course, withheld from those of all sects besides. Christians of every other denomination have to bear odium and embarrassment in a thousand forms; and this not because they are wanting in virtue—for, compared with Churchmen in the mass, they are by far the most virtuous part of the community—but simply because they are Dissenters. They pay a civil penalty for their religious convictions; and are punished for their fear of God, and their reverence of truth. This is substantial persecution, and does not differ in principle from persecution in its bloodiest forms. An Established Church is essentially a persecuting church. If I were to invest these institutions

with personal attributes, I might say that they have a native thirst for blood; and that the only security for religious liberty lies in their being muzzled with iron. When they cannot bite, their growl is still heard in the Acts of Parliament which call our liberty, mangled as it is, *toleration*.

Dr. Chalmers, overlooking the injustice thus done by an Establishment to all other communities of Christians, has dwelt largely on that which he conceives to be done to their *ministers*. He says it is "puzzling to assign

"any ground on which they should be excluded, we do not say from the honours, but from the substantial benefits, of an Establishment; or why a national provision should be withheld from the ministers of those Protestant denominations, more than from the Protestant Episcopalians of England. It may be easy to say," he adds, "why we should keep out Popery, and let in Protestantism; but it does not appear easy to fix on the proper reason why, when there is so little to discriminate between them, we should let in one species of Protestantism, and keep out all the rest. The closer their modes of faith approximate to each other, it does—it may well be thought—aggravate the task of selection, and make it all the harder to specify why it is that the monopoly of the endowments of a great national institute should have been vested in one alone; or why its favoured disciples should have been admitted into the bowers of the Establishment, while all the rest have been left on the outfields of unendowed sectarianism" (pp. 133, 134).

We thank our brother in "the bowers" for his sympathy; but we must apprise him that his whole argument in relation to this matter proceeds on an erroneous basis.

He argues as though he conceived that "the honours and emoluments of an Establishment" were the wish of *all* Christian communities. We know not respecting whom he may be in the right in this supposition; but, for ourselves, we can most truly assure him that he is in the wrong. Difficult as it may be for those who luxuriate in "the bowers of an Establishment" to believe it, it is nevertheless true that we do not covet, and that we are convinced we ought not to share, their supposed advantages. *We*, therefore, want no apology for the State-church not comprehending ourselves. Were a participation of its wealth and power to be offered us, our reply ought to be, in the words of an ancient seer: "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another."

But if we did wish to share "the honours and emoluments of an Establishment," we confess we should be hardly per-

suaded by the arguments of Dr. Chalmers on this subject to forego our desire. On the question of *right* he makes no stand, but admits that the churches established in England and Scotland have no claim to be preferred over the great majority of Protestant sects. Only, says he, the endowed church *must* be "territorial," and, if "territorial," then only one sect can be endowed. Whence he pleads with all other sects to let the one which happens to be endowed possess her supremacy undisturbed, because there is a great work to be done which can be done by no other means. Nay, he goes further, and not only complains of sectaries who, on account of minor differences, will not help an Establishment in its office, but laughs at those who, for what he calls "paltry" and "whimsical" peculiarities, refuse to enter the enclosure and enjoy the "bowers." "To the remonstrances of the excluded sects, Why, when we differ so little, do you not take us in?" he tells us "it may well be replied, Why, when you differ so little, do you keep yourselves out?"

Now, if I were a party against whom these arguments had any bearing, I should reply in two ways. I should say, first, that I do not regard the Establishment as adapted to the work it boasts of; that I look on it rather as an institution essentially ill-principled, and actually ill-working; so that no motive exists with me to sacrifice anything to its support. And I should say, secondly, that the points in which I differ with the Established sect, though not "essential," are not "paltry;" if subordinate to the great matters of saving truth, they are not (as Dr. Chalmers calls them) "caprices, and whimsical peculiarities," but matters upon which I think God has made known his will, and upon which I have made a conscientious decision. To be asked, with a sneer,* why, for such reasons, I "keep myself out" of "the bowers of an Establishment," is but to be asked, in other words, why I am such a fool as not to sell my conscience for a bribe? Is it the habit, then, of those who enter Establishments to do so?

* I was present when this appeal was made, and was struck, too forcibly soon to forget it, with the kind of plaudits with which it was received. I have used too gentle a term in saying they were expressive of a *sneer*; it was almost a broad laugh. An ebullition more indicative of an utter want of principle in those from whom it issued, and of an absolute incapacity to appreciate it in those against whom it was directed, I never witnessed—one less creditable to the honesty of that courtly audience as churchmen, or their urbanity as gentlemen.

Or can he be anything but a knave who asks me such a question?

5. But to return. The allotment of territorial rights to State-clergy can evidently be of no use without a guarantee of their competency and diligence. This we have already seen that an Establishment cannot afford. On the contrary, it is adapted to create, and creates in fact, a ministry pre-vaillingly ignorant and unfaithful. To hand over sections of the country and masses of the people to these teachers, is to consign the people to ruin, and to augment to the utmost possible degree the mischievous influence of the ministers. They are the very men to whom a territory should not be assigned; but who should be left to the clear sense and shrewd observation of the people themselves, to be dealt with according to their deserts.

6. The State-church system, also, places its ministers in a position of serious and insuperable disadvantage. They are placed over their parishioners to fleece as well as to feed them, and appear before the people as having an obvious interest in the system they uphold. It is the source of "honour and emolument" to them; and, even if they are disinterested in labour, and abundant in self-denials, it is scarcely possible they should be exempt from suspicion of selfishness in the popular mind. They are entitled to exact money for everything; money for christening you—money for marrying you—money for churching you—money for burying you; and all this out of your own pocket, besides the much larger sum which the State pays them for the trouble of taking it from you. It may be said unjustly that they strive to maintain the church as a system of "good things," and religion as "a profitable fable;" that they preach only because they are paid for it, and that they look out with an eagle's eye for promotion—all this may be said unjustly; but it *is* said, and will be said, and cannot be gainsaid, so long as Establishments exist. The work of the Gospel is thus rendered, not voluntary, but professional; not self-denying, but lucrative; and, with so rich a fleece for his reward, the shepherd never can make the people believe that he cares mainly for the flock. We say that this is a serious disadvantage, both to minister and to people; inasmuch as it takes away from him that aspect of disinterested love by which, above all other things, he might win his way into their hearts.

These natural and inevitable mischiefs are serious drawbacks from the apparent value of the territorial system, and fully entitle us to claim a preference for modes of exertion independent of such machinery. But, even if the scheme were not mischievous, but were, on the contrary, of confessedly beneficial adaptation, we might truly say that it is impracticable, at least without a simultaneous requirement that every person shall go to *his parish church*. Dr. Chalmers seems to be displeased with ministers who “fill their churches by the superior attractiveness of their preaching,” and would have them to do so “out of the district” allotted to them. For ministers to *try* at this is very well; but does Dr. Chalmers mean to put a restraint upon the *people*; so that either the residents in other parishes shall not come into this, or the residents in this parish shall not stray into another? Why, to say nothing of that awkward tribe the Dissenters, even Churchmen themselves would never bear such a bridle as this. No part of the community is more characterized by “having itching ears” than the church-going population, or more audaciously wanders in search of popular preachers. Let Dr. Chalmers mark out the country into territorial allotments, stud the land with State-clergy to the number of one to every two thousand persons, and assign the Christian instruction of each section to its authorized minister—and the people will still forsake their authorized instructors in countless droves, and with unblushing effrontery, to fill the churches of Mr. Melvill and Dr. Dillon, leaving others to the occupation of the sexton and the beadle. Now we affirm that, in this way, even Churchmen themselves, and the highest of them, adopt and act out the plan often so vehemently condemned by High Church writers, of *hearers choosing their own minister*; and that they trample in the dust the fancy of territorial allotments. According to the theory of an Establishment, every man should go to his parish church; for there preaches the man, and the *only* man, whom the State has authorized to teach *him*; and it is as clear a violation of his duty, and as gross an insult to the State, to go to church in another parish, as it could be to worship in a conventicle. Originally the Church of England enforced this theory by a law imposing a penalty upon every person who did not go to his parish church; and there is no sense at all in Dr. Chalmers’s scheme of a minute territorial allotment, without the odious and intolerable adjunct of its revival.

Such are our objections to the localizing of Christian ministers *by the authority of the State*. We say, let them localize ; but let localizing, like contribution, be *voluntary*.

On no other ground does our northern opponent make an attack upon us. If we have repulsed him at these points, we have repulsed him at all those at which he has thought proper to try our mettle. And we remain unscathed in our position. The principle of "free trade," which he falsely ascribes to us, we disclaim. The principle of voluntary contribution, which we acknowledge, he admits to be just. And the territorial scheme, which he pronounces to be indispensable, we have shown to be needless, mischievous, and impracticable. It remains, then, a sentiment impregnable thus far, that voluntary efforts, as they constitute the only just, are a perfectly sufficient mode of diffusing Christianity. We will not argue their sufficiency, however, merely from the failure of the Chalmerian battery ; but will add two or three considerations of a positive kind to confirm our conclusion.

1. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts for the spread of the Gospel may be argued from *their exclusive rectitude*. They are the only kind of efforts which are not unjust. Now, if these be not sufficient, one of two things must ensue ; either that there are *no* sufficient means of accomplishing the triumph of Christianity, or that its triumph must be secured by injustice and wrong. We allow our opponents to choose either horn of this dilemma. But, if neither of them can be accepted, then our position cannot be shaken, that voluntary efforts, seeing they are the only ones which are just, must be sufficient for the propagation of religion.

2. The same conclusion may be argued from *the confidence placed in voluntary efforts by the divine Founder of Christianity*. He neither enjoined, recommended, nor sanctioned, any other. He committed "the faith" "to the saints," and left all its triumphs to their fidelity and zeal. And this, too, in the extremest weakness of his cause ; at a period when, if ever, it must have pre-eminently demanded the sheltering and fostering care of governing powers. How was it our Lord did not see that his Gospel could by no means so effectually be propagated through the world as by making the Roman emperors successively the head of his church, and directing them to carve the empire into parishes, and to endow a teacher "to every two thousand of the population"

out of the imperial revenues? What could he be thinking of to intrust such a work to a few poor fishermen, without a single endowment for a rector, vicar, or curate among them—or a single cathedral preferment, to provide leisure for “pious authorship;” and without any “territorial allotment” except when their feet “were made fast in the stocks,” or their hands bound behind them to die? Was this *infatuation*? One would think Dr. Chalmers must deem it so. We hold it to be *wisdom*; and avow the methods in which our adorable Master placed his confidence to be worthy of ours.

3. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts may be argued from *their comprehending all that is active and powerful in Establishments themselves*. Everybody who looks at our National Religious Establishment in its actual working, must be struck with the fact that it is far from working out the theory of its existence. According to this, the care of the nation's religion belongs to the government, which is to endow the teachers, erect the churches, divide the parishes, appoint the incumbents, and constitute the entire hierarchy, with all its grades of rank and authority, “selecting its faith,” and enacting its ritual. Theoretically, there is neither scope to voluntary zeal, nor right of private judgment. From first to last it is a scheme of coercion and restriction; every man's work and duty being precisely laid down, and prescribed to him by the government. This is the theory of the National church; but we all know that, with respect to our own at least (and I might enumerate others), this is not the practice. There has been gradually introduced into it a great deal of what Dr. Chalmers calls “voluntaryism.” See it in the Church Missionary Society, in the Bishop of London's subscription for building churches (analogous to that of which Dr. Chalmers boasts so loudly in Scotland); in the erection of churches by individual liberality, the election of lecturers and other officiating ministers by the people, in the Pastoral Aid Society, and many instances besides. The same spirit was struggling for utterance in the baffled Home Missionary Society of the Irish Church. All these things are exercises of the voluntary principle, as distinct from, and as repugnant to, the principles and spirit of an Establishment. These doings are copied from us. But these are the very life and power of the Establishment at the present moment. It would perish, in the present state of public opinion, if they were

obstructed; and it lives only because it has been plastic enough to admit of such irregularities, and to yield to such anomalous modifications. How can Churchmen deprecate that which they so sedulously cultivate, and which constitutes at once the entire vitality of their system, and the sole hope of its stability?

4. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts may be further argued from *their early triumphs*. For national Establishments were not coeval with Christianity. This fallacious aid was never presented to it till the time of Constantine, who became Emperor of Rome A.D. 330. For more than three hundred years, therefore, this heaven-born religion struggled alone; and, in its native might and majestic simplicity, it achieved triumphs far greater than have at any subsequent period distinguished its course. If that was the time of its helplessness, give us its helplessness again, and set the quickening spirit once more free from the "machinery" and the trappings, which only disguise her loveliness and fetter her hands.

Dr. Chalmers, however, tells us that voluntary efforts cannot be trusted. Whatever they may have done in ancient days, in modern times they have egregiously failed. These are his words:—

"Ere, however, we confide the religion of our people to the growth and multiplication of these churches, we should like to know in how far they have filled up those blank spaces which, in the course of an increasing population, our national churches have left behind them. In the deficiency of our existing apparatus, the voluntary principle has had ample field for the trial of its energies; and our desire is to understand whether, in virtue of those spontaneous and expansive properties which have been ascribed to it, the mighty surplus of our unprovided millions has indeed been overtaken. In this land of perfect toleration, there has been no want of liberty for the great experiment; and now, at the end of at least a century since chapels may, without let or hindrance, have been planted in each vacant portion of the territory, let us be told whether all the national and all the voluntary churches together be commensurate to the exigencies of our augmented population" (p. 80).

This passage exhibits very strikingly one of the effects of people getting into "the bowers of an Establishment." These "bowers" seem to be places where studious men, like poets, live in a world of their own imaginings, and remain almost utterly ignorant of what exists in the real world around them. If this had not been the case with Dr. Chalmers, it

is utterly inconceivable how he should have stated, that "in this land of perfect toleration (!) there has been no want of liberty for the great experiment" of voluntary zeal; and that, for "at least a century" past, "chapels may, without let or hindrance, have been planted in each vacant portion of the territory." The reverse of this is notorious, and the bruit of it has been loud enough, one would have supposed, to penetrate everywhere—but it seems the northern monasteries must be excepted. For "*a century*" past! Does Dr. Chalmers, then, know nothing of the times of Whitefield and of Wesley? But I forbear, lest I should be severe. Everybody else knows that the "planting" of chapels has been throughout the whole period, and is to this day, obstructed by the strenuous employment of all possible influences, just and unjust. In this respect the voluntary principle has never had a fair trial in England.

Nor has it had a fair trial in any other respect. And it is preposterous to talk of its having a fair trial where there exists a national church. The operation of the voluntary principle is thus at once discountenanced and embarrassed; its scope is contracted; its resources are drained away; its spirit is broken. It is like private traders contending with a monopoly. And here, after centuries of patient, though disadvantageous, toil, resulting, of course, in only partial success, we have the great monopolist triumphantly and tauntingly saying, "You have had ample trial, and you had better give it up; you see it won't do." We say, *Break up the monopoly*, and let us try, *then*. And never, till such a trial has been made, can any man undertake to affirm rationally that the voluntary system would not be a speedy and everlasting blessing to this country and to the world.

Considering the difficulties under which it has laboured, every candid person will allow that the voluntary principle has done much. It has done enough to vindicate its character, and to demonstrate its capabilities. I am not here to boast of its achievements; I say, rather, that it should have done more, and that it should yet do more. It is this very thing that the controversy we are engaged in should teach us, namely, *to act out our principles*. It is well to defend them, but it is better to work upon them. We see the vehemence with which they are assailed, and the urgency with which the extension of national churches is pushed on; and it is

not amiss to meet argument with argument. But it will be still better to meet arguments with facts. An eloquent defence of the voluntary principle may do something for us; but the manifest diffusion of the Gospel around us will do much more. Nothing will carry such irresistible conviction that it *can* do good as the demonstration that it *is* doing good. And it is not as a theoretical, but as an active principle alone that it can live. We may as well abandon our cause at once as be idle. It is the diligent who will be substantially in the right in this controversy. And the Churchman, with all his advocacy of the principle of authority, is practically working to a great extent the principle of voluntary labour. Let us not fall behind him. Let every man be at work as best he may; and, whatever may be the fate of national churches, the time shall yet come when we "shall no longer say every man to his neighbour, Know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest."

In thus noticing the Lectures of Dr. Chalmers, I have endeavoured to find the strength of his argument, and to grapple with it fairly; those who may have heard or read them will be able to say with how much honesty or effect. If, however, there was little force in his reasonings, there certainly was great staunchness in his courage; and he deserves no little honour for having spoken his sentiments boldly, where he must have been sure some of them could not be acceptable—as in the following passage:—

"We do not speak of the sin of schism in the abstract. There is much said on this subject by certain domineering Churchmen, who arrogate a mystic superiority to themselves, while they would consign all others beyond the pale of Christianity—wherewith we cannot in the least sympathize. It is not on any pretension of this sort that we would vindicate the Establishment of the churches, either of Scotland or of England. We do not feel it necessary for such a purpose to depress immeasurably beneath us either the creed or the government of other denominations. We most willingly concede of sectaries we could name that they are one with us in all which is vital, and only differ from us in certain minute and insignificant peculiarities; and yet the Establishment, the single, the exclusive Establishment, of our existing churches in their respective countries, might be made to rest, we think, on a firmer because a more rational basis—on a far clearer principle than is alleged by those who claim for their ministers the immaculate descent of a pure and apostolic ordination. We disclaim all aid from any such factitious argument—

an argument which could have been of no avail against the Popery that we rejected, and should be of as little avail against those denominations of Protestantism which have been left unendowed" (pp. 172, 173).

Whether the obtaining of this rebuke for the High Churchmen was exactly contemplated by the "Christian Influence Society" I know not; nor whether this is exactly the commodity for which they are satisfied to have given this northern hunter after treasury grants the gratifying sum (if report may be credited) of three hundred guineas. But let them not be chagrined. So salutary an article is not dear at that price. If they will take it kindly, and make a good use of it, it may be worth to them in the end a great deal more than they have unintentionally paid for it.

THE
TEST OF EXPERIENCE;
OR THE
VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE subject of this volume is one upon which much has already been written, and written so well that it may seem almost a work of superelevation to write more. What is important to the public, however, is not so much the existence of good books as the accessibleness of them; and the principal value of the present performance (if it have any) will be, that it presents in a small compass, and at a cheap rate, information gleaned from many and more expensive volumes.

Of works touching incidentally on the working of the Voluntary Principle in the United States, the most valuable is undoubtedly Drs. Reed and Matheson's Narrative of their visit to the American Churches, published in 1835. Two books have been produced on this subject exclusively. The first of them is by Dr. Lang—Religion and Education in America—the fruit of a visit to the States in 1839 and 1840: the second is by Dr. Baird, an American Presbyterian minister, entitled Religion in the United States, and published in 1843. The former of these volumes contains much excellent matter, but the latter exhausts the entire subject. For facts as they were at the period of his writing, Dr. Baird, as a minister of high standing and long experience in the United States, is, of course, himself an authority; and for matters of history, as having access to all the best sources of information, he is scarcely less so. In this latter particular a writer in this country is necessarily at a disadvantage. Such original works as I have been able to find, however, I have consulted; and I have in all cases found Dr. Baird's use of them so correct and so just, that I place in his citations an entire confidence. Those who have read Dr. Baird's book will find that I have made much use of it. I could not do otherwise, and I readily acknowledge my obligation.

In addition to Dr. Baird's volume, and as a kind of Appendix to it containing the most recent intelligence, there is great value in the statistical paper which he read before the Conference of the British Organization of the Evangelical Alliance, on the 30th of August last. I have made use of it as it appeared in the columns of the *Christian Times* newspaper of September 6th.

This little performance, however, is far from being either an abridgment of Dr. Baird, or an imitation of him. Without a possibility of being

original, it is assuredly not servile ; and I trust I do not deceive myself in hoping that I have put the matter which is pertinent to the very important question I have handled, in a more compact and readable form than any in which it has hitherto appeared before the British public.

LONDON, *September 16, 1851.*

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

IN a case in which opposite opinions are strongly entertained it is difficult to render an argument conclusive. If something not wanting in weight may be advanced on one side, something scarcely (in the opinion of its propounders) less weighty may be urged on the other ; and much, perhaps, may be said on both. In such circumstances it is a great felicity when a debated question is capable of being subjected to a practical test. If the result of applying such a test is clear and certain, an experimental argument is obtained of far greater power and conclusiveness than a host of speculations.

The question of National Religious Establishments is one on which it has, by both parties, been found very hard to produce conviction. The advocates of the Compulsory Principle, indeed, find much to say ; but, after all, the promoters of the Voluntary Principle retain as unshaken a conviction as their opponents. Now it seems as though it might contribute to help the argument out of this difficulty—which, to use an American term, might not unaptly be called *a fix*—if one could discover a practical test, and submit the Voluntary and Compulsory principles respectively to a process of experiment by which their value might be definitely decided.

In part, indeed, this has been already done. Established and endowed churches have existed quite long enough, in our judgment, to show what their powers are of evangelizing nations ; and certainly the result of the experiment, so far, is little in their favour, since it is but too obvious that they have merely covered the ignorance and vices of mankind with the name of Christianity, leaving it all the while to the struggling efforts of the Voluntary Principle to generate and foster vital religion.

It may be said, however, that this is only one-half of the experiment required ; that the energy of the Voluntary

Principle also needs to be subjected to a similar test; and that nothing can be inferred in its favour from the comparative failure of its antagonist, until it has demonstrated its power to effect a happier result. And when this has been said, we are liable to be told that, as to England, and even to Europe, the Voluntary Principle is a theory only, a mere speculation of the value of which nothing certain can be affirmed, and for the sake of which, consequently, it cannot be worth while to abandon what has been so long maintained.

Part of this allegation we are compelled to admit. It is quite true that, neither in Europe generally, nor in England in particular, has the Voluntary Principle unobstructed course. Not in this region can its capabilities be demonstrated. Happily, however, the world is larger than Europe; and, still more happily, there is one portion of it in which the principle we are wishing to question has been put to the test of experience, and has been so put for a time sufficiently long, and in circumstances sufficiently critical, to afford us an instructive, and perhaps a conclusive, answer. We refer, of course, to the United States of America.

The materials presented to us by the United States of America for an experimental determination of the question before us comprehend everything that can be desired. They are a great nation. They are a nation almost wholly of European, and in great part of British, origin. Their ancestors took with them into the western wilderness European sentiments, and among these especially a conviction of the importance, and even the necessity, of Religious Establishments. Under all possible advantages they adopted and acted upon the principle of compulsion. They have, however, relinquished it; they have adopted in its place the Voluntary Principle; and now it cannot be either unfair or uninteresting to ask, How does it work?

This question is the key to this little volume. And our plan will be, in the first place, to exhibit the History and Working of the Compulsory Principle in the United States; and, in the second, to trace the Introduction of the Voluntary Principle, and to inquire into its Results.

PART I.

THE COMPULSORY PRINCIPLE IN THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER I.

ITS HISTORY.

THE United States, we have just said, are a great nation. The nation thus denominated, however, consists, as its name imports, of a number (now thirty-one) of States which in some important respects are separated, yet in some other respects, not less important, united. Thus there is a Federal government for the management of affairs strictly national, such as questions of peace or war, and many others; and there are State governments, to which belong generally matters of local interest, together with some subjects of great magnitude for various reasons excepted from the Federal rule. Now the question of Religious Establishments is one with which the Federal government has not, and never has had, anything to do. There is, indeed, one express article of the constitution of the United States which forbids to it any action on that subject, whether adverse or favourable. We, consequently, shall have no references to make to proceedings of the Federal government, but shall have to concern ourselves entirely with the conduct of the several States.

And chiefly with a few of these. For the matter we have to treat of carries us back far beyond the formation of the American Union, that is to say, beyond the existence of the United States as a nation; and without, we hope, trying the patience of our readers, we must give some brief account of the origination of some of the settlements which formed the nucleus of it. We shall not do this in a strictly chronological order, but shall throw them rather into two groups, corresponding with the modes of religious action by which they were respectively characterized. The one of these may

be called the New England group, the other (using the name with some latitude) the Virginian.

We first turn our attention to the colonies which we have called the Virginian group.

Virginia was the first permanent colony planted by the English in America. Its origin dates as far back as 1607, when it was founded by a company in London, wholly as a commercial speculation. The religious troubles of the seventeenth century in England had not at that time broken out, and the settlers, as members of the Church of England, carried out with them a cordial attachment to its ecclesiastical system. It was, besides, enjoined in the charter that religion should be established according to the doctrines and rites of that church; and every emigrant was bound, not only to allegiance to the king, but to conformity with his creed. In the year 1619 a legislative assembly met for the first time, and then laws were passed for the formation of parishes, and for the regular maintenance of the clergy; this, consequently, is the date of the formal establishment of the Episcopal Church in Virginia, which, however, was from the first identified with the secular government.

Maryland, originally a part of Virginia, was planted in 1634, by Lord Baltimore, in order to provide an asylum for persecuted Romanists. Leonard Calvert, his son, led the enterprise, and settled the colony on the basis of toleration for all Christian sects; for fifty years this state of things was maintained, and no legal provision was made for any religious community. After the revolution of 1688 in England, however, Protestant Episcopacy was established in this colony by law, the country was divided into parishes, and the clergy were supported by a tax on the inhabitants.

The two Carolinas, North and South, having been partially settled by stragglers from Virginia, with whom some from New England and some from Europe joined themselves in search of better fortune, the region was, in 1663, granted to a proprietary company in England.

In South Carolina no preference was in the first instance shown to any sect. By the act of the Representative Assembly of the colony in the year 1704, however, and by a majority of one (said to have been artfully obtained), the Episcopalians deprived all but themselves of the political franchise, and established the Church of England in a des-

potic supremacy. On an appeal to the House of Lords, the measures complained of were both annulled at home and repealed in the colony; but the Church of England remained the church established by law.

In North Carolina, in the same year, a church establishment was forced by the proprietaries on the inhabitants, without any regard either to their wish or their creed; the population, however, being a medley of almost all religious denominations, the church establishment never was more than a name.

New York was originally a Dutch colony. The first settlement having taken place about the year 1614, it was called New Netherlands, and its chief town New Amsterdam. The English, however, conquered, and took permanent possession of, all the Dutch settlements in the year 1664; and New Netherlands having been granted by Charles II. to his brother, the Duke of York, both the colony and its capital assumed his name.

As long as the colony remained in the hands of the Dutch the Church and the State were kept apart, and the ministers were supported by voluntary contributions. The English governors, however, naturally preferred the English church, and the establishment of Episcopacy was ultimately brought about in the following manner:—In 1693, the legislature was prevailed on to pass an Act for the Establishment of *certain* Churches and Ministers, reserving the right of presentation to vestrymen and churchwardens; and, two years afterwards, this act was construed in such a manner that *Episcopal* ministers alone received the benefit of it.

It is not needful to speak here of the other colonies—New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Georgia—in which the principle of a church establishment was either never introduced, or never fully carried out.

We proceed to notice that portion of the United States which is commonly called New England. Extending northwards from the State of New York, it comprises Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont; and it was colonized by various parties of settlers from England during the tyranny of the Stuarts. The first settlement was at New Plymouth, which was founded on the western coast of Massachusetts Bay in the year 1620; and further settlements were effected a few years

afterwards—one at Salem in 1629, and one at Boston in 1630, points from which colonization extensively diffused itself. New Hampshire was planted in 1631, and the first settlements in Maine were made rather before this time. In 1635 the valley of Connecticut was wrested from the hands of the Dutch; and in 1638 the celebrated Roger Williams, an exile from Massachusetts, founded the city of Providence on Narragansett Bay, the germ of the colony of Rhode Island. Thus, within about twenty years from the first settlement, the foundation of all the States, except Vermont, was laid.

The men by whom this rugged and unpromising region was colonized were among the most remarkable the world has ever seen. They are now familiarly known as the Puritan, or Pilgrim, Fathers of New England; and, with all their faults (which were not few), they were worthy of the profound veneration which posterity has paid to their names. They were men of sterling religion, for which, indeed, they sacrificed everything. They set a high value on learning, and were friendly to the diffusion of knowledge; and, finally, they were great examples of self-denial and patriotism.

One of the first objects of the New England colonists was to found an ecclesiastical economy. For this they adopted the system of Independency. Its essential principles were—“That, according to the Scriptures, every church ought to be confined within the limits of a single congregation, and that its government should be democratical; that churches should be constituted by such as desired to be members making a confession of their faith in the presence of each other, and signing a covenant; that the whole power of admitting and excluding members, with the deciding of all controversies, was in the brotherhood; that church officers, for preaching the word and taking care of the poor, were to be chosen by the free suffrage of the brethren; that in church censures there should be an entire separation of the ecclesiastical from the civil sword; that Christ is the head of the church; that a liturgy is not necessary; and that all ceremonies not prescribed by the Scriptures are to be rejected.”

Thus much had the New England Colonies in common; and subsequently religion, in most of them, became connected with the secular government in the following manner:—

1. In every colony except Rhode Island, one of the first legislative acts was directed to a provision for the support of public worship. It required the laying out of parishes, or towns—that is, districts—of a convenient size; and authorized the levying of taxes for erecting and repairing meeting-houses, for supporting a minister, and for other necessary expenses.

2. In 1631 a second law touching this matter was passed in Massachusetts, then including what afterwards formed the State of Maine. It was of the following tenor:—"To the end that the body of the Commons may be preserved of honest and good men, it is ordered and agreed, that, for the time to come, no one shall be admitted to the freedom of the body politic but such as are members of some of the churches within the limits of the same." A similar law existed from the first in New Haven, during the period of its separate existence, and was extended in 1662 to Connecticut, with which New Haven was incorporated. By these two links were the Church and the State fundamentally united in New England.

Thus we see the Compulsory Principle practically established in the American colonies, and in a twofold aspect—as identified with Independency, or Congregationalism, on the one hand, and with Episcopacy on the other. We may now proceed to notice its operation respectively in each group.

CHAPTER II.

ITS WORKING.

IN proceeding to consider the results of the Compulsory Principle in the American colonies, it is, of course, fair to estimate the advantages of which it is alleged to have been productive. There have not been wanting persons who have highly eulogized it, and even Dr. Baird puts down to its apparent credit some considerable benefits.

Some of these, however, are confined to New England—we may say rather, to the colony of Massachusetts—and are

of a political kind. The tyranny which was rampant in England was furiously jealous of every measure of liberty enjoyed by the colonies ; and it is asserted that the law of Massachusetts by which political power was confined to church members was very useful in assisting the colonists in their early contest with the English Court, and in enabling them to rescue their institutions from the clutches of Charles I. and Laud. There are two reasons, however, why we think no weight ought to be attached to this statement. The first is, that the matter of it is totally irrelevant. Our question relates to the operation of the Compulsory Principle in religion, not in politics. Political advantages are nothing to the point, still less so is one that was purely incidental to the circumstances and the time. The second is, that it is substantially untrue. Even American historians admit that, with all the help supplied by its church polity, Massachusetts would not have been saved if Charles had been prosperous. "As it was," says Dr. Baird, "nothing saved them, probably, but the breaking out of the civil war in Great Britain, which gave Charles I. enough to do at home."*

Quite as little importance are we disposed to attach to another alleged benefit of this law in Massachusetts—namely, that it kept away from the colony men of a troublesome character. There is no system of despotism for which a plea may not be raised on a similar ground.

One only question, in our judgment, has pertinency ; it is, What was the effect of the Compulsory System in respect of religion ? This question carries us away from New England in particular, and leads us to contemplate the influence of the Compulsory Principle throughout the whole region in which it was operating.

It has been asserted with great confidence, and with some apparent justice, that it proved eminently beneficial by securing the ministration of the Gospel to the colonial settlements as soon as they were formed. Some American writers are eloquent upon this theme, but there are serious drawbacks from its apparent force.

1. The plan did not, and could not, really secure the ministration of the *Gospel*. All that it could certainly effect was the building and endowing of places of worship. In point

* Baird's Religion in the United States, p. 198.

of fact, in many cases where this was done there was no minister, and often when a minister was appointed he was worse than none. This was especially the case where Episcopacy was established, a large number of the clergy in Virginia in particular being of a most worthless description. If in New England the character of the ministers was better, this arose from accidental, and even from temporary, causes.

2. Where there existed influences adapted to make the plan work well, all that it effected would probably have been done without it. The Puritans of New England, for example, with the sentiments and plans which they carried with them to the New World, would surely have done on the Voluntary Principle all that was effected in this respect by the Compulsory. In Rhode Island religion never had the aid of the State, and, assuredly, it has never been a whit inferior to any in its religious character and advancement. It is clearly unfair, first by the adoption of the Compulsory Principle to repress the Voluntary, and then to claim the credit for the Compulsory Principle of all that the Voluntary would equally have effected.

In our judgment, therefore, there is no advantage whatever to be set down to the score of the Compulsory Principle in the American Colonies. What good was done during its prevalence either would have been done without it, or was done in spite of it. If New England was an illustration of the former alternative, Virginia was an illustration of the latter. In that colony Dissenters multiplied rapidly, especially Presbyterians and Baptists; and among them almost exclusively were nourished the elements of vital religion.

We may now inquire what evils—for evils there certainly and speedily were—the prevalence of the Compulsory Principle generated? And we answer—

1. The established churches soon manifested a spirit of intolerance and persecution.

We shall lay no stress on the “laws moral and divine” sent out from England to Virginia under the governorship of Sir Thomas Dale, atrocious as they were, because there was good sense enough in the colony to prevent the enforcement of them;* but the legislation of the colony itself furnishes a

* The reader may like to read the account given by Dr. Baird of these laws, and to see what the established church in America *might* have been:—

sufficient illustration of our remark. Thus previously to the dissolution of the company in 1624, a law was passed enacting that whosoever should absent himself from divine service any Sunday, without an allowable excuse, should forfeit a pound of tobacco (then generally used as a substitute for money); and whosoever absented himself for a month should forfeit fifty pounds of tobacco. A law was passed, also, conforming the church as near as might be to the canons of

“The first of those laws that bears upon religion enjoins officers of the colony, of every description, to have a care that ‘the Almighty God be duly and daily served,’ that the people ‘heare sermons,’ that they themselves set a good example therein, and that they punish such as shall be often and wilfully absent ‘according to martial law in the case provided.’

“The second law forbids, upon pain of death, speaking against the sacred Trinity, or any Person of the same, or against the known articles of the Christian faith.

“The third law forbids blasphemy of God’s holy name upon pain of death; and the use of all unlawful oaths, upon severe punishment for the first offence, the boring of the tongue with a bodkin for the second, and death for the third.

“The fourth law forbids speaking disrespectfully of the Word of God upon pain of death, as well as the treating of ministers of the Gospel with disrespect; and enjoins ‘the holding of them in all reverent regard and dutifull entreatie,’ under penalty of being whipt three times, and of ‘asking public forgiveness in the assembly of the congregation three severall Saboth daies.’

“The fifth law enjoins upon all to attend morning and evening every week-day in the church for service upon the tolling of the bell, upon pain of losing their daily allowance for the first omission, to be whipt for the second, sent to the galleys for six months for the third. It also forbids all violation of the Sabbath by gaming, and commands the people to prepare themselves by private prayer for the proper attendance upon the public worship, forenoon and afternoon, upon pain of losing their week’s allowance for the first omission, the same and whipping for the second, and death for the third.

“The sixth law enjoins upon every minister within the colony to preach every Sabbath morning, and catechize in the afternoon; to have a service morning and evening every day, and preach on Wednesday; ‘to chuse unto him foure of the most religious and better disposed’ to maintain a sort of spiritual police, and to see that the church be kept in a good and decent state; and that he keep a register of births, deaths, baptisms, &c., ‘upon the burthen of a neglectfull conscience, and upon paine of losing their entertainment.’

“The seventh law commands ‘all who were then in the colony, or who shall henceforth arrive, to repair to the minister, that he may know by conference had their religious knowledge;’ and if any be deficient, they are enjoined to go to him, at times which he shall appoint, to receive further instruction, which if they refuse to do, the governor, upon representation of the fact, shall order the delinquent to be whipt once for the first omission, twice for the second, and every day till acknowledgment be made, and forgiveness asked, for the third; and also commands every man to answer when catechized respecting his faith and knowledge upon the Sabbath, upon pain of the same peril.”—*Baird*, p. 189.

the Church of England, and requiring that all persons should yield a ready obedience to the canons, on pain of censure.

The spirit which breathes in these laws led to acts of intolerance and oppression of the most shameful kind. The Quakers were subjected to much persecution and annoyance, and severe measures were adopted to exclude the Puritans from the colony. In 1642, one Reek was pilloried for two hours, fined £50, and imprisoned during the governor's pleasure, for an offence against the authority of Archbishop Laud. In Maryland the Quakers and Roman Catholics were treated with great injustice; and in the State of New York matters were carried with a still higher hand. Lord Cornbury used strenuous efforts to force the Dutch settlers into the Episcopal Church; and he received orders from the government at home "to give all countenance and encouragement to the exercise of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London, as far as conveniently might be, in the province." What was comprehended within the limits of provincial convenience may be judged of by one particular. It was directed "that no schoolmaster be henceforward permitted to come from this kingdom, and keep a school in that our said province, without the licence of our said Lord Bishop of London."

Things were not at all better—in some respects they were much worse—in New England. The differences of religious sentiment which arose there gave rise to the gravest difficulties, and the harshest proceedings. In the year 1631 the celebrated Roger Williams arrived in Massachusetts, like his precursors, fleeing from religious tyranny in England, but not, like them, prepared to practise it in America. His eyes were fully open to the nature and importance of the great principle of religious liberty, and he bore a fearless testimony against the system of ecclesiastical domination which had been founded in the wilderness. The colony was greatly agitated by the controversy which his proceedings excited for several years, and ultimately Williams was banished from it. In the year 1637 another religious dispute occurred, called the Antinomian controversy, which terminated in the expulsion from the colony of Wheelwright, Anne Hutchinson, and Aspinwall. The Baptists, also, were treated with great harshness, as is stated by a most impartial American historian, in a passage which, for the edification of our readers, we extract:—

“The first appearance of these sectaries in this province was in the year 1651, when, to the great astonishment and concern of the community, seven or eight persons, of whom the leader was one Obadiah Holmes, all at once professed the Baptist tenets, and separated from the congregation to which they had belonged, declaring that they could no longer take counsel, or partake divine ordinances, with unbaptized men, as they pronounced all the other inhabitants of the province to be. The erroneous doctrine which thus unexpectedly sprang up was at this time regarded with peculiar dread and jealousy, on account of the horrible enormities of sentiment and practice with which some of the professors of it in Germany had associated its repute; and no sooner did Holmes with his friends set up a Baptist conventicle for themselves, than complaints of their proceedings, as an intolerable nuisance, came pouring into the General Court from all quarters of the colony. The Court at first proceeded no further than to adjudge Holmes and his friends to desist from their unchristian separation; and they were permitted to retire, having first, however, publicly declared that they would follow out the leadings of their consciences, and obey God rather than man. Some time after, they were apprehended on a Sunday, while attending the preaching of one Clark, a Baptist from Rhode Island, who had come to propagate his tenets in Massachusetts. The constable who took them into custody carried them to church, as a more proper place of Christian worship, where Clark put on his hat the moment that the minister began to pray. Clark, Holmes, and another, were sentenced to pay small fines, or be flogged; and thirty lashes were actually inflicted on Holmes, who resolutely persisted in choosing a punishment that would enable him to show with what constancy he could suffer for what he believed to be the truth. A law was at the same time passed subjecting to banishment from the colony every person who should openly condemn or oppose the baptism of infants, who should attempt to seduce others from the use or approbation thereof, or purposely depart from the congregation when that rite was administered.” *

About the same time as the Baptists, the Quakers also attempted to introduce themselves into the colony.

“It was in the month of July, 1566, that two females, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin, arrived in New England from Barbadoes; and not long after nine more individuals of the same tenets came from England. They were very speedily brought before the Court of Assistants, where they gave what were deemed very contemptuous replies to the interrogatories which they were required to answer, and the Court did not hesitate to commit them to prison. The Court ultimately passed sentence of banishment against them all; and required the captain who brought them from England to find sureties to a heavy amount that he would carry them out of the colony, detaining them in prison till the vessel was ready to sail.

“Up to this period there had been no special law for the punishment of Quakers, but they had been proceeded against under the general law respecting heretics. At the next sessions of the General Court,

* Grahame's Rise and Progress of the United States, vol. i., pp. 343, 346.

an act passed laying a penalty of one hundred pounds upon the master of any vessel who should bring a known Quaker into any port of the colony, and requiring him to give security to carry him back again; enacting, also, that the Quaker should be immediately sent to the House of Correction, receive twenty stripes, and afterwards be kept to hard labour till transportation. They also laid a penalty of five pounds for importing, and the like for dispersing, Quakers' books, and severe penalties for defending their heretical opinions. The next year an additional law was made, by which all persons were subjected to the penalty of forty shillings for every hour's entertainment given to any known Quaker: after the first conviction, if a man, he was to lose one ear, and a second time the other; a woman each time to be severely whipped; and the third time, man or woman, to have their tongues bored through with a red-hot iron; and every Quaker who should become such in the colony to be subjected to the like punishment. In May, 1658, a penalty of ten shillings was laid on every person present at a Quakers' meeting, and five pounds upon every one speaking at such meeting. Notwithstanding all this severity the number of Quakers, as might well have been expected, increasing rather than diminishing, in October a further law was made, for punishing with death all Quakers who should return into the jurisdiction after banishment."*

Upon three persons was this last atrocious sentence ultimately executed. As this act of barbarity excited considerable discontent, the magistrates put forth a public vindication of their conduct; a curious document, which we think it may be useful to introduce into our narrative, not merely as authenticating the fact beyond question, but also as showing the spirit in which the persecuting tendency of State-churchism was defended:—

“A Declaration of the General Court of Massachusetts, holden at Boston, Oct. 18, 1659, and printed by their order.

“Although the justice of our proceedings against William Robinson, Marmaduke Stevenson, and Mary Dyer, supported by the authority of this Court, the laws of the country, and the law of God, may rather persuade us to expect encouragement and commendation from all prudent and pious men, than convince us of any necessity to apologize for the same; yet, forasmuch as men of weaker parts, out of pity and commiseration (a commendable and Christian virtue, yet easily abused, and susceptible of sinister and dangerous impressions), for want of full information, may be less satisfied, and men of perverser principles may take occasion hereby to calumniate us, and render us as bloody persecutors, to satisfy the one and stop the mouths of the other we thought it requisite to declare: That about three years since divers persons, professing themselves Quakers (of whose pernicious opinions and practices we had received intelligence from good hands, both from Barbadoes and England), arrived at Boston, whose persons

* Hinton's History of the United States, vol. i., pp. 80, 81.

were only secured to be sent away by the first opportunity, without censure or punishment, although their professed tenets, and turbulent and contemptuous behaviour to authority, would have justified a severer animadversion; yet the prudence of this Court was exercised only in making provision to secure the peace and order here established against their attempts, whose design (we were well assured of by our own experience, as well as by the example of their predecessors in Munster) was to undermine and ruin the same. And, accordingly, a law was made and published, prohibiting all masters of ships to bring any Quakers into this jurisdiction, and themselves from coming in, on penalty of the House of Correction, till they could be sent away. Notwithstanding which, by a back door they found entrance; and the penalty inflicted upon themselves proving insufficient to restrain their impudent and insolent obtrusions, was increased by the loss of the ears of those who offended the second time; which also being too weak a defence against their impetuous fanatic fury, necessitated us to endeavour our security; and, upon serious consideration after the former experiment, by their incessant assaults, a law was made that such persons should be banished on pain of death, according to the example of England in their provision against Jesuits; which sentence being regularly pronounced at the last Court of Assistants against the parties above-named, and they either returning or continuing presumptuously in this jurisdiction after the time limited, were apprehended, and, owning themselves to be the persons banished, were sentenced by the Court to death according to the law aforesaid, which hath been executed upon two of them. Mary Dyer, upon the petition of her son, and the mercy and clemency of this Court, had liberty to depart within two days, which she hath accepted of. The consideration of our gradual proceedings will vindicate us from the clamorous accusations of severity; our own just and necessary defence calling upon us (other means failing) to offer the point which these persons have violently and wilfully rushed upon, and thereby become *felones de se*, which might have been prevented, and the sovereign law, *salus populi*, been preserved. Our former proceedings, as well as the sparing of Mary Dyer upon an inconsiderable intercession, will manifestly evince we desire their lives, absent, rather than their death, present.”*

Such was the natural and characteristic working of the system which had been adopted. “Thus,” says an American historian, “the creation of a national and uncompromising church led the Congregationalists of Massachusetts to the indulgence of the passions which had disgraced their English persecutors, and Laud was justified by the men whom he had wronged.”†

2. The influence of the colonial church establishments was

* Hubbard's History of New England, pp. 572, 573. Mary Dyer afterwards returned, and was executed.

† Bancroft's History of the United States, pp. 450, 451.

palpably and lamentably adverse to the interest of religion itself.

In Virginia and the neighbouring colonies the endowment of Episcopacy recoiled upon the favoured church in a strong, but very natural, feeling of dislike, amounting even to antipathy. Members of other churches, or of none, felt galled at the levying of taxes for the support of a dominant sect, and learned hostility to a body to which they might otherwise have been at least indifferent, if not friendly. The Episcopal Church reaped a copious harvest of injury from the seeds of animosity thus sown.

And the interest of religion suffered as greatly as the interest of the church. "To coerce men," says an American writer, "into the outward exercise of religious acts by penal laws is, indeed, possible; but to make them love the religion which is thus enforced, or those who enforce it, is beyond the reach of human power. There is an inherent principle of resistance to oppression in the very constitution of most men, which disposes them to rebel against the arbitrary exercise of violence seeking to give direction to opinions."* And thus religion itself was at a disadvantage.

Nor was this all. In Virginia and Maryland the presentation to ecclesiastical benefices gave occasion to violent, and almost incessant, disputes between the governors and the parish vestries; while both vestries and governors alike were careless of the character of the men whom they thrust into the pastoral office. These colonies, indeed, were most infelicitously supplied with Episcopal ministers. This care devolved upon the successive bishops of London, some of whom took a deep interest in the colonial church, and did what they might to provide the parishes with godly and zealous men. Many of a very different class, however, found their way there. So gross were the immoralities of the clergy at large, that in 1651 the General Assembly found it necessary to interfere; and they enacted that "Mynisters shall not give themselves to excesse in drinkege or riott, spendinge their tyme idellye by day or night." "The worst are sent to us," said Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia, at a later period. And in 1751, the then bishop of London describes "a great part" of the colonial clergy as

* Hawks's History of the Episcopal Church in Virginia, p. 49.

those "who can get no employment at home," or are willing to go abroad "to retrieve either lost fortunes or lost character." Discipline was impossible, and cases of the most shocking delinquency occurred with impunity. Such was the condition of the State-church in the Virginian colonies.

In New England the evils resulting to religion from the union of the Church and the State were different in form, but equal in magnitude.

The law which made church-membership requisite to the enjoyment of the rights and privileges of citizenship, speedily brought forth its fruits. The worthy and noble founders of these settlements seem quite to have overlooked, not only the sure influx of irreligious persons into them, but the fact, equally certain, that many of their own children would grow up without religion. The churches at first maintained a strict discipline, and allowed none to become members who did not give evidence of conversion. Gradually, however, a large population appeared who gave no such evidence, but who thought it very hard that they should, on this account, be excluded from citizenship in settlements which their fathers had founded. When the complaints of this class of persons could no longer be disregarded, the practical question lay between church-discipline and the law. Which of these should be relaxed? Unhappily, the relaxation fell, not, as it ought to have done, upon the law, but as it ought not to have done, on the discipline of the church. The colonial legislators decided that all baptized persons should be regarded as church members. Not simply, however, according to its terms was this enactment carried out. In order to meet, as it would seem, an ecclesiastical scruple, the baptized persons who wished for citizenship were required to be of good morals, and publicly to own in the church the covenant made for them in their baptism.

The bearing of this system on the religious state of the colony soon appeared. For the attainment of a civil end the churches were filled with persons who had been baptized, and who owned the covenant; but, in consequence of a reluctance to pass the severer test by which the purity of the Lord's table was guarded, the number of communicants, or full members, rapidly diminished. To remedy this evil, and to fill the table with guests, the door to it was opened more widely, and all "well-disposed" persons were admitted

to it, under the idea of the Lord's supper being, like the preaching of the Gospel, a means of grace, and adapted to the conversion of sinners as well as to the edification of saints. The churches were thus filled with communicants, but with unconverted communicants; the consequence of which was that the standard of religious sentiment and doctrine speedily began to decline, and that in the course of a few generations it fell very low.

As the New England Colonies advanced in population, and as diversities of religious sentiment multiplied, the law which taxed the whole community for the support of one form of religion became increasingly unpopular, and it gave rise in the end to very serious difficulties. When the legislature had been obliged to extend the rights of citizenship to persons of all sects, and to allow to all the maintenance of their own worship, it became intolerable that, after paying for their own, they should be constrained to pay in addition for the parish or town churches also. Relief was obtained for this grievance; but it consisted, not in exempting any parties from the tax, but in allowing every one to appropriate his share of it to the form of religion he preferred. Compulsory support was thus given, not only to one form of religious worship, but to a hundred—to anything, in short, which could contrive to call itself by a Christian name. "Fair as this seemed," says Dr. Baird, "it proved most disastrous to the interest of true religion. The haters of evangelical Christianity could now say, 'Well, since we must be taxed in support of religion, we will have what suits us;' and in many places societies were formed, and false preachers found support, where, but for this law, no such societies or preachers would ever have existed. It is impossible to describe the mischiefs that have flowed from this unfortunate measure, not only and particularly in Massachusetts, but likewise in Connecticut, Maine, and, I believe, in New Hampshire also."*

We thus see that, under both the forms, and in both the regions, in which it prevailed, the Compulsory Principle wrought evil, and only evil continually. It at once injured religion, and tortured society. It was at length vigorously assailed, and finally overthrown; but of this we shall give an account in the next chapter.

* Baird, p. 205.

CHAPTER III.

ITS ABOLITION.

THE Compulsory Principle in religion was first assailed and overthrown in the Virginian group of settlements, and, indeed, in Virginia itself.

In this colony the friends of the Established Church kept for a long period a very close watch against the intrusion of dissent, which for more than a hundred years was scarcely suffered to exist within its bounds, even in the most secret manner. The element, however, which the legislature was so careful to exclude from without, was generated from within by the vices of the Church itself. A church whose clergy spent most of their time in fox-hunting and other sports, in company with the most dissolute of their parishioners, and who at the same time eagerly contended for the last pound of tobacco allowed them as their legal salary, could not permanently retain its hold on popular favour. Multitudes became alienated in heart, and practically abandoned it.

The date of the first actual Nonconformist congregation existing in the colony cannot be ascertained. It appears, however, that prior to 1740 there existed one Presbyterian congregation in Eastern Virginia; and it is believed that Scotch and Irish emigrants from Pennsylvania had introduced the same ecclesiastical polity into what was called "The Valley." A few Quaker societies, some small German congregations, and a considerable number of Baptist churches—containing, perhaps, on the whole, a greater number of persons than all the other dissenting bodies together—also existed at this period. After the year 1740 Presbyterianism rapidly increased; partly under the warm-hearted labours of a godly layman, and partly through visitations from the north by two clergymen of that body,—one in 1743, and another in 1747. For some time before the revolution, the Virginian Presbytery of Hanover was a numerous and powerful body. In the western part of the colony the Scotch and Irish Presbyterians also had by this time multiplied, and the Baptists had increased most rapidly of all.

The effect of the revolutionary struggle was immediately to place the Episcopal—that is, the Established—Church of Virginia in a position of disadvantage. It was the church of the mother country, and was not unnaturally regarded as hostile to the cause of American freedom. As the dominant, it had also been the persecuting, church; and the dissenting bodies in common regarded it as the author of many wrongs and sufferings endured both by themselves and their fathers. It was to be looked for, consequently, that an attack on the ecclesiastical establishment would be speedy, and the shock severe.

The first blow was struck in the year 1775, immediately after the appearance of the Declaration of Independence. The Baptists, who had suffered more than any other class of Dissenters from the intolerance of the State-church, and who had maintained an active and uninterrupted opposition to it for more than twenty years, now took the lead of the combined assault by presenting a petition to the General Assembly, in which they desired “that they might be allowed to worship God in their own way, without paying the clergy of other denominations.” The Quakers also petitioned. But the most important effort was made by the Presbytery of Hanover, now a numerous and influential body. These presented an address to the Assembly, which we think sufficiently important and interesting to be given entire:—

“To the Honourable the General Assembly of Virginia.—The Memorial of the Presbytery of Hanover humbly represents: That your memorialists are governed by the same sentiments which have inspired the United States of America, and are determined that nothing in our power and influence shall be wanting to give success to their common cause. We would also represent that Dissenters from the Church of England in this country have ever been desirous to conduct themselves as peaceful members of the civil government, for which reason they hitherto submitted to various ecclesiastical burdens and restrictions that are inconsistent with equal liberty. But now, when the many and grievous oppressions of our mother country have laid this continent under the necessity of casting off the yoke of tyranny, and of forming independent governments upon equitable and liberal foundations, we flatter ourselves that we shall be freed from all the incumbrances which a spirit of domination, prejudice, or bigotry, has interwoven with most other political systems. This we are the more strongly encouraged to expect by the Declaration of Rights, so universally applauded for that dignity, firmness, and precision, with which it delineates and asserts the privileges of society, and the prerogatives of human nature; and which we embrace as the Magna

Charta of our commonwealth, that can never be violated without endangering the grand superstructure it was designed to sustain. Therefore we rely upon this declaration, as well as the justice of our honourable Legislature, to secure us the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of our consciences; and we should fall short in our duty to ourselves, and the many and numerous congregations under our care, were we, upon this occasion, to neglect laying before you a statement of the religious grievances under which we have hitherto laboured, that they may no longer be continued in our present form of government.

“It is well known that in the frontier counties, which are justly supposed to contain a fifth part of the inhabitants of Virginia, the Dissenters have borne the heavy burdens of purchasing glebes, building churches, and supporting the established clergy, where there are very few Episcopalians either to assist in bearing the expense, or to reap the advantage; and that throughout the other parts of the country there are also many thousands of zealous friends and defenders of our State, who, besides the invidious and disadvantageous restrictions to which they have been subjected, annually pay large taxes to support an establishment from which their consciences and principles oblige them to dissent: all which are confessedly so many violations of their natural rights, and in their consequences a restraint upon freedom of inquiry and private judgment.

“In this enlightened age, and in a land where all of every denomination are united in the most strenuous efforts to be free, we hope and expect that our representatives will cheerfully concur in removing every species of religious, as well as civil, bondage. Certain it is that every argument for civil liberty gains additional strength when applied to liberty in the concerns of religion; and there is no argument in favour of establishing the Christian religion but may be pleaded with equal propriety for establishing the tenets of Mahomet by those who believe the Alcoran; or, if this be not true, it is at least impossible for the magistrate to adjudge the right of preference among the various sects that profess the Christian faith, without erecting a claim to infallibility which would lead us back to the Church of Rome.

“We beg leave further to represent, that religious establishments are highly injurious to the temporal interests of any community. Without insisting upon the ambition and the arbitrary practices of those who are favoured by government, or the intriguing, seditious spirit which is commonly excited by this as well as by every other kind of oppression—such establishments greatly retard population, and consequently the progress of arts, sciences, and manufactures: witness the rapid growth and improvements of the northern provinces compared with this. No one can deny that the more early settlement, and the many superior advantages, of our country, would have invited multitudes of artificers, mechanics, and other useful members of society to fix their habitation among us, who have either remained in their place of nativity, or preferred worse civil governments and a more barren soil, where they might enjoy the rights of conscience more fully than they had a prospect of doing in this. From which we infer that Virginia might now have been the capital of America,

and a match for the British arms without depending on others for the necessities of war, had it not been prevented by her religious establishment.

“Neither can it be made to appear that the Gospel needs any such civil aid. We rather conceive that, when our blessed Saviour declares his kingdom is not of this world, he renounces all dependence upon State-power; and, as his weapons are spiritual, and were designed only to have influence on the judgment and heart of man, we are persuaded that, if mankind were left in the quiet possession of their inalienable religious privileges, Christianity, as in the days of the apostles, would continue to prevail and flourish in the greatest purity by its own native excellence, and under the all-disposing providence of God.

“We would also humbly represent, that the only proper objects of civil government are the happiness and protection of men in the present state of existence, the security of the life, liberty, and property of the citizens; and to restrain the vicious, and encourage the virtuous, by wholesome laws equally extending to every individual. But that the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can only be directed by reason and conviction, and is nowhere cognizable but at the tribunal of the universal Judge.

“Therefore we ask no ecclesiastical establishments for ourselves, neither can we approve of them when granted to others. This, indeed, would be giving exclusive, or separate, emoluments or privileges to one set of men, without any special public services, to the common reproach and injury of every other denomination. And for the reasons recited, we are induced earnestly to entreat that all laws now in force in this commonwealth which countenance any religious denomination may be speedily repealed; that all, of every religious sect, may be protected in the full exercise of their respective modes of worship, exempted from all taxes for the support of any church whatsoever, further than what may be agreeable to their own private choice, or voluntary obligation. This being done, all partial and invidious distinctions will be abolished, to the great honour and interest of the State; and every one be left to stand or fall according to his merit, which can never be the case so long as any one denomination is established in preference to others.

“That the great Sovereign of the universe may inspire you with unanimity, wisdom, and resolution, and bring you to a just determination on all the important concerns before you, is the fervent prayer of your memorialists.”*

These memorials were, of course, met by counter-memorials on the part of the Established Church, and they led to a long and earnest discussion. The great opponent of the Church in the House of Assembly was the celebrated Thomas Jefferson, afterwards President of the United States, who ably conducted the debate, and who speaks of the contest as the severest in which he was ever engaged. After nearly two months' struggle, a law was passed amounting to a partial

* Baird, p. 231.

victory. It repealed all laws attaching a penalty to dissent, and exempted Dissenters from taxation in support of the Establishment, all arrears being secured to the clergy, however, and the salaries till the first day of the ensuing year. The question of a general assessment for the support of religion was partially discussed, but reserved for subsequent decision.

This act was passed on the 5th December, 1776. During the following two years a violent struggle was maintained in the Assembly by means of petitions and counter-petitions, and in 1779 a bill was introduced for enacting a general assessment for religion: but, when this bill had been carried so far as the third reading, it was abandoned in consequence of the continued endeavours of the Presbytery of Hanover, and still more of the strenuous opposition of the Baptist churches.

In 1784, after the return of peace, the question of a general assessment for religion was again brought forward in the Assembly, with a considerable amount of public as well as official favour. A bill for this purpose passed the first and second reading, and was then published in order to gather the opinion of the people respecting it; but this gave rise to such a general expression of hostility that the bill was never passed into a law. An act was passed by a large majority to provide for the incorporation of "all societies of the Christian religion which may apply for the same;" but when the celebrated Patrick Henry introduced a bill for the incorporation of the Episcopal Church, proposing to secure to it "all the property it had ever had," the issue was different. This bill was strongly opposed by the Presbytery of Hanover; and from all parts of Virginia there were sent in petitions against it, signed by not less than 10,000 persons. To make their success with a reluctant legislature more sure, the Presbyterian churches held a convention, drew up a second memorial, and deputed the Rev. J. B. Smith, one of the ablest members of the Presbytery, to support the prayer thereof at the bar of the Assembly. This body heard him for three successive days, and then abandoned their project.

This severe and protracted contest was brought to a close in 1785, by the act "for establishing religious freedom," which was drawn up, and powerfully advocated, by Mr. Jef-

person. As it is short and celebrated, our readers may like to see it without abridgment :—

“Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free : that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the holy Author of our religion ; who, being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his almighty power to do : that the impious presumption of legislators and rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who, being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as such endeavouring to impose them on others, hath established or maintained false religions over the greatest part of the world, and through all time : that to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical : that even the forcing him to support this or that preacher of his own religious persuasion is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern, and whose powers he feels most persuasive to righteousness, and is withdrawing from the ministry those temporal rewards which, proceeding from an approbation of their personal conduct, are an additional incitement to earnest and unremitting labours for the instruction of mankind : that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than on our opinions in physic and geometry : that, therefore, the proscribing any citizen as unworthy of the public confidence, by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of trust and emolument, unless he profess or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which, in common with his fellow-citizens, he has a natural right : that it tends only to corrupt the principles of that religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing with a monopoly of worldly honours and emoluments those who will externally profess or conform to it : that though, indeed, those are criminal who do not withstand such temptation, yet neither are those innocent who lay the bait in their way : that to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on suspicion of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy, which at once destroys all religious liberty ; because he, being, of course, judge of that tendency, will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own : that it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government, for its officers to interfere where principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order : and, finally, that truth is great, and will prevail if left to herself ; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons—free argument and debate—errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.

“Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, that no man

shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry, whatsoever; nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect, their civil capacities.

“And though we well know that this Assembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the acts of succeeding assemblies constituted, with powers equal to our own, and that, therefore, to declare this act irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural right of mankind; and that, if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present, or narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right.”*

The step thus taken in one colony was soon taken by the rest. “At the period in question, Virginia was the leading State of the South, if not of the whole Union. Its proceedings were carefully watched, and its example generally followed, by the smaller adjoining States of Maryland and Delaware on the one hand, and by the Carolinas and Georgia on the other. Whenever, therefore, the new system of leaving religion to itself had been duly tested and found to work well in Virginia, it was successively adopted by each of these States.”†

We direct our attention now to New England. The principle of Religious Establishments was nowhere so firmly rooted as in this region, nor was the Religious Establishment itself at all shaken by the convulsions which attended the acquisition of American independence. On the contrary, the ecclesiastical edifice stood with apparent firmness for forty years after this era. Its time, however, was to come. The agitation commenced in the State of Connecticut, where, in 1816, the various parties which differed from the dominant worship—Congregationalism—combined to overthrow its rule. In that year the Legislature of this colony abolished the legal assessment for parish churches, and left it optional to the ratepayers to assign the amount levied as they thought fit.

Of all the New England States Massachusetts was the last to adopt a similar course. The struggle was obstinate, and

* Baird, p. 240.

† Lang's Religion and Education in America, p. 124.

the progress slow. Before the revolution, the Episcopalians had been relieved from the parochial church-tax by a special act of the legislature; and by the State-constitution of 1780 (after the revolution), although the assessment for religious worship was maintained, every person was allowed to appropriate his share to whatever society he pleased, provided it was incorporated. By a law passed in 1811, and altered in 1823, a person was relieved from all taxes in support of the parish church by holding a certificate of membership in some other religious society; but all persons who belonged to no religious society whatever were still regarded as attached to the parish church, and taxable for its support.

The evils which grew out of this system, however, became at length so great and so palpable, that, with some exceptions—among whom were the late Rev. Dr. Dwight, and a most respectable circle of ministers, whose hearts trembled with a hallowed sensitiveness for the ark of God—the friends of evangelical religion of every name, including the members of the Established Church itself, combined their exertions for the effectuation of a change. They strove successfully; and the necessary amendment of the constitution having been voted in the three consecutive sessions of 1831-33, it became part of the organic law, and the connexion between the Church and the State in New England was definitively dissolved.

The law finally passed in Massachusetts was in the following terms:—

“As the happiness of the people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality, and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community but by the institution of the public worship of God, and of public instruction in piety, religion, and morality: therefore, to promote their happiness, and secure the good order and preservation of their government, the people of this commonwealth have a right to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of God, and for the support and maintenance thereof: *Provided*, that all religious societies shall at all times have the exclusive right of electing their public teachers, and of contracting with them for their support and maintenance; and provided, also, that the obligations of no existing contract shall be hereby impaired.

“And all religious sects and denominations, demeaning themselves peaceably and as good citizens of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and no subordination of any sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law.”

Having thus described the process by which the Compulsory System was abolished, first in the Virginian group of colonies, and afterwards in New England, we have accomplished in this respect the whole of our task. The United States assumed a national existence in the year 1775; but this event, however important it is in other respects, does not in the least degree affect the question before us. The United States, as a nation, have never adopted, and of course have never repudiated, the principle of an ecclesiastical establishment. It is, as we have already said, a part of the national compact that this question shall be left entirely to the judgment and decision of the several States. We do not suppose that this was done under the influence of a feeling towards religion of any kind. At a crisis when, for national existence, union was so necessary yet on many grounds so difficult, it was an easement of the great arbitration to refer all questions which it was possible to refer to the decision of the States severally. In this manner the fearful question of slavery was dealt with, and in this manner, also, the momentous question of religion.

Politically speaking, however, the United States count themselves a Christian nation; and the courts maintain that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land. Of the eighteen States which have been added to the Union since its formation, no one has ventured to renew the experiment of an ecclesiastical establishment.*

Dr. Baird complains, and not altogether without reason, that the statement is continually made in Europe that the principle of ecclesiastical establishments was repudiated by the American government, and that they had a great advantage in having a clear field for the experiment; whereas he affirms, with an almost piteous earnestness, that the Federal government had nothing to do with it, and that the change was, in fact, obstructed by very formidable, and all but insuperable, obstacles. Even recent travellers, however, little versed in American history, follow the old track. Thus Dr. Dixon observes:—

“It can be no matter of surprise that the American people, being favoured with the opportunity, the soil being clear, and no old institutions standing in the way, should be disposed to adopt a new principle,

* Reed and Matheson's Narrative, p. 493.

and, discarding all authoritative church organization, try the effect of Christianity itself, in its own native grandeur and divine simplicity. This they have done. We have seen that the people is the State; and the State, in this sense—namely, through the people—has, with the exception of the infidels among them, adopted Christianity; only, instead of being an hierarchical government, it is that of the Holy Scriptures, the Bible itself being the governing light, the decisive authority, the court of final appeal. All the interests of society converge to this point;—religion is its life, its power, its beauty. It is like the *substrata* of the world, on which all the soils whence the vegetable productions spring repose in security.” *

And thus also Mr. Mackay:—

“Whilst education is universally promoted in America by the State, . . . religion is left to itself, not as a matter in which the State has no interest, but as being of such high individual concern that it is thought better for the State to keep aloof, and leave it to the care of the individual. Moreover, the experience of other nations had taught the Americans ere they framed their constitution, that religion and politics were not the most compatible of elements, and that political systems had the best chance of working smoothly towards their object when least encumbered by alliances with the Church. If there was one thing more than another on which they were agreed in preparing a political framework for the Union, it was the propriety and necessity, if they would not mar their own work, of divorcing the State from the Church. The Americans were fortunate, in determining and arranging their system, in having a clear field before them. In settling it they were at liberty to base it upon their convictions, untrammelled by inconvenient precedents. They, therefore, wisely determined to leave out of their plan a feature which, as it seemed to them, had added neither strength nor harmony to the political systems of others. They not only divorced the State from the Church in a strictly political sense, but, in so doing, refused to allow the Church a separate maintenance.” †

Such are the romances of travellers; and we do not wonder that foreigners, Americans especially, complain of them. Would not transatlantic voyagers who mean to *write* do well to prepare themselves by a little attention to the history of the climes they visit?

* Methodism in America, p. 147.

† Mackay's Western World, vol. iii., pp. 249, 250.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARGUMENT FROM ITS ABOLITION.

THE history of the abolition of the Compulsory Principle in the United States having been given, we might now proceed to consider the effects produced by this measure, and to trace the operation of the Voluntary Principle as thus brought into full play ; but, before we do so, we may profitably employ ourselves for a few moments in drawing an inference from the materials which are already before us.

We have here a great fact, one both striking and significant—namely, the abolition of the Compulsory and the introduction of the Voluntary Principle, in these two great portions of the United States. The following things are remarkable in it :—

1. That it was a social change of great magnitude ; not partial or local, but affecting the whole community, and affecting them very powerfully.

2. That it was a change on the most important of all subjects ; not commerce, not politics, but religion. Religion may often be treated with indifference ; but, when the mind is alive to it at all, it is felt to involve the deepest of all interests, and to be the most momentous of all concerns.

3. That it was a change of a principle ; not a matter of detail or of practice merely, but a leading sentiment, a ruling power. It was not the question of the greater or less predominance of an ecclesiastical system. It was not a decision between rival systems. It was not an affirmation of toleration for Nonconformists. It was the question of the principle of religious establishments universally. It asked, Any establishment, or none ? It went to the foundations of the social religious system, and necessarily wrought a change in the whole.

4. That it was a change effected intentionally. In this respect the introduction of the Voluntary Principle into the United States differed widely from that of the Compulsory Principle. In the former case it was purpose ; in the latter, accident. The mercantile settlers of Virginia, and the fugitives of New Plymouth, equally brought the principle of church-establishments with them, and the germ naturally developed itself in the new world, as it had long been prevalent in the old. The principle of absolute religious liberty,

however, as a fundamental element of society, and a rule of law, was generated amidst the wilds. It was an absolute creation of the New World, and was to the communities in which it grew up as strange as the soil they won from the waste. They adopted it, not because they had been educated in it, but because they saw its truth, and because they felt its identity with their dearest interests. They made a church dominant because they had been accustomed to it; they destroyed ecclesiastical domination because their eyes had been opened, and their judgment changed.

5. That it was a change effected after long experience. There was nothing about it indicating mere versatility, or love of change. It was not easily done, or on the instant of acquiring release from the mother-country. On the contrary, nothing could apparently be more fixed and substantial than the ecclesiastical systems. They had been born with the Colonies, and were growing old with them. Like the Siamese twins, the Church and the State seemed connected together by a vital bond. So things continued in Virginia for more than a hundred and fifty years, and in Massachusetts for nearly two hundred. Either was time enough to test the system. And all this while were the Colonies rapidly increasing, not in population only, but in all the elements of social strength, working out a solution of the most important problems, and preparing to constitute one of the greatest nations of the world.

What was likely to be the character of a great change, amounting to a total alteration in one of the leading principles of government, under such circumstances? If, after from one to two hundred years' experience of its operation, the Compulsory Principle in religion was repudiated, is it likely that the communities who repudiated it were mistaken in their judgment of it? If a decided preference was thus given to the Voluntary Principle, and a preference so decided as to be secured at the certainty of suffering temporarily many inconveniences, and at the risk of many more, is there not a strong probability that the principle is, as they must have thought it to be, both right and beneficial? We should scarcely go too far, if we were to assert that such a rejection of the Compulsory Principle constitutes its sufficient condemnation. Not to be precipitate, however, let us wait a little, and see what has been the practical effect of so great a change.

PART II.

THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE IN THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER I.

OPINIONS RESPECTING ITS INTRODUCTION.

ONE of the first elements by means of which it would seem that a just judgment might be formed of the great, and, in truth, the unprecedented, change effected in the American community by the introduction of the Voluntary Principle in religious matters, is the subsequent opinion of those among whom it has taken place. Let us inquire, therefore, what the Americans themselves have thought of it, and what they think of it now.

With respect to the Virginian group of colonies, or, as we have now to call them, States, there never was room for two opinions. The Established Church there—Church of England Episcopacy—was at all times a hindrance rather than a help to true religion; and at the period of its abolition it was so palpable and deplorable a mischief that, although some persons might have been still disposed to contend for ecclesiastical property and domination, no one could anticipate from its overthrow anything but an immense advantage so far as vital godliness was concerned. Opinion upon this point has ever been one and unchanged.

In the New England States the case was different. Congregationalism, which was the dominant worship there, had possessed in the first instance a character of strict orthodoxy and earnest piety; and, although this had in some measure deteriorated, the Established Church contained to the last a large number of eminent and devoted men, and a most influential mass of living godliness. What might happen if the status and prerogatives of an establishment should be taken away from such a body, was a question on which good and wise men who had inherited such a position from their fathers, and had been all their lives accustomed to attach an indefinite importance to it, might well be excused for

pondering with some uncertainty and anxiety; more especially, when they saw the infidel united with the tolerated religionists of all shades in the assault, sometimes violent, on an institution in their eyes so sacred and venerable. Dr. Dwight, accordingly, and with him many ministers of eminence and standing, hesitated. A vague fear of change disturbed them, and they shrank from committing themselves to so serious and untried an issue.

Upon this point we cannot have a better authority than that of Dr. Baird, who speaks in the strongest terms of the subsequent opinions of these distinguished men.

“It ought to be known,” says he, “that there is not a single survivor at this day of all who once wrote against the separation of Church and State in Connecticut who has not long since seen that he was mistaken, and has not now found to be a blessing what he once regarded as a calamity. Had not Dr. Dwight died just as the change came into operation, no doubt he too would have changed his opinion.”*

To this may be added the evidence of Dr. Reed, which is wholly to the same purport.

“Dr. Dwight,” says Dr. Reed, “has not survived to look back calmly on the consequences of the change, but many of his contemporaries have. I have sought them out; I have communed with them at large upon the subject. In every instance they have acknowledged that they were wrong; that their fears were groundless; that the transition has brought with it only good, and good in a degree for which they could not have hoped.”†

If such was the testimony of this class of witnesses, it may naturally be expected that the general sentiment would be concurrent with it. And that it was so will satisfactorily appear by another extract from the work just quoted.

“Testimony,” says Dr. Reed, speaking of this subject, “is universally in its favour. Let me not be mistaken. Some may carp at the term universal, and endeavour to muster some few voices in favour of the ‘standing order.’ Such voices are doubtless to be heard, but it is truly marvellous that they are so few. Of course, the transition so lately effected from one system to the other must have disturbed many interests, and have brought loss to some. It was to be expected that some under the old system would be incompetent; and these would naturally incline to an allowance from the State, rather than from the people who would be too wise to grant it. Some who had

* Baird, p. 252.

† Reed and Matheson, vol. ii., p. 140.

become grey and infirm under that system might be supposed to cling to it, even though every advantage were with the change. Harvey showed his skill in metaphysics, as well as in physics, when he observed that none of his profession above forty years of age received his theory, or were to be expected to receive it.

“But, in truth, though every reasonable mind would be ready to make considerable allowance for the influence of such causes, it was never less necessary; and they are only referred to to prevent captious and unfair objection. After having invited the most candid opinion on the subject; after having sincerely sought for the truth, whether favourable or unfavourable to the Voluntary System; and after having sought this in every quarter, and chiefly where State-provision had been enjoyed—I certainly did not find half-a-dozen men who would give their suffrages for the old method! The ministers as a body, who might be supposed to have, professionally, strong preferences for a fixed and compulsory stipend, were united in their attachment to the Voluntary Principle. The brethren in Massachusetts, where the change had been so recently completed, rejoiced in it, and anticipated from it a decided advance in pure religion. Those of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, with whom we had an opportunity of meeting and conferring, were unanimous in the same judgment, and referred gratefully the renovated state of their churches, and of the ministry, to its benign influence. The brethren of Connecticut, whom we met in large numbers, decidedly concurred in the same opinion. The Episcopalian of Virginia, and the Congregationalist of New England, who had been indulged and protected to the utmost, were equally in favour of the new principle. Men of every denomination—the Methodist, the Baptist, the Presbyterian, the Reformed, the Lutheran, the Churchman, and the Independent—all deprecate State interference and State allowance. Men of every region—the east, the west, the north, the south—and who are most deeply concerned for the interests of religion, agree in coming to the same conclusion. Indeed, such unanimity of opinion on a practical question involving the interests of so many parties, and to be determined mostly by those whose habits and thoughts had been associated only with the old system, is what I never expected to find.”*

Drs. Reed and Matheson were in the United States in 1835; Dr. Lang visited them in 1840, and in his work we may trace the course of public opinion on the matter before us through the intervening five years. We give an extract or two:—

“‘We are not of two opinions on these subjects here,’ observed his honour, Judge Jones, of Philadelphia, who did me the honour to invite me to reside with him during my stay in that city; ‘we are all agreed that religion requires no support from the State, and can derive no benefit from a connexion with the civil power.’”

“But the clergyman who expressed himself the most decidedly on

* Reed and Matheson, vol. ii., p. 137.

this subject, and who, moreover, from his age and experience, as well as from his high character, his acknowledged talents, and his valuable researches into the history of the church, was doubtless the best qualified to offer an opinion on the subject, was the Rev. Dr. Miller, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the Theological Seminary of the American Presbyterian Church at Princeton, New Jersey. On requesting Dr. Miller to inform me what were the general sentiments of the Presbyterian clergy of the United States in regard to a civil establishment of religion, 'Why, sir,' he replied, with some degree of surprise at the question, 'if the government of the United States were to propose to the Presbyterian clergy of this country that they must either become an established church or be persecuted by the State, I am sure, from what I know of their opinions on this subject, that they would prefer even a persecution to a civil establishment.'**

We may pursue the current of opinion somewhat farther by referring again to the work of Dr. Baird, which was written in 1843, and published in the following year. His language is as follows:—

"Although I have been much in Connecticut during the last fifteen years, know many of the clergy, and have conversed much with them on the subject, out of the two hundred or three hundred once established ministers of that State, I am not aware of there being more than one Congregational minister in the State who would like to see the union of Church and State restored in it. Indeed, the exception referred to is probably the only one in the United States, among the Protestant ministers at least; any others are most likely foreigners, who have not yet entered largely into the spirit of our institutions and our people. On no one point, I am confident, are the evangelical clergy of the United States of all churches more fully agreed, than in holding that a union of Church and State would prove one of the greatest calamities that could be inflicted on us. This is the very language I have heard a thousand times from our best and ablest men, in speaking on the subject."†

To these individual testimonies we may add the general and well-known fact, that the absence of all connexion between the Church and the State, or, to use a characteristic American phrase, the entire freedom of religion, constitutes a topic of frequent eulogy and gratulation at the great religious anniversaries. The same sentiment is inwrought into literary and philosophical lectures, and evidently rules in the popular mind. We will adduce a single example of this kind.

"If man is free in view of earth, who shall bind his soul in view of heaven? If it be good to deprive the State of power to bind

* Lang, p. 192. † Baird, p. 252.

man's will and acts, except so far as clear necessity requires, in temporal things, that rule applies with far more force and clearness in spiritual things. For, if the State desire an engine to oppress its people, none has been more near at hand, or more effectual in every age, than a State-religion; or, if a faction should desire to use the State for evil purposes, no principle resides in man to which so many and so effectual appeals have been made as a perverted religious sentiment. Then, if people or governments desire security, let every State and all religion be always separate. Not that a State shall have no God; for then most surely will God reject that State. But as factions in the State are not the constitution, so let not sects in religion become the government. And as all political opinions are free, so also let all religious opinions be: but, as all overt acts that endanger the public security, peace, or order, are to be punished, though they be called political, and even proceed from settled principle, so also overt religious acts that threaten or hurt society are not to be allowed, although men say they have exclusive reference to God. Religion, of all things, may be most free, because, of all things, most of its varieties may well consist with public security, which is the great end of law.

“In religion, then, absolute freedom, and thorough independence of the State, is best for itself, and safest for the world. The State must punish acts of open wrong, and suppress practices which hurt the public peace or decency; not because they are irreligious acts or practices, but because they are hurtful, indecent, or unjust.

“Religion is the strongest necessity of the human soul; no people have done without it, none ever will. Rather than have no God, men worship things which they themselves see to be both corrupt and despicable. Sooner than be destitute of some settled faith, they will attempt to credit things too gross to be believed, and do things too gross to be detailed. They who at any time have escaped this mighty influence, have done so only after having discovered the vile delusions by which they had been misled, and the terrible pollution of those who seduced them into sin, professing to guide them to God; and even these have soon returned again submissive to the all-pervading power of nature, which, even while they pretended to cast off, they showed their proneness to obey by every freak of superstition and credulity. All commonwealths may trust as implicitly that man must be religious, as that he is capable to rule himself. His rule may be unwise, his religion false and corrupt; his rule may be subverted, and his religion itself destroyed. But as there is no better security on which to build a State than to rely on his ability to rule himself, so there is no certainty so great, and yet so safe, that religion will exist as to rely on man's proneness to it. Here ends the duty of the State, and here begins that of the church of God. The way is free and wide: the heart of man, tossed to and fro, is panting for what it never finds but in the peace of God; and here the heavenly messenger is sent to teach, to guide, to quicken, sanctify, and save. Here is our commonwealth, and there our church. Here is our agent to consolidate our freedom, to secure our rights, to guard our growing greatness, to watch and provide the means whereby the humblest citizen may be prepared

for honest competence, and real, though obscure, usefulness. But yonder is our home, our last and blessed abode—not built of men, but God; and he, his Word, his Spirit, his messenger, his glorious grace, need little help of human governments, far less their guidance, titles, power, and riches, and least of all their glittering swords or noisome dungeons, to win our Father's children to the skies. A stranger's voice they do not know; a stranger's steps they will not follow; and from the voice of man's authority their spirits shrink; and at the sound of the armed tread of power the timid bird of peace flies backward into heaven. O that the wise would learn that in their carnal wisdom they are but fools with God; and the strong know that God's weakness is mightier than their strength!"

This passage is taken from a discourse on the "Formation and Development of the American Mind," delivered before the Literary Society of Lafayette College, Pennsylvania, on the 29th of September, 1837, by Robert J. Breckenridge, A.M. We may add to it, before concluding this chapter, a similar testimony from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Rice, of Richmond, Virginia.

"Religion," says Dr. Rice, "to be completely successful, *must be free*. Experience shows that in this country it has the energy of liberty—it has free course, and is glorified. Beyond a doubt it will ultimately triumph. At this time (1829) there are more than a million of communicants in the several Protestant churches in the United States—probably a larger proportion than exists in any other country in the world. The number increases at the rate of one hundred thousand a year. Such increase is perfectly unexampled since the days of the apostles. Religion will triumph, and no power on earth can prevent it. And it will triumph precisely because it is perfectly free. The intelligent clergy of all denominations understand this, and would be the very foremost to oppose any effort to bind religion to the car of the State."*

To these testimonies may be added one of very recent date, borne by Dr. Baird at the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance in August, 1851. Speaking of the support of public worship and the diffusion of religion in the United States, he says:—

"This duty devolves upon the people; and, after an experiment which may well be pronounced to be sufficient, the sentiment is universal with us that we would on no account have this task placed in other hands."†

These quotations lead us naturally to the subject of our next chapter.

* High Church Principles opposed to our Republican Institutions. By J. H. Rice, D.D.

† Baird's Statistical Paper.

CHAPTER II.

ITS DIRECT RESULTS.

It would have been out of nature and possibility that the effectuation of so great a change should have been without its immediate and temporary inconveniences, and even mischiefs. A large amount of these may readily be admitted without any disadvantage to the new system, which is to be judged of by its remote and permanent, rather than by its immediate and transient, results. No disturbance of things as they are—that is to say, no improvement—can take place without its proportion of momentary evil.

The change was most sorely felt in Virginia. It came upon the Established Church there when it had been much depressed by other causes, both ecclesiastical and political. The profligacy of a large proportion of the clergy had for a long period alienated from it public respect; it became still more unpopular during the revolutionary war, in consequence of the loyalty of the Episcopal clergy generally to the British crown; it suffered much, from necessity, accident, and design, by the war itself, of a considerable part of which Virginia was the immediate theatre; and, finally, the entire period of the conflict was, of course, eminently unfavourable for religious efforts. Thus depressed by other causes, the loss of her establishment was a heavier blow to the Episcopal Church of Virginia than it would have been in other circumstances; and in the years immediately following the revolution her condition was feeble, and her prospects gloomy. Yet this very measure was her salvation. “She gradually emerged from her difficulties. Her people learned by degrees to trust in themselves, or rather in God, and began to look to their own exertions rather than to a tobacco-tax for the support of their churches and pastors. Faithful ministers multiplied; an excellent bishop was elected and consecrated; benevolent societies began to spring up; a theological school was planted within her borders, where many youths of talent and piety have been trained under excellent professors to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I do not think it possible,” says Dr. Baird, whose

words we are quoting, "to find a body of ministers of equal number in any denomination, who, in point of theological education, prudent zeal, simple and effective eloquence, general usefulness, and the esteem in which they are held by the people, can be regarded as superior to the Episcopal clergy of the present day in Virginia. What a change!"*

A statement substantially similar may be made respecting the Established Churches of Maryland, North and South Carolina, and New York. The whole is told in a single sentence by Dr. Baird:—"The disestablishment of the Episcopal churches produced a kind of syncope for a time; but from this they ere long recovered, and their prosperity is now incomparably greater than it ever was when they were supported by the State."† In the States of New England, the condition of momentary exhaustion, which had been so much dreaded, seems to have been less felt than in any other quarter.

The immediate inconveniences of the introduction of the Voluntary Principle having thus in all cases passed away, not only without any permanent injury, but rather with a manifest advantage to the churches most nearly affected by it, we are now at liberty to examine the aspect of the United States generally, and to inquire whether the progress of religion itself, now unfettered, demonstrates the value of the freedom acquired for it.

And here we may properly speak, in the first instance, of what is technically called church-accommodation, or the provision of places of public worship and instruction.

It is, of course, fair that the Voluntary Principle should be subjected to this test, and there is no need to shrink from it. It may be observed, however, that this is the strong point of established churches—their ability to keep pace with the demands of the population for church-room—and that in which it has been thought least possible for voluntary churches to compete with them. Consequently, if the result of a comparison in this respect be favourable to the Voluntary Principle, the argument ought to be held the more conclusive.

It may be observed, also, that, in relation to this subject, the condition of the United States differs widely from that

* Baird, p. 249. † *Ibid.*, p. 251.

of Great Britain, and every densely populated, or even long-inhabited, country. The enormous extent of previously unoccupied territory into which new inhabitants have been continually pouring, the unprecedented rapidity with which the occupants of this territory have multiplied, and the thinly scattered population which has resulted, render the prompt and adequate provision of places of worship more than usually difficult, and, if anywhere it can be so, impracticable.

The best statistics supplied to us on this subject are those contained in Reed and Matheson's Narrative, which have evidently been compiled with great care, and which are referred to as eminently trustworthy by Dr. Baird, and by our own countryman, Mr. Buckingham. Dr. Reed himself gives the following estimate of the sources from which he derived his information :—

“The statistical returns have recently been put into dispute, and have been taxed with the grossest exaggerations. That some exaggerated statements have been hastily made I am ready to allow, for I have seen such. But I have given much attention to the approved documentary evidence, and have sought in several cases to verify or shake it; and the result is that I am fully persuaded it deserves confidence. Great pains have, indeed, been taken with this class of evidence. All the denominations have more association and more system than are common with us. They make their yearly returns in their respective Associations, where they are known, and where serious error would be corrected. These are again made to Conventions, or central bodies. General Almanacs are prepared for public use, into which these statistics are introduced, and are subject to revision and amendment. One gentleman, with excellent capacities for the subject and of unquestioned integrity, has devoted himself entirely to these important inquiries. All the annual and local returns have been searched and sifted by him; and they have appeared in the amended form in the *Quarterly Register*, a work which, for its research and fidelity, has acquired high repute in all the denominations; and it is the interest of each body to see that no other body is allowed, at its expense, to pass with exaggerated numbers. I say not that these returns, after all the pains taken, are perfect; but I fearlessly say that they are both honest and admirable.”*

We take from this volume the following statement, showing the amount of church-accommodation, without distinction of sect, in several States in 1835 :—

* Reed and Matheson's Visit to the American Churches, vol. ii., p. 149.

	POPULATION.	CHURCHES.*
Massachusetts	610,014	600
New York	1,913,508	1,800
Pennsylvania	1,347,672	1,829
Tennessee	684,000	630
Ohio	937,000	802
Indiana	341,000	440

Some writers, compelled to allow that the Eastern States are copiously supplied with places of worship, have ventured to contrast them with the Western, which they have represented as desolate. There is, however, no ground for such a contrast. The list we have just given speaks as well for Ohio and Indiana, as for Massachusetts and New York. "The severest trial that can by possibility be made on this subject," says Dr. Reed, "is to take the ten States, from which we have any safe returns, which have been last added to the Commonwealth. These will give a return of persons spread over a surface of 480,670 square miles, about nine times the size of England and Wales." The result thus obtained is as follows:—

	POPULATION.	CHURCHES.
Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Alabama, Mississippi, Mis- souri, Louisiana, and Florida.....	3,641,000	3,701

The condition of these territories compared in the same particular with that of Scotland, certainly a highly favoured part of our own country, appears unquestionably to great advantage,—the statistics in the latter instance giving 2,365,807 as the population, and 1,804 as the number of churches.

The church-accommodation of the principal towns of the United States is thus placed by Dr. Reed in comparison with that of corresponding British towns and cities:—

	POPULATION.	CHURCHES.
New York	220,000	132
Liverpool	210,000	57
Philadelphia	200,000	83
Edinburgh	150,000	65
Boston.....	60,000	55
Glasgow	220,000	74
Cincinnati	30,000	21
Nottingham	50,000	23

* The word "church" is uniformly employed in America to denote a place of worship, of whatever denomination. We shall use it for the same purpose throughout this volume.

The general supply throughout the whole country in 1835 stood thus:—For a population of 13,000,000 there were 12,580 churches; or one place of worship for every thousand persons, nearly.

This, however, is not the entire case. It is, of course, obvious that the whole population can never be at the same moment in a place of worship. The very young, the very old, the very sick, must be absent, together with a very considerable number of persons to attend upon them; and to these must be added that large class of persons always engaged in domestic or other necessary occupations. If these are to attend on religious instruction, it can only be alternately, or in rotation. Now, on a careful consideration of these circumstances, it has been estimated that not more than half of any population can be at the places of worship at the same hour; and, consequently, if there are churches and chapels enough to hold half the population, the whole population is adequately supplied. Applying this principle to the statement just made (as we shall to all others of the same nature), there was in the United States in 1835 a church for every 500 persons, nearly.

On the matter of church-accommodation in 1850, fifteen years later, the estimate of Dr. Baird respecting Protestant Evangelical* communions is thus given in his statistical paper read before the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance:—

	CHURCHES.
Protestant Episcopal Church	1,550
Congregational body	1,971
Baptist body	13,455
Presbyterian body	5,672
Methodist body	30,000
German Churches.....	5,356
Orthodox Friends, or Quakers	300
Total.....	58,304

On this summary view Dr. Baird makes the following remarks:—“There has been no portion of this investigation attended with more difficulty than that relating to the number of individual churches [ecclesiastical organizations]. I have found it impossible to attain to entire accuracy. The

* We mention, once for all, that we take the distinction between evangelical and non-evangelical bodies as Dr. Baird has given it, without making ourselves responsible for its correctness.

number given is rather that of the congregations, or assemblies. Large as it is, it is certainly much under the mark. If all the places where the Gospel is occasionally preached by pastors and others, but where there is no church organized, were to be added to those in which a church or body of believers is organized, the entire number would, it is believed, exceed one hundred thousand."

Of the Protestant communions not evangelical Dr. Baird's account is as follows:—

	CHURCHES.
Unitarians	300
Christians	1,500
Universalists	550
Swedenborgians	40
	-----2,390
Roman Catholics	1,073
	-----3,463
Total Evangelical Churches.....	58,304

Total places of Worship	61,767

The population of the United States in 1850 may be stated in round numbers at 23,000,000. The ratio of churches to the population, consequently (taking half the population as the element of calculation), is rather more than one to every two hundred persons. In fifteen years the population had increased not quite twofold, and the number of churches had increased more than fourfold.

In the estimate of church-accommodation, no doubt, it is necessary to include in our calculation, not only the number of churches, but the size of them. Along the border of the western wild they are certainly small—Captain Marryat sneeringly says, "small to ridicule:" it may be supposed, however, that the zeal which has built them there has built them large enough for the congregations which can be gathered in so sparse a population. If there are some churches which will hold but fifty persons, there are many which will hold a thousand; the latter being certainly as far above the average as the former are below it.

Contemplating his statistics of 1835, Dr. Reed exclaims, "Are not these figures in union with such circumstances most astonishing? I confess to you that I have looked at them once and again; and when I have assured myself that there is no reason to doubt their correctness, it still appears next to impossible for a people settling in this new land,

without aid from government, and spread over so large a surface, to have achieved so great a work for their spiritual welfare.* With how much additional transport might Dr. Reed express himself now!

Dr. Baird tells us that during his residence in Europe the question was often proposed to him, "How do you build your churches in America, since the government gives no aid?" Less perplexity, we imagine, connects itself with this question in the British Islands, where on the Voluntary Principle so many places of worship have been built, than upon the Continent; but even to an English reader, the Doctor's account of this process "in the far West" will be interesting:—

"Let us suppose a settlement commenced in the forest in the northern part of Indiana, and that in the course of three or four years a considerable number of emigrants have established themselves within a mile or two of each other in the woods. Each clears away by degrees a part of the surrounding forest, and fences in his new fields, where the deadened trees still stand very thick. By little and little the country shows signs of occupation by civilized men.

"In the centre of the settlement a little village begins to form around a tavern and a blacksmith's shop. A carpenter places himself there as a convenient centre. So do the tailor, the shoemaker, the waggon-maker, and the hatter. Nor is the son of Æsculapius wanting: perhaps he is the most of all needed, and it will be well if two or three of his brethren do not soon join him. The merchant, of course, opens his magazine there. And if there be any prospect of the rising city—though the deadened trees stand quite in the vicinity of the streets—becoming the seat of justice for a new country, there will soon be half-a-dozen young exponents of the law to increase the population, and offer their services to those who have suffered or committed some injustice.

"Things will hardly have reached this point, before some one amid this heterogeneous population come from different points of the older States, intermixed with wanderers from Europe—Irish, Scotch, or German—proposes that they should think of having a church, or, at least, some place of worship. It is ten chances to one if there be not one or more pious women, or some pious man with his family, who sigh for the privileges of the sanctuary as once enjoyed by them in the distant East. What is to be done? Some one proposes that they should build a good large school-house, which may serve also for holding religious meetings, and this is scarcely sooner proposed than accomplished. Though possibly made of mere logs, and very plain, it will answer the purpose for a few years. Being intended for the meetings of all denominations of Christians, and open to all preachers who may be passing, word is sent to the nearest in the neighbourhood.

* Reed and Matheson, vol. ii., p. 145.

Ere long some Baptist preacher, in passing, preaches in the evening, and is followed by a Presbyterian, and a Methodist. By-and-by the last of these arranges his circuit labours so as to preach there once in the fortnight, and then the minister of some Presbyterian congregation ten or fifteen miles off agrees to come and preach once a month.

“Meanwhile, from the increase of the inhabitants the congregations, on the Sabbath particularly, become too large for the school-house. A church is then built of framed beams and boards, forming no mean ornament to the village, and capable of accommodating some 200 or 300 people. Erected for the public good, it is used by all the sects in the place, and by others besides. For were a Swedenborgian minister to come, and have notice given that he would preach, he might be sure of finding a congregation, though, as the sect is small in America, and by many hardly so much as heard of, he might not have a single hearer that assented to his views. But it will not be long before the Presbyterians, Methodists, or Baptists, feel that they must have a minister on whose services they can count with more certainty, and have a church also for themselves. And at last, the house, which was a joint-stock affair at first, falls into the hands of some one of the denominations, and is abandoned by the others, who have mostly provided each one for itself; or it may remain for the occasional service of some passing Roman Catholic priest, or Universalist preacher.”*

In his Appendix, Dr. Baird gives the following statement of the rate at which he conceives places of worship were multiplying in the Union in 1842 :—

“The church edifices annually erected may be estimated, I consider, at about 880, rating them as follows :—

In the Episcopal Methodists, according to a good authority, “from 250 to 300,”—say	250
The Baptists,—say as many as the Methodists	250
The Presbyterians and Congregationalists together build at least	160
The Lutheran Almanac mentions 76 new churches erected in the year 1841; an imperfect report for 1840 mentions 47,—say, then	60
The German Reformed may be fairly estimated at	30
The Protestant Methodists at	20
The Episcopalians at	50
The Cumberland Presbyterians at	30
The Reformed Dutch at	10
The Scotch Presbyterians of all kinds at	20
Total	880

“It is not easy,” adds Dr. Baird, “to calculate the cost of these 880 churches. Considering that from twenty to thirty at least are built in our large cities every year at an expense of from 10,000 to 50,000 dollars, and a few of them at even more, the whole cost is probably about 1,500,000 of dollars.”†

* Baird, p. 298. † £300,000. Baird, p. 728.

It is evident that nothing can more severely test the efficiency of the Voluntary Principle in the United States, than the vast amount of church-building required to meet the demands of the rapidly-augmenting population. "Last year," says Dr. Baird, in his statistical paper, "the population increased nearly, if not quite, 800,000 souls. This would require the building of churches to accommodate 400,000 persons. . . . I think I cannot be mistaken in my opinion that more than one thousand edifices were erected last year in the United States by all bodies of Christians—Protestants and Romanists, evangelical and non-evangelical. Indeed, the evangelical denominations alone certainly built 950." This estimate gives one church to every 400 persons of the new population.

CHAPTER III.

ITS DIRECT RESULTS, CONTINUED.

NEXT to the question of church-accommodation is that of religious teachers, both as to number and qualification. With respect to this matter, also, we shall avail ourselves of Reed and Matheson's statistics, as showing how the relative supply of ministers stood at the period of their visit in 1835.

	CHURCHES.	MINISTERS.
Massachusetts	600 ...	704
New York	1,800 ...	1,750
Pennsylvania	1,804 ...	1,765
Tennessee	630 ...	458
Ohio	802 ...	541
Indiana	440 ...	340
The ten newest States	3,701 ...	2,690
The whole Union	12,580 ...	11,450

The following account of the number of ministers in some principal Protestant denominations in 1850, is made up partly from the American Almanac for 1851, and partly from Dr. Baird's statistical paper read to the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance :—

	CHURCHES.	MINISTERS.
Protestant Episcopalians.....	1,550	1,504
Presbyterians, Old School	2,675	2,027
Presbyterians, New School.....	1,651	1,551
Cumberland Presbyterians.....	480	350
Dutch Reformed	292	299
German Reformed	261	273
Evangelical Lutherans	1,604	663
Moravians	23	27
German Methodists (United Brethren)	1,800	500
Albright Methodists (Evan. Assoc.)...	600	250
Mennonites.....	400	250
Orthodox Congregationalists	1,971	1,687
Unitarian Congregationalists	245	250
Regular Baptists	10,441	6,049
Free-will Baptists	1,252	1,082
Reformed Baptists (Campbellites).....	1,848	848
Christian Baptists (Unitarians).....	607	498
Anti-mission Baptists	2,035	907

We have thus in 27,408 churches 18,021 ministers.

Additional light is thrown on the point now before us by a view of a single denomination, but one of the largest in the United States—the Baptists—which we find in a letter from the Rev. Baron Stow, D.D., of Boston, in the *Baptist Manual* for 1850. This letter includes a general summary of the Baptists in the United States, prepared by the Rev. T. S. Malcolm, of Philadelphia, according to the latest returns which it had then been possible to collect. We give the relevant portion of this valuable document without abridgment, for the sake of the light it collaterally throws on the distribution of religious agency under the Voluntary System, throughout the several States and territories of the Union:—

STATES.	CHURCHES.	ORDAINED MINISTERS.	LICENSED MINISTERS.
Maine	295	201	20
New Hampshire.....	96	73	14
Vermont	112	71	10
Massachusetts.....	238	246	37
Rhode Island	48	55	7
Connecticut.....	113	114	13
New York	794	705	132
New Jersey	89	88	14
Pennsylvania	306	213	49
Delaware	1	2	2
Maryland	22	18	2
District of Columbia...	4	5	1
Virginia	553	272	81
North Carolina	448	236	75
South Carolina	408	188	72
Georgia.....	719	387	157
Florida	51	25	8

STATES.	CHURCHES.	ORDAINED MINISTERS.	LICENSED MINISTERS.
Alabama	516	233	69
Mississippi	382	181	42
Louisiana	96	40	12
Texas	36	27	5
Arkansas	78	39	10
Tennessee.....	455	283	79
Kentucky.....	713	354	127
Ohio	464	294	70
Indiana.....	392	191	47
Illinois	320	210	53
Missouri	370	194	62
Michigan	176	105	14
Wisconsin	55	40	9
Iowa	37	22	3
Minnesota Territory ...	1	2	—
Indian Territory	23	20	7
Oregon Territory	5	4	—
California.....	—	4	—
Total.....	8,406	5,142	1,302

According to these figures, the excess of churches above ministers is considerably larger in 1850 than it was in 1835; that is to say, the congregations have increased more rapidly than the supply of ministers required for their instruction. Dr. Stow, in his letter to the Secretaries of the Baptist Union, notices this aspect of the case in the following terms: "Your attention will be arrested by the fact that the number of churches so far exceeds the number of ministers. The greater disparity appears in the southern and western parts of the Union, where the population is more sparse and the churches are less able, or less disposed, to maintain the stated ministry of the word. It is not uncommon in those sections of the country for one preacher to serve three, four, or five, churches in rotation. In the Eastern and Middle States most of the churches are supplied each with its own pastor."

It appears, however, that, in addition to the "ordained ministers," there exists, in the Baptist denomination at least—and we should scarcely think that this is an exceptional case—a large body of teachers under the name of "licensed ministers." Of these Dr. Stow says:—"Those who are noted as 'licensed ministers' are not all to be regarded as young men just entering the service. Many of them are brethren in middle life, who have received the approbation of the churches to which they respectively belong to 'preach

the word,' and whose labours are often very acceptable as itinerants in destitute districts, or in the occasional supply of vacant pulpits."

Dr. Baird, in his statistical paper, gives the following condensed view of the relative numbers of churches (or congregations) and ministers. We take the doctrinal distinctions as he gives them, without attaching any importance to them in relation to our present argument:—

Protestant and Evangelical.

	CHURCHES.	MINISTERS.
Episcopal Church	1,550	1,504
Congregational body	1,971	1,687
Baptist body	13,455	8,018
Presbyterian body	5,672	4,578
Methodist body	30,000	6,000
German Churches	5,356	1,827

Protestant, not Evangelical.

Unitarians	300	250
Christians	1,500	1,500
Universalists	550	540
Swedenborgians	40	35

Not Protestant.

Roman Catholics.....	1,073	1,115
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This statement affords a total of 61,467 churches (or congregations) and 27,054 ministers. It should be observed that this large deficiency lies principally with the Methodist body, and that among them it is largely compensated by the employment of local preachers, estimated by Dr. Baird at 9,000; so that the gross number of ministers of religion may be taken as exceeding 36,000.

From this view of the number of religious teachers in the United States, we now turn to a consideration of their qualifications. Upon this subject we must be understood as limiting our remarks to Protestant Evangelical communions, in the sense in which the word evangelical would be currently understood in this country.

With respect to the qualifications of religious teachers in the United States, it is obvious that a hasty—or what we may call an English—judgment will be sure to be an erroneous one. We must not carry to such a region the long-established modes of thinking and habits of action characteristic of our own country. There are, on the contrary, two important respects in which we should dispossess ourselves of them.

On the one hand, we must entirely have done with the supposition that education alone is a sufficient qualification for the ministry; we must rather set it down as a first principle that the antecedent, and far more important, qualification, is religion itself—that is to say, the personal religious character of the teacher. On the other hand, we must be ready to admit that a course of religious teaching may, under many circumstances, be beneficially carried on without any specific education at all; that is, without what is ordinarily called an education for the ministry. There ought to be no difficulty, we think, in admitting these two positions, which are, in our judgment, of obvious truth, and may be amply supported by a large induction of fact and experience. By these principles alone can the ministerial bodies of the United States be fairly tested.

Now, with respect to the former, there is certainly no country on earth to so small a degree infested with an ungodly ministry. The almost universal sterling and genuine piety of preachers of the Gospel in the United States, is matter of such unanimous testimony that it need not be further insisted on. And for this America is certainly indebted to the Voluntary Principle. Those who have read the preceding pages will recollect to how grievous an extent the Virginian group of colonies was afflicted by a body of profligate clergy under the Episcopal establishment, and how even in New England the tone of religious character in the ministry was lowered. There are now (subject to few and occasional exceptions) no ungodly ministers in the States, because, under the Voluntary System, the ministry holds out no inducements to ungodly men. "The Voluntary System," says Dr. Lang, with great justice, "secures the American churches against the intrusion of those numerous individuals who, under any existing establishment, enter into the holy ministry from unworthy motives, and for mean secular ends. There are no prizes in the American churches for the man of secular ambition, or the covetous man. There is no *otium cum dignitate* for the lover of ease."

While, on the one hand, the Christian ministry in America thus offers no temptation to the ungodly, no little pains is taken by the churches to exclude any who might offer their services. All candidates for this office, in every communion, are required to give satisfactory evidence of personal piety;

and, should any one of irreligious character even succeed in passing this ordeal, he would speedily find that the churches had neither use nor place for him.

It must be admitted, however, that a large proportion of the ministers in the United States have not received a regular education. How far this might have been with any of the denominations a matter of choice, or of principle, is uncertain ; it has been, to a great extent, a matter of necessity. All along the western frontier, where towns and villages have been rising up in the wilderness almost as rapidly as Jonah's gourd at Nineveh, the demand for preachers has constantly and largely exceeded the utmost possible supply of educated men ; there was no resource but to employ uneducated men of acknowledged piety, and approved gifts ; and, had this not been done, a vast field of most important and imperative labour must have been totally neglected. So obvious and urgent has this necessity been, that almost all religious denominations have acted upon it, the Presbyterians (according to Dr. Lang) being the only exception.

For ourselves, we think that this dictate of necessity might have been also the choice of wisdom. Whatever may be the value to ministers of the Gospel of a classical and enlarged theological education—and we are far from being disposed to depreciate it—it is clearly not of scriptural obligation, not of essential necessity, not of universal expediency. And for the population rapidly dispersing itself through the western wilderness, as, on the one hand, a supply of highly educated men could not be obtained, so, on the other, it would have been unwise to send them. Men of acknowledged piety and approved gifts without a collegiate education were much better adapted to the field. And the testimony of experience confirms this judgment ; for labourers of this class have cultivated the vast and trying field on which they entered with great and surprising success. It should be observed, however, that this does not really affect the question before us. Had there been an ecclesiastical establishment, or a dozen of them, they could not have educated a clergy of sufficient numbers, and with sufficient rapidity, to meet this demand.

The various religious communities, however, have not been negligent of an education for the ministry in its most enlarged sense. In the first instance, students in this department placed themselves in small groups under the tuition of some

individual pastor, more or less distinguished, often also residing in his house. An advance upon this plan was made by the Rev. Dr. John Mason, of New York, who, about the beginning of the present century, commenced a course of public instruction in theology in that city; and this was succeeded, in 1808, by the institution of the Theological Seminary at Andover, Massachusetts, the earliest and the most celebrated of its class in the United States. The example was speedily followed, and with so much rapidity and vigour that the ensuing forty years have witnessed the rise of more than forty theological schools, in all the principal communions.

Dr. Baird gives a list of them as they were in 1842, from which it appears that six were supported by Congregationalists, six by Old-school Presbyterians, six by New-school Presbyterians, three by Episcopalians, eight by Baptists, one by the Reformed Dutch church, three by Lutherans, one by the German Reformed church, one by the Associate church, and two by the Associate Reformed church.* Since this period several important additions have been made to the theological schools of the United States, and their number is continually on the increase.

On this subject generally, Dr. Baird makes the following observations applicable to the year 1842:—

“The entire number of theological schools and faculties belonging to the orthodox Protestant churches is thirty-eight, with about 105 professors, and nearly 1,500 students. The greater number of these institutions are in their infancy. Where they are connected with colleges, the theological professor generally gives lectures in the literary department; also on moral philosophy, metaphysics, logic, &c. Many of the professors in the new and smaller seminaries are pastors of churches in the neighbourhood; and all that are not preach much in vacant churches, or on extraordinary occasions—such as before benevolent or literary societies and bodies, ecclesiastical assemblies, &c. Many of them, too, are expected to employ their leisure moments in instructing the people through the press. Though the number of professors seems large when compared with that of the students, I can assure the reader that few men have more to do, or, in point of fact, do more, for the cause of Christ. There are to be found among them many of the very first ministers of the churches to which they respectively belong. If not quite equal in point of science to some of the great professors in the old world, they are all, God be praised! believed to be converted, and are devoted, faithful men. Their grand

* Baird, p. 368.

object is to train up a pious as well as a learned ministry. I am not aware that there is one of them that does not open every meeting of his class with earnest prayer, in which he is joined by his pupils—a striking contrast to what one sees, alas! at too many of the theological lectures in the universities of Europe.”*

To this modest statement we may add, what all the world knows now, that, while the American schools generally are seminaries of sound theological learning, they have conducted in instances not a few to eminent scholarship, and a distinguished position in the department of Biblical literature.

We may observe further, that institutions have arisen in the United States, under the name of Education Societies, intended to facilitate the acquisition by candidates for the ministry of a proper theological culture.

“In all denominations of evangelical Christians in the United States, there are to be found among those classes of society whose means are too limited to give their sons a college education young men of talent, to whom God has been pleased to impart the knowledge of his grace, and in whose hearts he implants a longing to preach the Gospel. Now, before the Education Societies appeared upon the field, such youths used to find it very difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to obtain such an education as was required by the rules of the church in whose ministry they wished to place themselves. Some, indeed, might succeed by their own exertions: by dint of industry and economy, they might lay up enough to enable them to secure a course of study at college to begin with; by interrupting their college studies occasionally in order to recruit their finances by teaching a school, they might, after long delays, be able to complete the requisite course at last; and then, by similar efforts, carry themselves through the required theological course at a seminary. Others, more fortunate, might be so far assisted by a church, or some wealthy and benevolent patron, or friend. But the greater number, in despair of success, were apt to renounce all expectation of being able to preach the Gospel, and to resign themselves to the necessity of spending their lives in the ordinary pursuits of business, not in making known the ‘unsearchable riches of Christ’ to their fellow-men.

“To meet the demands of the churches for a vastly-augmented number of ministers of the Gospel, and to help those young men who desired to respond to this demand, the American Education Society was formed on the broad basis of rendering its aid to all pious young men of suitable talents who appeared to be called to preach Christ, and who belonged to any of the evangelical denominations. The only conditions imposed upon the recipients of its bounty were an engagement—1. To go through a full course of collegiate and theo-

* Baird, p. 371.

gical education in some approved college or seminary ; and, 2. To refund the sums advanced to aid them, should the providence of God, in after life, give them the means of doing so." *

The activity and laboriousness of the American clergy generally appear to be great. Their average amount of duty in the pulpit, in all denominations, is to preach at least three times a week, and not unfrequently four ; and there are many collateral exertions. "In short," says Dr. Lang, "the labours of the American clergy are 'in season and out of season ;' and I am quite sure, from what I uniformly observed myself in eleven of the States, that they are stimulated to these labours rather by their own zeal, and their high sense of duty, than by any idea of the supervision of the people. Everywhere from Salem to Charleston, along an extent of a thousand miles of country, I found no religious denomination of any pretensions to evangelical character resting satisfied with the performance of divine service on the Sabbath. In every congregation there was a concert for prayer, at which the minister presided, and communicated interesting religious intelligence to his people, once a month. There was a weekly Bible-class meeting for the more advanced of the younger members of the congregation. There was a public lecture every Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evening. The lecture-room was a never-failing appendage of the church, and the Sabbath school machinery was uniformly plied by a most efficient corps of volunteers." †

If the industry here described springs from the zeal of the clergy, it appears, on the other hand, to be highly acceptable to their flocks ; so much so, as to establish in public opinion a high standard of ministerial character and duty. Some, indeed, have complained of the amount of labour that is demanded of the clergy in some denominations as excessive, as "undermining their health, and sending scores to their graves every year long before they ought to go there." ‡ Without troubling ourselves to inquire into the truth of this charge, it may be enough to observe that such an accusation was never brought against Religious Establishments. It belongs exclusively to the Voluntary System.

We shall conclude this topic by citing two testimonials to the general worth of the American clergy ; the one by a

* Baird, p. 352.

† Lang, p. 198.

‡ Rev. Calvin Colton.

friend of the Voluntary Principle, the other by an enemy of it. "Never since the days of the apostles," says the Rev. Calvin Colton, "was a country blessed with so enlightened, pious, orthodox, faithful, willing, clergy as the United States at this moment." "The American clergy," says Captain Marryatt, "are, in the mass, equal, if not superior, to any in the world."

Not altogether without interest is the question, whether, on the Voluntary Principle, in the United States, a sufficient provision is made for the temporal support of so large a body of ministers. Some churches have large endowments; but these, Dr. Baird assures us, are found rather injurious than beneficial. There are, of course, no very large pastoral incomes, and in some communions the ministry is wholly, and on principle, unpaid. The following general view of this matter is given by Dr. Baird:—

"It is not easy to give any very satisfactory answer to the question, whether the ministers of the Gospel are well supported in the United States. Using that phrase in the sense which many attach to it, I should say, in giving a general reply to the question, that they are not: that is to say, few, if any, of them receive salaries that would enable them to live in the style in which the wealthiest of their parishioners live. Their incomes are not equal to those of the greater number of lawyers and physicians, though these are men of no better education, or higher talents, than great numbers of the clergy possess. None of the ministers of the Gospel in the United States derive such revenues from their official stations as many of the parochial clergy of England have, to say nothing of the higher dignitaries of the church in that country. There are few, if any, of them who, with economy, can do more than live upon their salaries; to grow rich upon them is out of the question.

"Yet, on the other hand, the greater number of the salaried ministers in the United States are able, with economy, to live comfortably and respectably. This holds true especially as respects the pastors of the Atlantic, and even of the older parts of the Western, States. In New England, if we except Boston, the salaries of the Congregational, Episcopalian, and Baptist, pastors are in the largest towns, such as Providence, Portland, Salem, Hartford, Newhaven, &c., from £160 to £240; in the villages and country churches, they vary from £60 or £80 to £140 or £160; besides which, the minister sometimes has a 'parsonage' and 'glebe'—that is, a house and a few acres of land; and, in addition to all, he receives a good many presents. His marriage fees are of some amount. In other parts of the country, and especially in the West, the clergy are not so well provided for. The New England practice of giving them presents, whether casually or regularly, and at some set time, does not prevail elsewhere to the same degree.

"The salaries of the clergy in the largest and wealthiest churches of the principal cities are handsome, though generally no more than

adequate: £300, £360, £400, £500, are the sums commonly given; and in a few cases £600, £700, and even £800. The Presbyterian church in New Orleans gives its pastor £1,000; and the highest of all is that of one of the bishops in the Episcopal church, which I have been told is £1,200."*

In addition to this general statement Dr. Baird gives the following table, containing an approximate calculation of the total amount of money raised annually for the support of the ministry in the principal evangelical denominations in the year 1842:—

	DOLLARS.
I. Episcopalian ministers, say 985, at an average of 400 dollars each (£80)	394,000
II. Presbyterian ministers, say 5,099, including Congregationalists, Lutherans, &c., at 400 dollars each (£80)	2,039,600
III. Baptist ministers, say 4,242, on an average of 200 dollars (£40) only	848,400
IV. 3,994 ministers of the Methodist group, exclusive of local preachers, at an average of 300 dollars (£60)	1,198,200
† General Total	<u>\$4,480,200</u>

In his recent statistical paper exhibiting the state of things in 1850, Dr. Baird largely augments his general estimate on this head. "After the most careful inquiry which I have been able to make," he says, "I have come to the conclusion that our congregations paid last year to their ministers, in the shape of salaries, parsonages, glebes, and other perquisites, at least 7,670,650 dollars."‡

* Baird, p. 303. I have expressed the amounts in sterling money, reckoning five dollars to the pound sterling, which is rather less than the value of the dollar.

† Nearly £900,000. Baird, p. 728.

‡ Reckoning again five dollars to a pound sterling, this is more than a million and a half—£1,534,130. If, in such an amount, the dollar were reckoned at four shillings and twopence, the augmentation would be very perceptible—£63,922.

CHAPTER IV.

ITS DIRECT RESULTS.

IN addition to the number of churches, and the number and qualifications of ministers, we may appeal to a third test as indicative of the religious condition of the United States; namely, the number of communicants, or of those who partake of the Lord's supper. This may be regarded as the nearest approximation which can be made (although still an approximation only) to an estimate of the spiritual power with which the ministry of the Gospel has been attended, and of its success in the highest sense of that term.

Under this head, we may refer once more to the statistics furnished by Reed and Matheson in 1835, in which it will be recollected Roman Catholics are included:—

	CHURCHES.	COMMUNICANTS.
Massachusetts	600 ...	73,264
New York	1,800 ...	184,583
Pennsylvania	1,829 ...	180,285
Tennessee	630 ...	60,000
Ohio	802 ...	76,000
Indiana	440 ...	34,000
The ten most recent States.....	3,701 ...	286,560
Total.....	9,802	894,692

The following is Dr. Baird's statement of communicants in the evangelical denominations throughout the Union in 1842:—*

	CHURCHES.	MEMBERS.
Episcopalians.....	1,164 ...	195,745
Presbyterians (including Orthodox Congregationalists)	8,111 ...	751,803
Baptists	8,561 ...	622,478
Methodists (inclu. German Churches)	25,134 ...	935,418
Total	42,970	2,505,444

In his recent statistical paper the same gentleman gives the following numbers for 1850:—

	CHURCHES.	MEMBERS.
Episcopalians.....	1,550 ...	73,000
Congregationalists	1,687 ...	197,106
Baptists	13,455 ...	948,867
Presbyterians.....	5,672 ...	490,257
Methodists.....	30,000 ...	1,250,000
German Churches.....	5,356 ...	333,000
Total	58,304	3,292,230

* Baird, p. 600.

The latter of these statements exhibits a large general increase as compared with the former. It will be observed, however, that in some instances the numbers are less, which is, no doubt, to be attributed, not to an actual diminution, but to the acquisition of more accurate information.

The number of communicants in the several religious bodies without distinction in 1850, is thus given in the American Almanac for 1851:—*

	CHURCHES.	COMMUNICANTS.
Roman Catholics	1,073	1,233,350
Protestant Episcopalians	1,232	67,550
Presbyterians, Old School.....	2,512	200,830
Presbyterians, New School	1,651	155,000
Cumberland Presbyterians	480	50,000
Other classes of Presbyterians	530	45,500
Dutch Reformed	282	33,980
German Reformed	261	70,000
Evangelical Lutherans	1,604	163,000
Moravians	22	6,000
Methodist Episcopal	—	1,112,756
Methodist Protestant Church	—	64,313
Reformed Methodists	—	3,000
Wesleyan Methodists	—	20,000
German Methodists (United Brethren)	1,800	15,000
Albright Methodists (Evan. Asso.) ...	600	15,000
Mennonites	400	58,000
Orthodox Congregationalists.....	1,971	197,196
Unitarian Congregationalists	245	30,000
Universalists.....	1,194	60,000
Swedenborgians	42	5,000
Regular Baptists	8,406	686,807
Six-principle Baptists.....	21	3,586
Seventh-day Baptists	52	6,243
Free-will Baptists	1,252	56,452
Church-of-God Baptists	97	10,102
Reformed Baptists (Campbellites) ...	1,848	118,618
Christian Baptists (Unitarians)	607	3,040
Anti-niission Baptists	2,035	67,845

Filling up the unexplained blank in the column of churches with the number supplied by Dr. Baird—30,000—we find the number of churches to be 60,215; and the total number of communicants 4,566,168. According to this table, the number of communicants in the Protestant churches is 3,332,818.

In his statistical paper, Dr. Baird makes the following statements as to the increase of some of the principal evangelical denominations:—"During the first half of this

* American Almanac, p. 202.

century, the Episcopal church has more than quintupled its clergy, and nearly quintupled its members. . . . In sixty years, the Baptist churches have increased tenfold, their ministers ninefold, and their members more than thirteenfold. . . . The Presbyterian body has increased twelvefold, so far as the ministry is concerned; eight-and-a-half-fold as to the churches; and nearly ninefold as regards the members." These appear to be by no means exceptions, but exemplifications of a general rule. In relation also to the comparative increase of the population and the churches during the last fifty years, Dr. Baird makes the following most gratifying, and we think extraordinary, statement; that "while the population of the United States has increased something less than fourfold and a half, the number of evangelical ministers, churches, and members of churches, has increased nearly, if not quite, tenfold."

It is an unfair use which Captain Marryat makes of Dr. Reed's statistics, when, animadverting on the statement that in 1835 there were two millions of communicants, he says that, "according to this statement, only two millions of the people openly professed any creed."* If he had inquired respecting the communicants in the Church of England, he would have found them amounting to a number very insignificant in the comparison. Such profession of a creed as is involved in the mere fact of being members of a national church is of no value, and the Americans are as well without it; but it by no means follows, as Captain Marryat insinuates, that the whole population except the communicants are unbelievers. Voluntary churches are rooted in general society, and have their congregations, or stated hearers, more or less leavened with their sentiments and spirit. If the population connected with each religious body were estimated at only three times the number of communicants, it would now be in the United States, not including Roman Catholics, about ten millions—approaching not very remotely to one-half of the whole, and, with the Roman Catholics, greatly exceeding it. The estimate of Dr. Baird, however, is considerably higher than this. In 1842, when the population did not exceed 19,000,000, he reckoned the "evangelical" portion of it at more than

* Marryat's *Diary in America*, vol. iii., p. 95.

13,000,000, or fully two-thirds. "Accuracy in such a calculation," he observes, "is hardly to be expected; but I have taken the best *data* I could find, and doubt not that the estimate I have made is not much wide of the truth."* Since 1842 evangelical religion has not merely kept pace with the population, but has sensibly gained upon it.

The portion of the immense region of the United States which presents to the eye the least satisfactory aspect is, of course, the border of civilization towards the West. The apparent destitution and irreligiousness of the sparse population of this region is adapted to give rise to a first impression somewhat painful; and it has occasionally been noticed by travellers—by Captain Marryat, for example—in severe language. "The moral desolation of the West," however, is thus frankly and candidly spoken of by Dr. Reed:—

"I have travelled over a large portion of the West, and I can readily account for the impressions which have been received by strangers in those regions. The eye is disappointed at not seeing amidst every little cluster of log cabins the spire, or tower, of the village church. The people who do not profess religion are not careful to save appearances, and you quickly see them as they are. The ministry, as a distinct order, is far less apparent than in the East; for those who minister among the Methodists and Baptists are mostly without regular training. But it is evident that he who is not prepared to revise and correct his impressions under such circumstances is not qualified to report concerning them. The ministers here are in advance of the people; they will still keep in advance of them; and it would be the desire of ambition, not of wisdom, that would place them so far in advance as to be out of reach, and out of sight. The little churches, also, in the scattered districts bear the same relation to the state of the people. They are frequently log cabins, and have no outward sign to designate their use; but as the log cabin yields to better accommodation in domestic life, so surely does the church receive an improved and visible form. In fact, the West is not New England. There are fewer means; they are of a lower character; and the people who do not profess are less under the influence of wholesome restraint and decorum. How can it be otherwise? There is, undoubtedly, much to be done for it. But, meantime, you will know how to judge of the reports made on its waste places, by remembering that, if its present means are fewer than those of New England, they are decidedly more than those of Scotland."†

One more test may be applied to the Voluntary System in the United States—namely, the development under it of

* Baird, pp. 600, 603.

† Reed and Matheson's Narrative, p. 145.

religious and benevolent activity. Now, the general fact is, beyond all question, that every mode of religious usefulness has been set on foot, and is in vigorous action there. We shall take a cursory glance at a few principal points.

1. Sunday Schools. Of the origin and progress in the United States of this important appendage to a religious society, Dr. Baird gives the following account:—

“The first attempt to introduce Sunday schools into the United States was made by the Methodists in 1790, but from some cause or other it failed. A society was soon after formed at Philadelphia, with the late Bishop White at its head, and a few schools were established for the benefit of the poor, taught by persons who received a certain compensation for their trouble. Early in the present century schools began to be established in various places under voluntary and gratuitous teachers; and, gradually becoming better known and appreciated, the number was found very considerable in 1816. Associations for promoting them more extensively began then to be formed in Philadelphia, New York, and other cities, and the publication of spelling and hymn-books, scriptural catechisms, &c., for the children, was commenced. Some persons also did much to advance this good work individually.

“Measures were taken in 1823 for the forming of a national society which should extend the benefit of Sunday schools to all parts of the country; and, accordingly, the American Sunday School Union was instituted—an association composed of excellent men of all evangelical denominations, and in which, therefore, no particular denomination is represented as such. It has now been diffusing its blessings for above eighteen years. The board of managers is composed of intelligent and zealous laymen of the various evangelical denominations, the greater part residing in Philadelphia and its vicinity, as that is the centre of the Society’s operations.

“Its grand object is twofold—to promote the establishment of Sunday schools where required, and to prepare and publish suitable books; some to be employed as manuals in the schools, and others for libraries intended to furnish the children with suitable reading at home. In both departments much good has been done.

“In 1830 the Society resolved to establish a Sunday school in every neighbourhood that was without any throughout the Western States, or valley of the Mississippi, wherever practicable. Three years thereafter it adopted a like resolution with respect to the Southern States. Both, but particularly the former, of these resolutions called forth much effort. Large sums were collected, and a great many schools were established. Every year since its commencement the Society has employed many of the above missionaries; in some years as many as twenty, thirty, forty, and even fifty such. These traverse the country throughout its vast extent, resuscitate decaying schools, establish new ones, and encourage all.”*

* Baird, pp. 340, 341.

In addition to this comprehensive Society, there are now in active operation several—we might say many—denominational ones. There is no authentic account of the present number of Sunday schools in the Union. In 1832 they were estimated at 16,000, and the teachers at 130,000 or 140,000. Dr. Baird, in his statistical paper, makes the following statement:—"The American Sunday School Union has issued 2,000 different publications, mostly books for Sunday school libraries; the Methodist Sunday School Union, 1,885; the Massachusetts Sunday School Union, 3,000; and the Episcopal, 300. It is estimated that there are now not far from 3,000,000 of children, youth, and adults, in Sunday schools in the United States, taught by 300,000 teachers, among whom are to be found many of the best of our young people, and even members of Congress and of our State Legislatures, judges, lawyers, mayors of our cities and other magistrates, and of our 'honourable women' not a few."

2. Bible Classes. These are nearly akin to Sunday schools, on which, however, they are a great advance. "So highly are they valued," says Dr. Baird, "as a means and occasion of good, that few settled pastors have not one or more among their flocks. In some cases, one for each sex is held once in the week; that for gentlemen in the evening, that for ladies during the day. They meet, according to circumstances, in the church, lecture-room, vestry-room, school-room, or in some private house. The pastor sometimes devotes his Sabbath nights to a Biblical service for the benefit of all who can attend—a practice feasible only where the population is compact, and the flock within an easy distance of the place of meeting. In country churches, these classes often hold their meetings in church before the regular service commences, or in the interval between the morning and afternoon services.

"In conducting these classes, the common method is to go through some particular book of the sacred volume in course, and some system of Bible questions is generally pursued. Upon this plan, all who have time and inclination for the task prepare themselves, by reading and study, for answering the questions to be found in the book that is used. But it is not the practice of any well-informed pastor to confine himself to the questions contained in the book.

These he employs as he sees fit ; by the questions he puts he assists in sustaining the attention of the people, and he takes occasion to give a great amount of scriptural instruction.”*

3. Home Missions. It is manifest that the immense territory through which the growing population of the United States is so rapidly pouring must present a large sphere, and create an imperative demand, for home missionary exertions ; not so much, however, to carry the Gospel as to a pagan land, as to assist small churches who have already carried it there, but are unable adequately to maintain the institutions of the Gospel by their own efforts. On this subject let us again hear Dr. Baird :—

“This inability to support the public preaching of the Gospel often arises from the number of sects to be found in new settlements, and even in some districts of an old State. In this respect diversity of sects sometimes causes a serious, though temporary, evil, not to be compared with the advantage resulting from it in the long-run. It is an evil, too, which generally becomes less and less every year in any given place, the little churches, however weak at first, gradually becoming through the increase of population strong and independent ; and, what is more, an evil disappearing, or rather, as I hope to prove, being converted into a blessing.

“The most obvious way of aiding such feeble churches, is to form societies for this express object among the older and more flourishing churches in the Eastern States. This has been done, and in this the Voluntary Principle has beautifully developed itself, particularly during the last fifteen years.”†

Operations of a home missionary kind were set on foot in Connecticut shortly after the era of American Independence (1775), and this agency has been subsequently adopted by almost all the religious bodies, and, on the whole, to a very large extent. After noticing only four or five of the principal societies formed for this purpose, Dr. Baird says :—

“The societies which we have passed under review, support, in all, above 1,600 ministers of the Gospel, in new and, as yet, feeble churches and flocks. Year after year many of these cease to require assistance, and then others are taken up in their turn. Be it remembered that the work has been systematically prosecuted for no long course of time. Twenty years ago, in fact, the most powerful and extensive of these societies did not exist ; others were but commencing their operations. It is an enterprise with respect to which the churches have as yet but partially developed their energies and

* Baird, p. 348.

† *Ibid.*, p. 311.

resources; still, they have accomplished enough to demonstrate how much may be done by the Voluntary Principle towards the calling into existence of churches and congregations in the settlements rapidly forming, whether in the new or the old States."*

To this, which relates to the year 1842, Dr. Baird has added, in his statistical paper, the following summary for 1850:—"The American Home Missionary Society, supported by Congregationalists and New-school Presbyterians, employed 1,032 missionaries in the home field; the Old-school Presbyterians, through their Board, 570; the Baptists, 168; the Episcopalians, 96; the Methodists, 787; in all, 2,603, at the cost of 426,868 dollars."†

4. Bible Societies. These are as well sustained, and are as popular, in the United States as in England. They are supported, in common, by good men of every name, although they have not escaped the operation of causes which have rent, or rather have multiplied, them.

"It is twenty-six years," says Dr. Baird, writing in 1843, "since the American Bible Society was instituted, and it now has branches in all parts of the country. It has sent out, in all, 3,052,765 copies of the Bible, or of the New Testament, from its depository. Last year alone 257,167 copies went forth to bless the nation. In the years 1829 and 1830, great and systematic efforts were made to place a Bible in every family that was without one throughout the whole land. Much was accomplished; yet so rapid is the increase of the population, that these efforts must be repeated from year to year; and the work can only be done by dividing the country into small districts, and engaging active and zealous persons to visit every house from time to time, to ascertain what families are destitute of the Scriptures, and supply them by selling or giving away copies, according to circumstances. Great efforts are also made at New York, and other sea-ports, to supply foreign emigrants as they arrive on our shores.

"Nor does the American Bible Society confine its efforts to the United States. It has for many years associated itself with those societies which, by prosecuting the same work in foreign lands, are labouring to hasten the coming of that day when 'the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth.' The receipts of the Society for last year amounted to 134,357 dollars, of which 20,619 were appropriated to the work abroad."‡

The American and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1837 by some members of Baptist churches, in order to be able to support versions of the Scriptures in which the terms relating to baptism should not be (as in the common English

* Baird, p. 325. † About £90,000. ‡ Nearly £27,000. Baird, p. 372.

version they are) transferred from the Greek, but translated into each language respectively. In 1850 this Society was divided, and a third now exists, under the name of the American Bible Union, having specifically in view the effectuation of a new translation of the Scriptures into the English tongue. The Societies, since the commencement of their operations, have circulated 7,774,983 Bibles and New Testaments. The issues of the American Bible Society alone were, in 1850, 633,395.

5. Indian Missions. We touch this subject with great delicacy, and not without pain. We read with small complacency, in royal charters, professions of concern for the spiritual welfare of the American savages, or injunctions to seek their conversion to the Christian religion. Nor can we contemplate without other feelings than we are called upon here to express, the course which has been now for more than two hundred years pursued towards these hapless children of mortality. We acknowledge the magnanimity and piety of individuals, and concur in rendering to the names of Sarjeant and of Brainerd an homage which can never die. But this is beside the mark. It was under the system of Religious Establishments. Under the Voluntary System, however, efforts have been continuously made for the religious benefit of the Indian tribes; and we quote with pleasure the following account of the result up to 1843:—

“Within the territory claimed by the United States there are now above fifty missionary stations, about fifty missionaries, above forty assistant-missionaries, American and native, and not much under 5,000 communicants, or members of churches. There is also a very considerable number of schools and scholars.”*

6. Foreign Missions. This is the broadest aspect of Christian benevolence, and it is by no means wanting in the Western World.

“Almost every evangelical church in the United States,” says Dr. Baird, “is doing more or less for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign, and especially in heathen, lands. I know not, indeed, that there is a single exception, unless it be among some of the smaller German denominations, or some branches of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Even these, however, seem almost all to contribute towards this great object through Societies, or Boards, either

* Baird, p. 631.

belonging to other denominations, or common to several. Thus, the Covenanters support a missionary in the East Indies, in connexion, I believe, with the Presbyterian church's Board of Missions; the Associate Reformed churches so far aid the same Board; and some of the German Reformed churches aid the American Board of commissioners for foreign missions, as do also some of the Cumberland Presbyterian churches.

“Previous to 1812 there was not a single foreign missionary society in the country, with the exception of that of the Moravian Brethren; and not till long after did the churches do anything worth mention in that field. The last twenty years, or rather the last ten years, have witnessed much improvement in this respect.

“Including the missions of the evangelical churches alone—and those of the others are hardly of sufficient importance to call for notice—the receipts from all sources, for propagating the Gospel in foreign, and chiefly heathen, lands, for the year ending August 1st, 1842, may safely be reckoned at 572,198 dollars.*

“The number of distinct missions prosecuted by the United States churches is at least sixty-five; that of stations and out-stations exceeds 200. These employed, in 1841 and 1842, at least 375 preaching American missionaries, who, with few exceptions, were ordained ministers, and above seventy American laymen, chiefly physicians, printers, teachers, and catechists. The American females, chiefly wives of missionaries and teachers, amounting to 420, make a total of 875 persons from the United States connected with these missions, and all labouring in one way or another to promote the Gospel among the heathen. The natives who assist as ministers, evangelists, teachers, distributors of tracts, &c., &c., amount at least to 375.”†

“In 1850,” says Dr. Baird in his statistical paper, “the several foreign missionary societies and boards sustained in the foreign field 358 missionaries, and 729 assistant-missionaries, at 366 stations; and they have 40,744 communicants in their churches, and 28,674 pupils in their schools.” The sum raised by these societies in the year was about 675,000 dollars, or £135,000.

The following is a summary of the amount raised by voluntary contribution for religious purposes in the year 1850:—

	DOLLARS.
Salaries, &c., of Ministers	7,670,650
Erection, &c., of Churches and Colleges ...	3,200,000
Religious and Educational Societies	1,991,817
Non-evangelical Bodies	2,137,553

Total..... \$15,000,020

or more than £3,000,000 sterling. Such are the pecuniary resources at the command of the Voluntary Principle.

* More than £100,000.

† Baird, pp. 723, 724.

In addition to the societies we have specifically mentioned are not a few others of a character scarcely less interesting and important, such as Tract Societies, Maternal Associations, the Seamen's Friend Society, the Prison Discipline Society, and others.

It thus appears that, in the United States, under the Voluntary Principle religion has been by no means stagnant, but that, on the contrary, it has manifested all its characteristic developments, and with no little vigour. The conclusion to be drawn from this survey will engage our attention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

INFERENCE FROM ITS DIRECT RESULTS.

AFTER this very brief, and even superficial, survey of the religious condition of the United States, what is to be our conclusion? Certainly not that the whole region is a paradise, that its entire population are true Christians, or even that all its church-goers are converted persons. Nor shall we say, as Dr. Baird may be understood to say, that all its religion is owing to the Voluntary Principle. No doubt there would have been religion in America had the system of ecclesiastical establishments been perpetuated and diffused. The question really before us is, Whether there is as much religion in the United States without Establishments as there would have been with them? If there be, America affords, at least, no argument against the Voluntary Principle; but, if there be more, and much more, an argument of proportionate strength is supplied in its favour.

We must, of course, leave the decision of this question to our readers, every one for himself. To us it seems very clear that religion has assumed an attitude, and made a progress, in the United States, which, under a system of ecclesiastical establishments, would have been not only improbable, but impossible; and that the churches which

were once established have their share in the general prosperity, and owe their existence as vital bodies to the very fact of their disestablishment.

This conclusion has the greater force because, unquestionably, the test to which the Voluntary Principle has in this case been put was of an extraordinary severity. If there can be any circumstances in which the resources and influence of national endowments and government patronage may be pronounced to be indispensable, or any to which the energy of spontaneous action might beforehand be declared to be inadequate, they are certainly those which have presented themselves on the North American continent. The Voluntary Principle had a gigantic task. To take up, single-handed, the provision for the religious welfare of a population then so large, and sure to increase with unparalleled rapidity, and equally sure to occupy a position in which religious instruction would be attended with unexampled difficulties, involved a very grave responsibility. Some men, without being either fools or cowards, might excusably have said, "Woe to the cause of religion, if the government does not put its shoulder to the wheel!"

Even under this extraordinary demand the Voluntary Principle has not broken down. It has done at least as much, and as well, as could have been done by established churches; and, if the race be not yet decided in its favour, no advantage has hitherto been yielded to its rival. No candid judgment in this case can be more favourable towards Establishments than that of the Earl of Carlisle, who spent some time in the United States, and delivered his public verdict in few but pregnant words, in his Lecture at Leeds in the year 1850. His lordship said:—

"It is my wish to touch very lightly upon any point which among us—among even some of us now here—may be matter of controversy. I, however, honestly think that the experience of the United States does not as yet enable them to decide on either side the argument between the established and voluntary systems in religion. Take the towns by themselves, and I think the Voluntary Principle appears fully adequate to satisfy all religious exigencies. Then it must be remembered that the class which makes the main difficulty elsewhere scarcely, if at all, exists in America. It is the blessed privilege of the United States—and it is one which goes very far to counterbalance any drawbacks at which I may have to hint—that they really have not, as a class, any poor among them. A real beggar is what you never see. On the other hand, over their immense tracts of territory

the Voluntary System has not sufficed to produce sufficient religious accommodation. It may, however, be truly questioned whether any Establishment would be equal to that function. This is one among the many questions which the republican experience of America has not yet solved. As matters stand at present, indifference to religion cannot fairly be laid to her charge. Probably, religious extremes are pushed further than elsewhere. There certainly is a breadth and universality of religious liberty which I do not regard without some degree of envy."

From such an observer any opinion has its value, and one so carefully formed and expressed has a more eminent value. We add to it that of a man who, although not a member of an ecclesiastical establishment, can scarcely, from his connexion with the Methodist body, be deemed an ardent friend of the Voluntary Principle, the Rev. Dr. Dixon. This gentleman visited America in 1848, and on the subject before us he says:—

"There are no sects in America—no Dissenters, no Seceders, or whatever other term may be employed to designate the position and standing of a Christian society. They are alike considered as Christians; and adopting, according to the judgment of charity, with equal honesty the common charter of salvation, the Word of God, they are treated as equal, and as possessing similar and indefeasible rights.

"This is certainly a new aspect of living and visible Christianity, and our business with it at present is to test its operation on society. Can perfect liberty and equality in religion work well, when favoured by circumstances as in the United States? Is Christianity itself, in its own revelations, its own glorious platform and basis, its own provisions and divinity, when made plain and put into the hands of a people, sufficient, without being formed and modified by the political society, to produce its legitimate fruits? Is this common Christianity, as taught and developed in Scripture, sufficient for a nation? May the people of a State be safely left, other things being favourable, to this simple process? This question is in course of solution in the United States. So far as it has been tested, it is believed to have answered."*

The testimony of a non-clerical traveller shall be adduced, —that of Alexander Mackay, Esq., barrister-at-law. His words are these:—

"For the first time since its junction with the State, has Christianity been thrown upon its own imperishable resources in the midst of a great people. And has it suffered from its novel position? Who accuses the Americans of being an irreligious people? Nay, rather, who can deny to them, as a people, a pre-eminence in religious

* Dixon's Methodism in America, pp. 145, 147.

fervour and devotion? . . . Taking the country as a whole, the religious sentiment is more extensively diffused, and more active in its operation, in America, than in Great Britain. What, then, becomes of the sinister predictions of those who assert that a State-connexion is necessary to the vigorous maintenance of Christianity? . . . Is proof of the vitality and energy of religion wanted? Look at the number of its churches, the extent and character of its congregations, the frequency of its religious assemblages, the fervour of its religious exercises, and the devotion of its religious community, testified by their large and multifarious donations for religious purposes both at home and abroad.”*

The Rev. Drs. Reed and Matheson, whose opportunities of observation were extensive, speak in terms equally strong.

“All these results,” says Dr. Reed, “are most striking; and, in truth, if they are admitted, they are overwhelming in evidence. . . . And with such results before us, shall we still with blindness and prejudice refuse the lessons they imperatively convey? While such evidence is developing itself in favour of the Voluntary Principle where alone it has found an open and fair field of probation, should not the Dissenter be confirmed in his assurance of its power and efficiency, and be disposed to rest his cause on it with confidence and quiet? And should not the pious Churchman, who regards an establishment only as it promotes the interests of religion among the people, be inclined, whatever may have been his original disinclination, to weigh such testimony with calm and dispassionate attention?”†

The Rev. Drs. Cox and Hoby, ministers of the Baptist denomination, made a visit to the United States in 1835, and on their return published a volume in which they give their judgment in the following terms:—

“We add our unhesitating testimony to that of our predecessors in favour of what is denominated the purely Voluntary Principle in support of religion. All the observations we were enabled to make during our widely-extended journey, confirmed our persuasion of its being incomparably more efficacious than the Compulsory System.”‡

* Mackay's *Western World*, vol. iii., pp. 252, 254.

† Reed and Matheson's *Narrative*, vol. ii., p. 151.

‡ *The Baptists in America*, Preface, p. 5.

CHAPTER VI.

ITS COLLATERAL RESULTS.

IN preceding chapters we have directed our attention to what may be called the direct effects of the Voluntary Principle, or those which indicate its influence on religion itself, as manifested in the amount of church-accommodation, in the number of communicants, in the number and qualifications of the ministerial body, and in the various modes of religious and benevolent exertion; we may now pay some regard to other influences of the Voluntary Principle, less direct, but by no means unimportant.

The first topic we notice under this head is the relation of the religious bodies in the United States one to another.

Before we look more closely at this, however, and with a view to prepare ourselves for a just appreciation of it, we shall do well to call to our recollection the relation which the various religious bodies in our own country bear to one another. This is sufficiently marked to have left on the mind of every observant person a distinct impression, and we venture to say a painful one. Here, on the one hand, is a church established by law, enormously endowed with national property, the exclusive recipient of national honours—its higher functionaries being peers of the realm—its haughty prerogatives fenced round by acts of parliament, Non-conformist religionists of every shade taxed for its support, while the worship they uphold (at a large cost to themselves) is tolerated (!) in return. Thus one sect is elevated above others; and, after the universal manner of poor human nature, it bears its supremacy in a jealous and tyrannical spirit. It denounces Dissent as schism; that is, as a damnable sin. It reckons Dissenters everywhere intruders, as though the whole nation were its manor, and every Nonconformist a poacher, deserving, on the most lenient estimate, a summary ejection from the parish. It calls Dissent on the great scale the curse of the country, and does everything in its power at once to mulct, insult, and destroy, every community which bears the name. It is made of absolute selfishness, and has no bowels of compassion. It will distract

the poor man's household goods for a few pennyworth of church-rates. It will pursue a manly recusant to ruin in the ecclesiastical courts. It will leave a resolute opponent to perish in prison; and, if it were not muzzled—for these are rather its growls than its bites—it would doubtless commit him to the flames. There are no restraints or mitigations of ecclesiastical despotism for which we are indebted to the Established Church. It is only as the State has made itself its gaoler that the community enjoys even a measure of tranquillity.

And this, like almost all social mischiefs, does not stand alone. It breeds a counterpart of evil. It gives to the action of the Voluntary Principle, in itself the most just and the most generous of sentiments, an aspect of strife and contention. In claiming what is just for ourselves, we are of necessity contradicting and endeavouring to thwart the unrighteous claims made by another. We ask for love in a tone of controversy, and to obtain peace we make war. It is not that the Voluntary Principle is essentially irate and irritating, but it is the infelicity of the circumstances in which it has to operate. To recover property which has been stolen is of necessity to dispossess those who have wrongfully appropriated it. It is, however, a disadvantage. It prevents the Voluntary Principle from appearing in its true colours, withholds it from producing its natural effects, and constrains it reluctantly to augment for a time the social strifes which its universal prevalence would extinguish.

So it is in England; and so it was in America while Church Establishments existed there, as what we have already said concerning both the Virginian and the New England colonies has sufficiently demonstrated; but so it is not now.

To travellers in the United States, no fact has been more immediately or more powerfully striking than the total absence of religious rivalry. Amid such a multitude of sects, an inhabitant of the Old World naturally, and almost instinctively, looks for one that sets up exclusive pretensions, and possesses an actual predominance. But he finds nothing of the kind. Neither Presbyterianism, nor Prelacy, nor any other form of ecclesiasticism, makes the slightest effort to lift its head above its fellows. And with the resignation of

exclusive pretensions, the entire ecclesiastical strife has ceased, and the din of angry war has been hushed; and here, at length, the Voluntary Principle is able to exhibit itself in its true colours, as a lover of peace and the author of concord. It is busied no longer with the arguing of disputed claims, but throws its whole energy into free and combined operations for the extension of Christianity. The general religious energy embodies itself in a thousand forms; but, while there is before the church a vast field to which the activities of all are scarcely equal, there is, also, "a fair field and no favour"—a field in which all have the same advantages, and in which each is sure to find rewards proportionate to its wisdom and its zeal. This inestimable benefit of religious peace is clearly due to the Voluntary Principle.

This result made a powerful impression on the mind of the Earl of Carlisle, who pointedly referred to it in his Lecture at Leeds in 1850; and it has been noticed in emphatic terms by other travellers. Thus, for example, the Rev. Dr. Dixon observes:—

"Notwithstanding the number of churches bearing different names, and adopting diversified forms of service, there is probably as much, or more, unity in the States than elsewhere. . . . It is no marvel that this unity of spirit prevails. The bitterness of sectarianism is prevented by the nature of their position. No one church thinks of calling another church . . . heretics, schismatics, dissenters. . . . These things can have no existence where common-law Christianity prevails: they are the assumptions of sects of exclusive pretensions, of caste claims.

"The American system looks for unity on this broad basis. As far as can be seen, it is as much secured as can well be expected in the midst of the infirmities of human nature. At any rate, society is not convulsed, nor the State put into jeopardy, by religious contentions, claims, and projects. If religion does not bless, neither does it curse, the country; if it does not produce health, neither does it spread any social pestilence; if, in fine, it does not allay human passions, neither does it exasperate them. But the matter is placed too low by being thus hypothetically put. It is my deep conviction that religion is the conservative power of American society. It is the salt of the community; it is the life and soul of public and private virtue; it is the cement—the power of coherence—which holds the States together; and by purifying the public morals, elevating the soul with noble sentiments, creating the sense of responsibility, and stimulating to industry, it is creative of their greatness and power."*

* Dixon, pp. 147, 149.

Mr. Mackay bears a similar testimony in the following passage :—

“It is only in America that the Voluntary Principle has had an opportunity of exhibiting itself in its proper character. There are many who, judging of it from the phase which it assumes in this country, object to it on the ground of its apparent tendency to run into fanaticism. . . . In a country divided between the Voluntary Principle and that of an Established Church, the tendency to over-zeal and fanaticism is much increased by the conflict which is waged between the two principles. The blow of the attacking party is always more violent than that of the attacked. The Voluntaries are here the attacking party. The Church, with some slight exceptions, remains on the defensive, the cohorts of voluntarism assailing her at every practicable point. . . . Voluntarism in America exhibits itself in a more attractive aspect. There it has the whole field to itself; and its manifestation of a more tractable disposition is owing not a little, perhaps, to the absence of those inducements to strife and opposition to which Dissent in this country is exposed.

“Religion in America is rarely brought into the field as a political accessory. Americans seek not to achieve anything political through its means. In this respect, religion escapes in America the degradation to which it is so frequently subjected here. By refraining from interfering with politics, and confining itself to a purely social influence, it recommends itself more to the community generally than it would do were it, as in this country, constantly thwarting the progress of secular interests. . . . Voluntarism in America is for this reason divested of many of those features which render Dissent unattractive in this country.”*

A second topic which here presents itself to us, is the relation of religion to civil and political freedom.

It is an observation which has forced itself on the careful observers of English history, that the political influence of the Established Church has for the most part been adverse to the progress of free institutions. It has, indeed, been set down by some persons of no mean authority as the principal barrier to social improvement. In France, where there is much less of practical religious toleration than in England, the National Churches, Romanist and Protestant, have exercised a similar influence with much greater power; and in countries where there is no toleration, as in many parts of Italy, the dominant ecclesiastical system is undoubtedly a most effective, if not the main, support of despotic government. Just in the same manner did the Establishment Principle work on the western side of the Atlantic. In

* Mackay, pp. 255-257.

Massachusetts, which ought above all places upon earth to have been the soil of liberty, it created a tyranny as odious as any which the world ever saw, and upheld it until the necessary and inevitable diffusion of civil liberty led to a limitation, and prepared for the overthrow, of the ecclesiastical despotism.

This state of things, also, has been changed. In America now religion and liberty go hand in hand. The religious communities are in possession of no prerogatives of which the progress of free institutions can deprive them, and the influence and activities of religion are totally independent of the forms of political development; while, in addition to this, the spirit of freedom is essentially one, whether in religion or in politics—whether in things secular or things spiritual—and its operation in one department is naturally allied to its operation in the other.

We cannot find a more fair or trustworthy witness on this subject than M. de Tocqueville, who in his celebrated work makes use of the following language:—

“Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country. My desire to discover the causes of this phenomenon increased from day to day. In order to satisfy it I questioned the members of all the different sects; and I more especially sought the society of the clergy, who are the depositaries of the different persuasions, and who are more especially interested in their duration. As a member of the Roman Catholic Church I was more particularly brought into contact with several of its priests, with whom I became intimately acquainted. To each of these men I expressed my astonishment, and I explained my doubts: I found that they differed upon matters of detail alone, and that they mainly attributed the *peaceful dominion of religion in their country to the separation of Church and State*. I do not hesitate to affirm, that during my stay in America I did not meet with a single individual, of the clergy or of the laity, who was not of the same opinion upon this point.”*

* De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, vol. ii., p. 237.

CHAPTER VII.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IT may well be supposed that a fact in itself so remarkable, and in its significance so condemnatory, as the constitution of a great nation without an Ecclesiastical Establishment would excite no little severity of criticism. Hard things have undoubtedly been said of the United States in consequence of its neglect in this matter; and to these we shall feel it necessary to give a sufficient, but not an extended, notice.

The objections alleged against the religious system of the United States are of two kinds, one theoretical and the other practical—the former relating to the principle, the latter to its operation.

The strength of the first class of objections is put out in the assertion, that the government of the United States is now irreligious: it has no conscience; it is an infidel government.

Effectually to meet this charge, it is necessary to examine with some care the language in which it is couched, and which, in fact, contains a fallacy entirely destructive of the charge itself. The assertion is, that if a nation be without an ecclesiastical establishment its government is irreligious, —without a conscience—infidel. Now this language is evidently founded on an assumption that governments, as such, can have a religious character, a conscience, or no conscience. We deny this altogether. Moral, or (which is the same thing for the present argument) religious, character is necessarily personal, and cannot in the nature of things belong to governments. It can belong only to individuals. You can say of a man that he is religious or irreligious, that he has or has not a conscience, because he is an entity of which properties of this class may justly be predicated: but, if you group men together, in any numbers, whether two or two hundred, you can no longer say the same thing of the group that you might of the individuals. It is not competent to two men to have *a*—that is, one—conscience; they necessarily have two. Now, a government is a group

of men, associated, indeed, into a certain unity for a certain class of actions, but yet a group of men who, as men, have each a conscience; but as a group, that is, as a government, they cannot have anything of the kind. To talk of it is absurd.

Or if, by a species of refinement, the substantial humanities of the group be evaporated, and a government be conceived of as a sort of ethereal entity, a political being having a permanency irrespective of the shifting human materials of which it may from time to time be composed, it is still more difficult to conceive of conscience being one of its attributes. It is, indeed, manifest that such a thing is an impossibility.

This is nothing more than an abuse of a familiar form of speech, according to which we ascribe a character to a government, and speak of it, for example, as despotic or liberal. Everybody knows that this is not done to ascribe properties to the government itself, but merely to denote the character of the measures pursued by it; measures which may be not at all in accordance with the personal sentiments of the governing men, but possibly in direct contravention of them.

The objection, consequently, has no force. To say that when a nation has an ecclesiastical establishment its government has a conscience, and that when it has not one its government has not a conscience, is to talk absurdly. Conscience is not an attribute which can be predicated of any government, of any kind.

We might easily extend this argument, and show into what inferential absurdities those might be led who maintain the theory of governments having consciences; but we shall content ourselves with the preceding brief refutation of it, and proceed to direct our attention to the practical objections which have been alleged against the ecclesiastical system of the United States.

In this department of our work we have to do at once with a bold and manly, if not an altogether fair, opponent, in the person of Captain Marryat, who, in the third volume of his *Diary in America*, has given a whole chapter on religion, and stated his sentiments at large. We have already made some passing references to the statements of this gentleman, and we shall now enter somewhat fully into his allegations.

Everybody is familiar with Captain Frederick Marryat, as not only a voluminous, but a very lively and entertaining, writer. He was also beyond doubt an able and valuable officer. He was not, however, exactly the man to supply us with a trustworthy judgment of American institutions. Like Achilles in the Styx, he is baptized in High-church feeling and Toryism, but without the exception even of his heel. He frankly avows, indeed, a hatred of democracy, and a design to do it all the injury he can. From such an observer we have to anticipate no impartiality, and little candour.

If Captain Marryat was not guilty of liberal politics, so neither does he seem to have been largely acquainted with experimental religion. He was readily submissive to the gilded yoke of a dominant priesthood, and happy in the slumbers of a sanctimonious formalism; but he had little sympathy with the workings of a tender conscience, and no admiration for the earnestness and activities of warm-hearted piety.

To show that we are not forming a judgment without book in speaking thus of the author before us, we cite what will be generally deemed a high authority upon matters of this class, the language of the *Edinburgh Review*, which is as follows:—

“Before reading Captain Marryat’s chapter on religion, we should have declined accepting him as either witness or judge upon the subject anywhere, but more especially in America. After reading it we still decline. He may think that he is anxious ‘to do justice to the really religious portion of its inhabitants;’ but he is too much of a High-Churchman to do justice to a nation of Dissenters. Our objection, however, lies deeper and broader than even this. Religion in America has a gravity, an earnestness, or, if Captain Marryat prefers the expression, an atmosphere of excitement round about it, to which we readily imagine he found nothing in his nature to respond. The mocking tone which he has picked up in running over the world about gold and godliness—a suspicion of everybody and everything that are unfortunate enough to appear to him to be righteous overmuch—a detestation of the bigotry of the Pilgrim Fathers so intense that he can find no other word but ‘diabolical vices’ for their mistaken virtues—are symptoms of an antipathy in nature amounting to a positive disability, when the question is What is the real religious condition of America at the present day? Captain Marryat compassionates Dr. Reed’s credulity in favour of temperance societies; but he is infinitely more credulous in favour of himself, if he indeed conceives that there is a man in Christendom desirous of knowing anything of

the moral and religious prospects of America, who would hesitate for a moment in his choice between the evidence of Dr. Reed and Dr. Matheson on one side, and of Captain Marryat on the other.”*

Captain Marryat's survey of religion in the United States, although generally to its disadvantage, contains some striking admissions in its favour, which may as well be cited, perhaps, at the commencement of our reply.

“I believe,” says he, “that in no other country is more zeal shown by its various ministers, zeal even to the sacrifice of life; that no country sends out more zealous missionaries; that no country has more societies for the diffusion of the Gospel; and that in no other country in the world are larger sums subscribed for the furtherance of these praiseworthy objects than in the Eastern States of America. I admit all this; and admit it with pleasure, because I know it to be true.”

In speaking of the western frontier, he says: “You may pass in one day a dozen towns not having above twenty or thirty private houses, although you will invariably find in each an hotel, a bank, and churches of two or three denominations.”

These are certainly gratifying statements, and from the quarter from which they come they must be deemed eminently worthy of credit. With such effects of the Voluntary Principle before his eyes, of what did he find reason to complain?

1. Several of his accusations relate to the operation of the new system on the clerical body. It has raised up self-constituted ministers; it has wrested power from the clergy; it has overwhelmed them with labour. The last of these accusations might seem to supply a sufficient answer to the first; since, if the demand for exertion is greater than the regular clergy can supply, it is clearly better that it should be done by spontaneous labourers than not done at all. This dislike of self-constituted ministers, however, is nothing but the result of English High-Church prejudice, and can be regarded only as marking the degree at which the Captain stood in the scale of the ecclesiastical thermometer. He would, of course, denounce the entire Nonconformist clergy of Great Britain on the same ground; and it would seem that his aversion must extend to all the American clergy, except the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Romish.

* Edinburgh Review, vol. lxx., p. 139.

That the Voluntary System has wrested power from the hands of the clergy is no doubt a fact; but it does not follow from this, as the Captain elsewhere affirms, that it "has deprived the pastoral office of its *legitimate* influence." It may be that the power held by the clergy under religious establishments in general, or under the American establishments in particular, was excessive rather than legitimate. This also is matter of opinion. For our own part, we believe it to be of the nature of religious establishments to put the clergy into a very false position, and to invest them with a degree of power which cannot but be hurtful both to society and to themselves; and we are quite sure that in the United States this power was practically injurious to an enormous extent. No one who has read the preceding pages can doubt this. That such power has been wrested from the hands of the clergy is one of the greatest blessings for which the Americans have to be thankful: whether the process of denudation has gone further than is expedient, is a question on which it is not necessary for us to enter. This is evidently a matter of opinion, on which all parties have to pursue their own course. It is enough to make this remark, that the legitimate influence of an unestablished clergy lies very much with themselves, and that they may in all cases, within proper limits, expect to have as much power as they deserve.

"The talents of the clergy," Captain Marryat somewhat bitterly complains, "are always in the market for the highest bidder." Will he have the candour to ask himself whether this is an evil peculiar to the Voluntary System? With what thoughtlessness and infatuation does a charge of this sort come from a member of the Church of England; a church which presents more temptations to the cupidity of its clergy than any ecclesiastical establishment in the world!

No complaint is more loudly reiterated by Captain Marryat, than that, in some denominations more particularly, ministers are overworked; and he makes a very long extract from a pamphlet of the Rev. Calvin Colton, representing the process as one almost of clerical murder. Mr. Colton, however, is a witness whose testimony is liable to material deductions, since it is given in vindication of his personal removal from a hard-working position to one of lighter toil. As for Captain Marryat, his views of ministerial duty are, no doubt, sufficiently luxurious. In truth,

this is a question of a practical kind, and must be settled by an exercise of practical wisdom. That churches in the United States should wish for a large amount of religious activity from their ministers is very creditable to themselves; that they should be reckless of the life and health of their ministers is not probable, nor do we believe it to be extensively true; but, to whatever extent it may be true, the remedy is in the hands of the ministers themselves, and it cannot be long ere it is actually applied.

2. Another class of accusations brought by Captain Marryat against the Voluntary System relates to the religious character which has been produced under its influence. It has fostered religious excitement, it has generated a love of change, and it has multiplied sects without end.

“Religious excitement”! We know sufficiently well what the Captain means by this phrase to pass it by as an accusation of small weight. We may take it rather as a eulogy. “In America,” says he, “all religion is excitement.” This sweeping denunciation saves us the trouble of making an exception, and of saying how far we are from sympathizing with *some* of the scenes of religious excitement which have been witnessed across the Atlantic. There, it seems, in the opinion of Captain Marryat, “*all* religion is excitement.” We wish it were so in England.

As a proof that religion has in America become “all excitement,” Captain Marryat informs us that it prevails chiefly among the women and the blacks. We here avail ourselves again of the language of the Edinburgh reviewer:—

“Religion, especially in its outward demonstrations, communicates more immediately with the imagination and the feelings than with the reason. Without doubt, therefore, in America, as everywhere else, the women will be more religious than the men. This too will be the case more there than elsewhere, in proportion to the truth of the assertion that religion there ‘is all excitement;’ and that ‘every sect has so far fallen into Catholicism that religion is become more an appeal to the senses than to the judgment.’ But to affirm that religion in America has passed from the men to the women, and from the whites to the blacks, is an exaggeration scarcely less extravagant than the cause assigned for it.”

The cause assigned by Captain Marryat for this pretended change is, that it is absurd to suppose “that a man who has been in such ardent pursuit of wealth as is the American for six days in the week, can recall his attention to serious points

on the seventh"! To this it is quite enough to reply, that such an influence is obviously in no degree connected with the Voluntary System.

That the Voluntary System has generated a love of change, is, we have no doubt, an entirely false accusation. Not that we mean to deny the existence of a love of change as a fact in all religious communities in the United States; but we think its existence is to be accounted for on a different principle. It must, indeed, be so, since it is not only in religion that a love of change appears. It is a universal characteristic of American society, and affects temporal affairs as palpably as it does spiritual ones. It has doubtless arisen from the circumstances in which the population has been placed. Never has a numerous and civilized people had such multitudinous opportunities of choice as the Americans—that is to say, such inducements to change, or such temptations to changeableness. In a country densely peopled, and of compact social institutions and interests, like England, it is well if a man can find one course of successful exertion open to him; and almost every man's choice is not only speedily, but permanently, made. In a wide and newly-settled country such as the United States, every man finds a hundred ways of profitable employment, and he abandons at his pleasure first one and then another, because of the facilities which lie so abundantly around him. It is not in the nature of things that a population so situated should not become changeable; nor is it in the nature of things that a population which is changeable in everything else should not be so in religion. But it is absurd to blame the Voluntary Principle for this.

It is undoubtedly true, that under the Voluntary System the formal varieties of religion in the United States have greatly multiplied; and, if more so there than elsewhere, the perfect religious freedom enjoyed will naturally account for it. Captain Marryat makes no attempt, however, to prove that this is an evil, or to show how it can be prevented, except on a principle which, if consistently carried out, would prohibit the allowance even of a single diversity; but perhaps his preference would be for the spiritual despotism which, under the name of unity, compresses all differences within its own bosom, where they struggle for a forbidden but inevitable existence, rather than the freedom which allows

man's heart and conscience to work their way unfettered through all their vagaries, to the appreciation of the light and truth vouchsafed to us from heaven.

3. A third class of accusations brought by Captain Marryat against the Voluntary System in the United States relates to the erection of churches. He tells us that the multiplication of sects compels the multiplication of churches; that the churches are built on speculation; and that it costs a great deal of money to secure a seat in them. He adds, as if to give piquancy to his complaint, that many of those in the western region are "small to ridicule;" that they are "built of clap boards, and so light that, if on wheels, two pair of English post-horses would trot them away."

A great deal of this has evidently no relation at all to the Voluntary System. If there were an ecclesiastical establishment in every State in the Union, the remoter settlements of a people penetrating every year farther and farther into the forest and the prairie would have churches in the first instance "small," and built, like every other dwelling, "of clap boards." Did Captain Marryat, however, see in the United States *no* churches large enough, or heavy enough, to please him?

The assertions that the multiplication of churches is compelled by the multitude of sects, and that it originates in speculation, are mutually contradictory; but, whichever be the truth, the result is beneficial. As for building churches on speculation, did Captain Marryat never hear of such a thing in England? He goes into the American plan of raising money for the erection of a church by selling the freehold of the seats to show that it is not cheap; he has the grace to recollect, however, that the payment in this case is voluntary, and consequently optional. He, doubtless, would have preferred the imposition of a rate on all the householders of the parish.

4. Another class of objections alleged by Captain Marryat against the Voluntary System in the United States relates to its social influence. It takes no care of the poor; it has broken one of the strongest links between man and man; and it has generated a tyrannical public opinion.

There is no complaint which one hears with more displeasure—we might say, with more disgust—from an English churchman than this, that other churches take no care of the

poor. A falser boast was never trumpeted through the world than this, which we hear so often, that the Church of England is "the poor man's church." As to America, we suppose Captain Marryat means that in the churches there is no specific provision for paupers. Certainly: there are no paupers to be provided for. The Earl of Carlisle, a very observant but candid witness, testifies distinctly to this point, that, in the sense in which we speak of the poor in relation to church-accommodation, there are no poor in America. When there are, no doubt Christian compassion will provide for them.

But the "links between man and man"—the Voluntary System has broken one of these, and even "the strongest" of them. Can the reader divine what this is? Or will he believe that Captain Marryat assigns to this position the "link" formed by an ecclesiastical establishment? The links that bind society together are doubtless very important, and one would not willingly break any of them; but what does an established church do to bind society together? Captain Marryat says that he witnessed religious disunion in families; but the same thing occurs where there is an Establishment. It afflicted him to see the members of a household dispersing themselves on a Sunday morning, one to one church and one to another; but he failed to observe, we must suppose, the cheerful goodwill which pervaded the whole, and the perfect absence of that grudging and displeasure which a similar scene often produces in England. The heart-burnings and resentments which a church-establishment produces are the very things which split society to pieces, and counteract with a fearful power the other influences which tend to make the several parts of it cleave one to another.

Dr. Lang, however, characterizes this statement as a gross misrepresentation of the real state of things in America. "The instances," he says, "in which the different members of the same family are members of different communions are but few in number, in comparison with those in which they all go one way; and even in these instances, as the Protestant communions of the United States are almost universally of evangelical sentiments, the peace of families is rarely interrupted."*

* Lang, p. 363.

Captain Marryat is probably right in telling us that public opinion in America has a control in religious matters somewhat approaching the tyrannical, but he is clearly wrong in ascribing this to the Voluntary System. American public opinion is universally tyrannical, as much in the house as in the church, as much in teetotalism as in religion. It is in the general progress of transatlantic society that this element has developed itself, and it acts on religion only because it acts on everything. Ecclesiastical establishments could never have prevented its growth, and would have been far more afflicted by it than voluntary churches can be.

5. The gravest of all the charges brought by Captain Marryat against the Voluntary System, however, is this—that it has not availed to prevent the growing degeneracy of the population. He pronounces not only the ministry to be inefficient, but the system of education to be immoral; and he thus proceeds:—

“The evidence that it is so is in the demoralization which has taken place in the United States since the era of the Declaration of Independence, which as a fact is freely admitted by so many American writers. Not fifty years back, at the time of the Declaration of Independence, was not the American community one of the most virtuous in existence? Such was indeed the case, and it is now equally certain that they are one of the most demoralized. The question is, then, What can have created such a change in the short space of fifty years? The only reply that can be given is that, as the Americans, in their eagerness to possess new lands, pushed away into the West, so did they leave civilization behind, and return to ignorance and barbarism—they scattered their population, and the Word of God was not to be heard in the wilderness: that, as she increased her slave States, so did she give employment, land, and power, to those who were indifferent to all law, human or divine. And as, since the formation of the Union, the people have yearly gained advantages on the government, until they now control it, so have they controlled and fettered religion until it produces no good fruits. Add to this the demoralizing effects of a democracy which turns the thoughts of all to mammon, and it will be acknowledged that the rapid fall is not so very surprising.

“In no other country,” adds Captain Marryat, “are such strenuous exertions [as those of the American clergy] so incessantly required to stem the torrent of atheism and infidelity which so universally exists in this.”

With some of the contents of these passages we have nothing to do; we shall remark on them only as they bear on our proper subject—the operation of the Voluntary Principle in the United States.

According to Captain Marryat, then, a "torrent of atheism and infidelity universally exists" there. This is easily said. It is, however, strongly contradicted by other testimony fully worthy of credit. De Tocqueville, for example, says: "In the United States the sovereign authority is religious, and consequently hypocrisy must be common; but there is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America."* It is also inconsistent with the Captain's own admissions. How, for example, can this statement be reconciled with his admission that where twenty houses are got together one of them will be a church—that public opinion runs so strongly in favour of public worship that the majority of men who attend on it attend from fear of their neighbours—that the American clergy are equal, if not superior, to any in the world; while, nevertheless, the spiritual demands of their congregations are generally beyond what the zeal and ability even of such a ministry can overtake?

Captain Marryat asserts, however, that the population of the United States has greatly degenerated within the last fifty years—"since the era of the Declaration of Independence." We shall excuse ourselves from noticing this political reference. The writer has evidently something more in his eye than the Voluntary System in religion. But this growing demoralization, it seems, is acknowledged by American writers themselves; and we, of course, shall not take it upon us to contradict them. What, then, is the cause of it? This, Captain Marryat says, is "the question." And he knows very well how to answer it. In a previous portion of his book, where he had no view to religion, he states his conviction that it resulted from the rapid growth of the population; and that, considering the increase and concentration of their numbers, things could not have been otherwise. Now, however, the subject of religion being in his eye, he assigns, not only a different, but a contradictory reason for the same fact—namely, the scattered condition of the population, and its pushing away into the West, where "the Word of God was not to be heard." The Captain's philosophy seems to be somewhat pliable; but, at all events, both these representations cannot be true.

* Democracy in America, vol. ii., p. 229.

For our part, the causes of the demoralization which American writers have admitted and bewailed seem to lie upon the surface. The America that is now is neither the America that was fifty years ago, nor its direct descendant. A very large proportion indeed of the increase of the population, which has been rapid beyond all precedent, has accrued by the accession of emigrants, many of whom were deeply demoralized when they left the various portions of the old world, and must of necessity have added to the general demoralization of the new, whether they accumulated in crowds, as in cities, or dispersed themselves through the wilderness, where they left civilization behind. In addition to this, since the era of independence, immense territorial acquisitions have been made by the United States—Louisiana, Florida, Texas, and other extensive regions—all of them bringing into the Union large masses of people already demoralized, and deepening the aspect of degeneracy in the whole.

With all this the spirit of religion has had to contend: and “the question” which is of importance in the case is, not, as Captain Marryat puts it, what have been the causes of the growing demoralization, but whether religion under the Voluntary System has acquitted itself with due vigour and success, or whether it may be supposed that a system of ecclesiastical establishments would have effected more good? To the latter of these questions the facts adduced in this volume furnish the appropriate and most satisfactory reply; but Captain Marryat himself also answers it after the same tenor, when he says that the American clergy, as a body, in the midst of unprecedented difficulties, have acquitted themselves nobly. If he thinks, however, that “the torrent of atheism and infidelity” would have been more effectually stemmed by setting up a church establishment in every State, he must be left to the enjoyment of an opinion in which we conjecture few of our readers will concur.

We ought not to leave this subject without observing, that in America there probably *seems* to be more of “atheism and infidelity” than there really is. For between the United States and the older countries of Europe there is this marked and influential difference—that with us all modes of unbelief are covered by the national profession of Christianity, while with them no man is taken for a Christian unless he per-

sonally declares it. There is in America a liberty of being irreligious; and the various kinds of irreligion put themselves more or less boldly into form, and present themselves palpably to the public eye. Thus, while an equal amount of infidelity may be supposed really to exist in America, England, and Spain, most would *appear* in the first, less in the second, and least of all in the third. Were a proper allowance made for this peculiarity, perhaps America might bear, even in this respect, no disadvantageous comparison with the countries of the Old World.

It may be observed, finally, that the admissions and complaints of American writers on this subject are probably to some extent deceptive. They have been made by persons desirous of kindling the fire of Christian zeal, and whose representations have been characterized by a warm and benevolent earnestness, amounting to exaggeration. "It cannot be denied," says Dr. Baird, "that the agents and missionaries of our home mission societies have unintentionally and unwittingly promoted erroneous impressions concerning the religious destitution of the country."* From such an adversary as Captain Marryat, however, the candour with which such representations ought to be received was not to be expected.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOURCES OF ITS POWER.

ONE question yet remains for consideration. The Voluntary Principle has done nobly in America, and will yet do nobly. What are the sources of its power?

In reading Dr. Baird's most interesting volume, we have been struck with his constant endeavour to resolve the success of spontaneous religion in America into American peculiarities. He is continually telling us of the sterling piety of the New England Puritans, of the extraordinary character of the early colonists, of the force with which the remaining popu-

* Baird, p. 727.

lation have been thrown upon their own resources, and of the ardent love of liberty they imbibed in the wilderness. Now, we do not for a moment question these as facts, nor the influence they have exerted in favour of the more facile and effective action of the Voluntary Principle. No doubt, a population accustomed to do everything for themselves, attended to their own religious concerns much more readily and effectually than a people would have done who had been accustomed to have everything done for them. The development of the Voluntary Principle has been easier in the United States than it would have been in France. But these are the mere accidents, and not the essentials, of the case. The Voluntary Principle will succeed in France as certainly as in America, although not so easily; and it has succeeded in America, not merely because circumstances existed there which favoured its action, but because it harmonizes with the great laws of God, and brings out the great energies of mankind.

M. de Tocqueville has gone, we think, much deeper into this subject than the American divine; and although we admit the justice with which Dr. Baird animadverts on some of his expressions, we cannot but regard his views as for the most part just and profound. In our judgment, they open the true philosophy of the matter. Our readers will require no apology for the length of the extracts which we are about to set before them.

M. de Tocqueville had been informed that, without a National Establishment of religion, or a politically influential clergy, the Americans were an eminently religious nation. From this point he proceeds:—

“This led me to examine more attentively than I had hitherto done the station which the American clergy occupy in political society. I learned with surprise that they filled no public appointments: not one of them is to be met with in the administration, and they are not even represented in the legislative assemblies. In several States the law excludes them from political life; public opinion in all. And when I came to inquire into the prevailing spirit of the clergy, I found that most of its members seemed to retire of their own accord from the exercise of power, and that they made it the pride of their profession to abstain from politics.

“I heard them inveigh against ambition and deceit, under whatever political opinions these views might chance to lurk; but I learned from their discourses that men are not guilty in the eye of God for any opinions concerning political government which they may profess

with sincerity, any more than they are for their mistakes in building a house, or in driving a furrow. I perceived that these ministers of the Gospel eschewed all parties with the anxiety attendant upon personal interest. These facts convinced me that what I had been told was true; and it then became my object to investigate their causes, and to inquire how it happened that the real authority of religion was increased by a state of things which diminished its apparent force. These causes did not long escape my researches.

“I am aware that at certain times religion may strengthen its influence by the artificial power of the laws, and by the support of those temporal institutions which direct society. Religions intimately suited to the governments of the earth have been known to exercise a sovereign authority derived from the twofold source of terror and of faith: but, when a religion contracts an alliance of this nature, I do not hesitate to affirm that it commits the same error as a man who should sacrifice his future to his present welfare; and that, in obtaining a power to which it has no claim, it risks that authority which is rightfully its own. When a religion founds its empire upon the desire of immortality which lives in every human heart, it may aspire to universal dominion; but, when it connects itself with a government, it must necessarily adopt maxims which are only applicable to certain nations. Thus, in forming an alliance with a political power, religion augments its authority over a few, and forfeits the hope of reigning over all.

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

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

“As long as a religion is sustained by those feelings, propensities, and passions which are found to occur, under the same forms, at all the different periods of history, it may defy the efforts of time, or, at least, it can only be destroyed by another religion. But, when religion clings to the interests of the world, it becomes almost as fragile a thing as the powers of earth. It is the only one of them all which can hope for immortality; but, if it be connected with their ephemeral authority, it shares their fortunes, and may fall with those transient passions which supported them for a day. The alliance

which religion contracts with political powers must needs be onerous to itself; since it does not require their assistance to live, and by giving them its assistance it may be exposed to decay."*

The author then adverts to the religious condition of France, so dissimilar to that of the United States; and, having described it, he goes on to observe:—

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

“I am intimately convinced that this extraordinary and incidental cause is the close connexion of politics and religion. The unbelievers of Europe attack the Christians as their political opponents, rather than as their religious adversaries: they hate the Christian religion as the opinion of a party, much more than as an error of belief; and they reject the clergy less because they are the representatives of the Divinity, than because they are the allies of authority.

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

Our readers, of course, have felt, in common with ourselves, that the interest of the preceding chapters does not consist in the view they give of religion in a particular country, but in the illustration they afford of the character of a great principle of human action applicable to all countries.

Religion is assuredly the highest concern of man; and in the interest of religion there are pursued two practical courses, widely different one from another, and both of them strongly advocated by their respective supporters. The one party say, “You must sustain religion by the wealth of nations and the political influence of governments, or it can never exist;” the other, “You must let religion alone, or it will be paralyzed, and perish.” It is on the momentous question at issue between these two parties that a summary of the development of religion in the United States throws a valuable light.

* Democracy in America, vol. ii., p. 238.

† *Ibid.*, p. 247.

It may be observed in the outset, that the religious development of the United States may in fact be regarded as having taken place on the Voluntary Principle. In two portions of the region there *were* ecclesiastical establishments, but none of the gratifying results we have been contemplating are due to them.

The lowest of the conclusions, then, which we may draw from the survey we have taken is, that, so far as the interest of religion is concerned, the Voluntary Principle need not be feared. It is clearly neither fatal to religion, nor pernicious. Here is demonstrative evidence that a nation without an ecclesiastical establishment is not necessarily abandoned to immorality and atheism, but that, on the other hand, it has a fair chance of being at least as religious as other nations.

We may surely go further than this, however, and say, that by this example the Voluntary Principle has shown itself eminently favourable to the development of religion. In the United States it is certain that, under the Compulsory Principle, religion could never have acquired a character of so much vigour, or have advanced at so extraordinary a rate. And there is nothing in the circumstances of the United States to render them an exception to a general rule. On the contrary, Establishments were tried there, and in circumstances most favourable to their success. They were animated by two principal elements—the Virginian by the political formalism of the Church of England, the New England by the sterling piety of the Puritans. They occupied new ground, and the whole ground; existing from the commencement of the colonies respectively, and being as exclusive as it was possible to make them. If ever there were circumstances in which the peculiar resources of an Establishment were of value, or if ever there was a position in which an Establishment ought to have succeeded, it was in the New World. Virginia, Massachusetts—surely the one or the other of these Establishments should have been effective. But they both alike failed.

And if in these circumstances Establishments failed, what was it likely the Voluntary Principle could do? It was here, certainly, at the greatest possible disadvantage. Nothing would seem more necessary to its efficacious operation than a certain degree—than some considerable measure—of social compactness, and individual resources. But all

elements of this class were signally deficient. Tenants of a vast wilderness, through which they were scattered with scarcely frequency enough to disturb the fearful silence of the waste, with no security of life and property, and often destitute of daily bread—these wanderers, whether expatriated by oppression, or roaming in search of some undefined improvement of fortune, might seem to have had many things to do before they could provide religious ordinances out of their own funds, and to have been the very last persons who could have safely relied upon the Voluntary Principle.

Yet the Voluntary Principle thrust itself in, and ultimately thrust out the Compulsory. We say it thrust itself in, for it was surely both uninvited and unwelcome. Both the Virginians and the New Englanders did everything they could to keep out Nonconformity. It insinuated itself, however, and flourished. Dissent succeeded better on the Voluntary Principle than the Established Churches did on the Compulsory. At length the Compulsory Principle was abandoned, and religion has developed itself with more power, and with more rapidity, by means of spontaneous liberality and unrestricted energy, than would have been possible under a system of legal taxation and exclusive prerogatives. Its liberty has been its strength.

There is unquestionably much to be learned from these facts. They teach us, not only that in religion the Voluntary Principle need not be feared, but that it ought to be trusted and employed. America has in this respect set an example which other nations ought to ponder, and to follow. It proclaims to Europe, with its ancient ecclesiastical foundations and politico-ecclesiastical despotisms—"Let religion go free! The vast endowments with which you enrich it, and the high prerogatives with which you invest it, constitute only its swaddling bands, and retain it in an everlasting babyhood. Never until you release it can it assume its gigantic form, or exert its triumphant influence."

Such is the lesson which has long been taught in theory, and is now taught by experience. May the world, and, above all, may our country, have the wisdom to profit by it!

THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF A STATE- CHURCH.*

ALL great social institutions exert an influence on society itself, and all institutions which are really good exert on society a beneficial influence. The influence of a social institution, consequently, is at once an accessible and a fair test of its character, and by this test we propose to estimate the character of a State-church.

A State-church is certainly to be ranked among *great* social institutions. Among all social institutions, indeed, it may be said to hold the first rank, and none can be conceived of as exerting upon society an influence more strongly marked. Our readers will decide by their own observation whether the influence on society which we are about to ascribe to the State-church in England be justly assigned to it, or not.

The social influence of a State-church may be variously viewed, according to the two principal aspects in which it may present itself—as tolerant, or intolerant. A State-church may permit diversity of opinion and worship, or prohibit it; in both these conditions it has existed in England, and we shall, accordingly, say a few words of both.

And, first, of the case in which diversity of opinion and worship is not allowed. The social influence of a State-church in this case may be traced in the following particulars: it generates vice, discontent, insecurity, and injustice.

1. An intolerant State-church generates vice.

It discourages the utterance of truth and the exercise of conscientiousness. In one great department of human action it represses inquiry, and prohibits the expression of opinion; and it thus generates at once servility and hypocrisy. If, in religion, you think differently from its own formulas, it either forbids you to speak, and so enforces disguise, or compels

* Tracts for the Million, No. 23.

you to speak contrary to your judgment, and so necessitates a lie. What can be more fatal than such a process to the morals of society? Vices fostered in one walk of life are sure to appear in every other. What men are in religion they are most likely to be in everything else. Fashioned after this manner, what can society be but a community of hypocrites and deceivers? All trust is at an end. No man can any longer believe the words of his fellow, conscious that he is not accustomed to convey truth by his own.

2. An intolerant State-church generates discontent.

It denies a vent to some of the strongest workings of the human heart. For the heart of man will exercise itself individually on the subject of religion, in defiance of all that a State-church can do to prevent it. Many, perhaps the majority, may slumber; but throughout the community there will be found not a few whose consciences are alive to its awful realities, and whose hearts are deeply penetrated by them. And if these feelings cannot express themselves by the methods of the State-church, they can have no utterance at all, since there must be no religious exercises of any other kind. The wretchedness of such a condition may be more easily imagined than described. The religious cravings of our nature are certainly to be regarded as those which most urgently call for supply, and the anguish of a broken heart is that which most imperatively demands healing; but under an intolerant State-church, which is the case now supposed, this is altogether denied. The necessity of suppressing the utterance of these feelings, and the refusal of permission to seek a solace for them wherever it may be found, creates a sore in the body politic of a severe and irritating kind. It generates an element which may be compared to volcanic fire, consuming the very basis of the social state, and threatening to involve in ruin its fairest forms.

3. An intolerant State-church generates insecurity.

In order to maintain its pretensions, it must punish diversity of sentiment and worship, or, as State-churches have been pleased to call it, heresy; and in order to supply proof of heresy, all men must turn informers, the sacredness of home must be violated, and the secrets of domestic life be dragged to light. It is made a duty of every man to bear witness against his neighbour; of parents to accuse their children, and children their parents; of the husband to

accuse his wife, and the wife her husband. There is no longer any sense of security. What you utter in the confidence of a bosom friendship to-day may meet you in the form of a judicial accusation to-morrow, and those in the tenderest relations to you may be compelled, with agonized hearts, to bear witness for your condemnation. Thus a living element of treachery, and a corresponding mistrust, is diffused throughout the whole community. Every man is religiously bound to betray his fellow, and there is no longer an individual into whose ear you can, without peril, breathe your secret thoughts.

4. An intolerant State-church generates injustice.

It causes penalties to be attached to that which does not deserve them, inasmuch as against society it is no offence. To imprison or to banish a thief is no matter of wrong, since the act punished is an injury to the social body; but it is quite another thing to imprison or banish a man for preferring a different kind of religion. This is no injury to society. It may even be a benefit to it, as leading to an improvement of morals, or an enlargement of benevolence. Yet this is the thing which an intolerant State-church constitutes into an offence, and for the punishment of which, with even the severest penalties, it invokes the exercise of the secular power. The only sound principle of social justice—that society should punish offences against society, and only those—is in this manner entirely overthrown, and a system of palpable injustice is established, proceeding in many cases to atrocious and barbarous cruelty.

That the influence of a State-church without toleration has been such as we have briefly indicated all history declares. In such a condition England itself *has been*, and Spain, Portugal, Austria, Italy, still are.

But let us now advert, in the second place, to the social influence of a State-church granting toleration, or permitting diversity of opinion and worship. In this case, there is no doubt a mitigation of the evil, but there is far from being an annihilation of it.

1. A State-church, when not intolerant, creates a social inequality at once unfair and vexatious. Those who belong to the State-church and those who do not, are not, under such a system, regarded with equal courtesy. To be a Churchman places you at once, and without any regard to your

other qualifications, in a higher walk in life than can ever be obtained by a Dissenter, however otherwise respectable. Integrity, virtue, benevolence, public spirit, wealth—not one nor all of these can avail to preserve a Dissenter from a very perceptible degree of social degradation. And this extends, indeed, beyond the mere courtesies of life to its more substantial comforts. As far as the influence of the State-church extends, its effect is to give to Churchmen in every respect the best chance—the best chance of obtaining education, of obtaining situations, of obtaining custom, of obtaining office, and, in one word, the best chance of getting forward in the world. This social preference, we say, is unfair, because it rests on no social superiority; and it is vexatious, because it makes honest men suffer when they do not deserve it, and refuses the honour due to the virtues which adorn society, and bless mankind.

2. A State-church, when not intolerant, creates a fictitious religious offence. Upon the false assumption that adherence to the State-church is a duty, it builds the equally false conclusion that separation from the State-church is a sin; and it calls this imaginary sin by the bitter name of schism. Hence Nonconformists are branded, even by a tolerant State-church, with the odious appellation of schismatics, and every artifice is employed by which this appellation can be made either expressive of more hatred on the part of those who employ it, or productive of more annoyance in those against whom it is directed. It is to the State-church that society is indebted for this infusion of gall. Were there no such institution, all religious bodies would be at peace, and no one would think of hurling the accusation of schism against those who did not adhere to it. The disturbance of religious equality by giving to one sect a superiority over others, is at the same time a disturbance of religious concord, since the State-church cannot but hate those whom its own unnatural elevation has converted into its rivals.

3. A State-church, when not intolerant, creates an occasion of groundless political imputations. It has been a prevalent policy to identify adherence to the State-church with fidelity to the State itself, and to accuse Dissenters of disloyalty. It is well known how often the favourite toast of "Church and King" has resounded in convivial parties, and how often Nonconformists have been denounced in

ambitious, if not eloquent, speeches, as men of divided allegiance. That the imputation of disloyalty against English Dissenters is unjust all the world knows, and none better than those who, for their own purposes, most eagerly reiterate it. But this is not our point; what we say is, that it is to the State-church we are indebted for it. Were it not for this, the factitious connexion between a man's religion and his political views would never have been dreamt of; but once give us a State-church, and then, however tolerant it may be, it is sure to nestle among the warm folds of the royal robe, and to say, as it peeps forth in pampered vanity, "If you don't love me, you don't love the king."

4. A State-church, when not intolerant, creates a system of bribery and oppression. It has, of course, many gifts to bestow—much patronage, and many charities. Is it possible that these should be dispensed with an impartial regard to merit, on the one hand, and to necessity, on the other? If a general knowledge of human nature would have led us to give a doubtful answer to this question, the lessons of experience have decided it in the negative. The treasures of the State-church have been systematically applied to purposes of personal favouritism, or political partisanship. Her rewards are not for the honest and the independent, but for the unprincipled and the servile. Her charities are not for the needy, but for the church-going.

5. A State-church, when not intolerant, creates a feeling hostile to social improvement. Every one knows that society has not come down to us from past ages in a state of perfection. It has received great improvements, and it needs many more. But for none of these has it been, or is it likely to be, indebted to the State-church. The whole influence of this body is directed to keep things as they were. It is too feeble to think of advancing, it is too frail to sustain the perils of amendment. All progress must be made without it, if not in opposition to it. It thus falls further and further behind the age, and grudges every onward step in the march which it cannot direct, and will not facilitate.

THE THREE ALTERNATIVES;

OR ONE, ALL, OR NONE?*

Which shall be paid by the State? That is the question. Shall it be one Church? or all Churches? or no Church at all?

First, shall the State pay one church?

No. Why should it do so? There is no one church so much better than others as to entitle it to a monopoly. Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, and Independency, are but different forms of the same religion, and one of them is as worthy of being paid by the State as another.

Besides, whatever church may be paid by the State, it is paid with the people's money; and if it is paid for any good reason at all, it is paid because the people approve it. But the people are far from approving one church to the exclusion of the rest. Some are Episcopalians, some are Presbyterians, some are Independents, some are Methodists, some are Quakers, some are Baptists; and if the people's money *must* be employed to support religion, proportionate grants should be made to all the kinds of religion which the people approve. Otherwise there is palpable injustice. The State takes my money to uphold a religion which, perhaps, I dislike, which, perhaps, I conscientiously disapprove and detest! Is this justice? Is it not a wrong which I have a right at once to feel and to denounce?

The government practically acknowledges that there is force in this argument; for although the principle of paying one church is not formally renounced, and although the great bulk of ecclesiastical wealth is confined to the Church of England, yet they do in fact pay other religious denominations. There is the *Regium Donum*, for example, to the Irish Presbyterians, and the endowment of the Romanist seminary at Maynooth. The government do not dare to stand by their principle, and give to any one church an absolute monopoly.

* Tracts for the Million, No. 21.

Secondly, shall the State, then, pay all churches?

No. For this would be as inconsistent as to pay only one would be unjust. The government supports a church professedly as a religious institution, and for the sake of disseminating religion—that is, truth. But a government that pays all churches supports all religions, however false in themselves, or contradictory to one another. With indiscriminate bounty and zeal, it would be propagating, not only different forms of religion substantially the same, but religions widely diverse and contradictory; the Evangelical and the Socinian, the Protestant and the Papist, the Swedenborgian and the Mormonite. In part the British government is already involved in this inconsistency, and a very revolting spectacle it is. Paying Protestant churches with one hand, it pays the Romish church with the other, both in Ireland and in the colonies; in some of the latter of which Popish and Protestant bishops draw their ample salaries, in a manner equally direct, from the people's purse. Thus the State preposterously nourishes within its own bosom, not only eager rivals, but deadly foes, and contributes, by an absurd expenditure, at one and the same moment to the spread of truth and of error, and to those convulsions of society which necessarily spring from a conflict so sustained.

Yet the mischief now resulting from this pernicious cause is small in comparison with that which must be produced if the principle of paying all sects by the State should be adopted, and thoroughly carried out. The government then would appear as the patron of every religious error, however crude and fantastical, which might gain a partial or temporary hold of the public mind, and would not only encourage it for the present moment by giving a salary to its preachers, but would perpetuate it by an endowment. The bounty of the State would thus counteract the natural tendency of erroneous notions to exhaust their energy, and force mischief to become permanent which a salutary law of divine Providence has doomed to be fleeting and evanescent.

It cannot but appear wonderful that an inclination to so inconsistent and mischievous a course as this should ever have been manifested; yet, strange to say, it has been so, and even British statesmen have, with little reserve, intimated their readiness to take all sects into the pay of the government. The reason of this, however, is not far to seek. They

lose sight of the promotion of *religion*, and view the payment of religious bodies by the State in a *political* aspect. They find the church that *is* paid a useful political instrument, servile, pliable, and ready to do dirty work; whereas they find religious bodies that are not paid to have some love of liberty and spirit of independence. It is to rid themselves of this inconvenience that they would squander more money. "Let us pay them all," say these shrewd politicians, "and then we can lead them in a string." Are the religious communities of England willing to sell their birthright, liberty, for a mess of pottage, and to be bribed into political servility? We trow not. Such an application of religious pretence to the purposes of State-craft is a desecration of what is holy which ought to be deeply and universally abhorred.

Thirdly, shall the State, then, pay no church at all?

This proposition has some obvious recommendations. There would then be neither injustice nor inconsistency. No church being paid by the State, no one would have occasion to be jealous of another; and no religious system being patronized by the government, it would hold itself entirely aloof from theological strife. So far the state of things would be very satisfactory and desirable.

But it may be said that, although neither unjust nor inconsistent, this state of things would be mischievous, and even dangerous. For what reason? we ask. And we are answered, that, if religion is not in some form supported by the State, it will not maintain its proper hold upon society, and that it may, perhaps, not even continue to exist. From such consequences as these we shrink with as much horror as can be felt by any party in the contemplation of them; and we say, Heaven forbid! But it is fair to ask whether such consequences really will follow, and whether there is any just reason to apprehend them. We are not to take this conclusion upon the mere word of anybody who pleases to assert it; especially when there is a large number of persons who have so strong an interest in its being believed.

What reason, then, is there to think that, if religion was not in some form paid by the State, it would lose its present hold of society, and die out? We will answer the question with all gravity and sincerity.

One might suppose from the representations made on this

subject, that Christianity—for that is what we mean by religion—was a creature of human society altogether, and was originally part and parcel of it. We scarcely need remind our readers, however, that the contrary of this was the fact. When Christ left his religion in the world, all the ruling powers were bitterly hostile to it, both the Jewish and the Pagan. No government on earth gave its ministers a salary; on the contrary, both its ministers and its professors were counted as “the offscouring of all things,” and hunted to the death. Yet it grew and increased, and, in the course of three hundred years—during the whole of which time no government gave it a farthing—it became “a great fact” in the world. Why should it not do the same again? We are willing to suppose, not only that all governments cease to pay it, but that all governments set themselves in hostility to it, and that by fire and slaughter its adherents are reduced to twelve men; and we say, Christianity was spread by twelve men once, and, with God’s blessing, it would be so again.

However, it became a fashion for States to endow Christianity, and to pay its ministers. And what was the effect of this system? Did it make preachers of the Gospel more disinterested and zealous, or the ranks of the clergy more free from hypocrites and pretenders? Nothing of the kind. It held out a lure to the worldly and the ambitious; and the church became crowded with men who, knowing nothing of the Gospel, were eager for the wealth, influence, and power, which were to be obtained by the profession of it. Thus was the purity of the church corrupted, her power enfeebled, and her glory lost. These mischiefs have, in every age, been inseparable from the payment of the church by the State, and with that injurious system they have descended to our times. In the Church of England any one can see the inherent and incurable vices of a State-endowed hierarchy. It is not the strength of Christianity among us, but its weakness—not its glory, but its shame.

That religion has power apart from State-pay is sufficiently apparent from this, that, in modern times and at the present day, the main energy of religion is to be found among communities which are unsupported by the State; and the diffusion of it, both at home and abroad, is chiefly to be ascribed to them. Let any one, for example, who knows what true

religion is, conceive what the state of England would be if all that has been done by the *unpaid* in it for the last three hundred years were annihilated. Or let any one look across the Atlantic, and take a calm survey of the religious condition of the United States, and ponder the answer which he receives to this question. In that region the test of experience has been applied with decisive effect to the system of supporting religion by the money of the State, and with no doubtful issue, since religion advances far more rapidly there without State-churches than ever it did with them. Why cannot a principle be trusted which has thus demonstrated its power? Are we everlastingly to be like people who have been made lame by the use of crutches, and can never be persuaded to try whether their legs can carry them?

We say without fear, and therefore without hesitation, Let no church be paid by the State. Give to all a fair field and no favour. We have confidence in truth, and in the God of truth. We have confidence in Christian zeal and love, the glowing fires which Christ kindled from heaven, and left burning upon earth. One *church* may rise and another may sink, as the purity or corruption, the activity or sloth, of the one or the other, may deserve; but RELIGION, in its unity and power, shall assuredly flourish, and the true Zion put on her beautiful garments.

We cannot conclude without saying that we are far from putting implicit confidence in the fears expressed for the safety of *religion* by those who wish to preserve State-pay for the *church*. Among the partakers or expectants of so many good things as the richest church in Christendom has to bestow, there is evidently something to be thought of besides the mere interest of religion. We are not thinking ill of the clerical body, or imputing to them any extraordinary vices; only we do not think them superhuman, or conceive that they can be absolutely indifferent to a handsome share of five millions sterling a year. No doubt, if the State were to pay no church at all, it would reduce many ladies and gentlemen to comparatively straitened circumstances, and render it necessary for many who now live in luxurious indolence to betake themselves to honest industry. But we merely ask this question—Whether, to prevent such consequences as these, it is worth while for the State to do a thing so unjust as paying one church, or so inconsistent as paying all churches?

FREE-TRADE AND CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS.*

A DIALOGUE.

Tom.—You are too late, Harry. The Free-trade argument against Establishments was very plausible once, and I used to think much of it myself; but Dr. Chalmers has quite knocked its brains out, and has done for it for ever.

Harry.—What has he said, Tom? Let us have a full, true, and particular, account of it.

T.—Why, Dr. Adam Smith† argued against religious establishments on the ground that religious instruction, like any common article of merchandise, should be left to the operation of demand and supply. Dr. Chalmers came forward with the reply, that, in all cases where the want of anything instead of weakening the appetite whetted the appetite, it might be best and safest to leave matters to the pure operations of nature; but the case of religion, he said, was peculiar, and no argument founded on the ordinary operations of commerce could be legitimately applied to it, because the natural and effective demand fell short of the actual necessity, and, indeed, became less as the necessity increased, until at last where the want was greatest desire for its relief was almost or altogether unfelt.‡ Is not this conclusive?

H.—You have quoted, I perceive, the Doctor's own language, which, translated into plain English, means only that, in religion, the ignorant are careless; an assertion which is no doubt very true, and a fact with which we are all familiar. But the Doctor is quite mistaken when he says that, in this respect, the case of religion is peculiar. With respect to almost everything else that is interesting or important to man the ignorant are careless. The force of his reasoning is more apparent than real. Dr. Smith's argument is, in fact, too narrowly stated. Common articles

* Tracts for the Million, No. 20.

† Wealth of Nations. ‡ Dr. Chalmers's Life, vol. ii., p. 142.

of merchandise are not left to the influence of a purely *spontaneous* demand. The things for which such a demand exists are, indeed, very few, as the condition of savage life demonstrates; and the supply of this demand would create a miserably small amount of commercial activity. For by far the greater part of the luxuries, and even the conveniences, of life, there is a demand *now* because the articles have been produced either by the skill of the manufacturer or by the enterprise of the merchant, and presented to the eye of the consumer in a manner fitted to awaken his desire for them. Man has as little desire for gutta-percha and mahogany as he has for religious instruction, until some one makes him acquainted with their value.

T.—Yet you cannot deny that there is an extensive demand for the luxuries and conveniences of life?

H.—Surely not. But let us trace this demand to its origin, and see how that has been produced which originally did not exist. The desire of gain is the main-spring of commerce. No one would ever have brought an article to dispose of to another, whether by sale or barter, but for the prospect of advantage. And wherever the prospect of advantage exists, there commercial activity is immediately stimulated. We are not merely to regard a person as saying to himself, “I have some things which such a people *do* desire; I will go and sell to them;” but rather we are to conceive of one saying, “I have some things which I think such a people would desire if they were to see them; I will go and exhibit them.” Thus the primary effort of commerce, in its large sense, is not to *supply* a demand, but to *create* one; and for this purpose the love of gain is a natural, constant, and adequate, stimulus.

T.—You would have religious instruction, then, hawked about the world for the purpose of making money by it?

H.—O, no! Very far from it. All I am saying is, that commercial and religious affairs are in this respect alike; and that there is no foundation whatever for the distinction which Dr. Chalmers would establish between common articles of merchandise and religious instruction. There is no original and spontaneous demand for commodities of either class.

T.—But there is a principle in human nature which leads to the creation of a demand for the comforts of life.

H.—And there is a principle in human nature, when

brought under the influence of religion, which leads to the creation of a demand for religious instruction.

T.—As I said before, the love of money. Is it because the preachers get paid for it?

H.—In your jocoseness you are forgetting the circumstances in which the first efforts to communicate religious instruction were, and generally must be, made. The earliest preachers of the Gospel suffered the loss of all things, and went forth not counting their lives dear to them; and not a few, even now, are treading in their steps.

T.—This is true. And what is the power which animates so vast a system of voluntary effort, when the prospect of gain is out of the question?

H.—It is religion itself; which, wherever it exists, not in name only but in reality, kindles such a sentiment of love to God and pity for man, that no efforts are deemed either too expensive or too laborious to effectuate the dissemination of the Gospel throughout the world.

T.—And your argument is that, as the creation and supply of the demand for physical comforts may well and wisely be left to the desire of gain, so the creation and supply of the demand for religious knowledge may well and wisely be left to the love of God and man cultivated by true Christians?

H.—Exactly so. For what reason should it be otherwise?

T.—For no reason, certainly, if the principle thus brought into action can be with equal justice relied upon.

H.—Surely you can have no doubt on this point. Only state in terms the question you have to decide. It is simply whether love to God and man may be expected to originate and sustain activities as costly and energetic as the love of gain.

T.—This assuredly ought not to be doubtful.

H.—And it is not doubtful. Not only in the structure of human nature is love to God and man the great commanding and animating power, but, in point of fact, it has done greater and more marvellous things than all other human passions put together. The enterprises of commerce are as nothing compared to the enterprises of benevolence. Not to insist upon the labours and sacrifices of the apostles and other early Christians, whose zeal you might ascribe to supernatural influence, let me recall to your remembrance the consecration of Howard to the cause of the prisoner, and of Clarkson to that of the slave; of Brainerd to the religious

welfare of the American, and of Schwartz to that of the Oriental, Indian; of Knibb to the regeneration of the Western Archipelago, and of Williams to that of the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, in such an enumeration where shall I stop?

T.—You have said more than enough to prove your point. The enterprises of commerce *are* as nothing to the enterprises of benevolence.

H.—Then why should benevolence not be confided in? To mistrust it is in every way unphilosophical and unjust. It is neither to believe in human nature nor to be taught by experience.

T.—There is force in what you say. You do not, however, put Dr. Chalmers wholly in the wrong. He is right when he says that religious instruction should be carried to the people, and that they should not be left till they ask for it.

H.—Undoubtedly. Nobody ever intended to say that people should be left in ignorance till they asked for instruction; nor would any disciple of Christ be either so ignorant, or so unmindful of the Great Master's command, "Go YE into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." He knew very well, and all the world knows, that no persons have been so active in carrying the Gospel to the ignorant and destitute as the dissentients from a State-church, against whom he argues. His localizing scheme, with all its pretended novelty, is the very principle on which English Nonconformists have been working for ages, and the present extension of the dissenting bodies is the amplest proof which can be cited of its adaptation and utility. But Dr. Chalmers is wrong as to the machinery by which he would effect this purpose. He argues thus:—"You must carry religious instruction to the people; therefore you must have a State-church, with its parochial and other machinery of localization." We set out from the same point, but arrive at a different termination. We say, "Religious instruction must be carried to the people; therefore give free scope to all who love the souls of men, and keep out of the field every kind of instrumentality which might thwart or obstruct them."

T.—The dispute, then, resolves itself into one respecting the adaptation of the machinery?

H.—Clearly so; it is nothing more.

T.—But why may not the government act? It is the supremely powerful body, and can do a great deal more than private individuals.

H.—Your question opens a very large subject, and might provoke the assigning of many reasons. I might say, for example, that governments are not certainly or uniformly composed of religious men, and that they are consequently unfitted for a course of religious action. I might say, again, that governments employ an instrumentality which is always more or less tainted by an admixture of secular motives, and so rendered unfit for a religious object. But I will rather confine your attention to what has been briefly called the Free-trade argument, which now becomes fully and easily applicable.

T.—That is it of which we were at first conversing?

H.—Yes; and it may be stated in the following manner. Free trade is now an established principle; that is, it is an established principle that trade ought to be free. In other words, in the creation and supply of the demand for the ordinary commodities of life the government ought not to interfere, either by becoming a trader itself, or by meddling in any way, favourably or unfavourably, with those who are so. You agree in this principle?

T.—Certainly. I am quite prepared to leave trade in the hands of individuals, alike without bounties and without restrictions.

H.—You believe that the desire of gain will cause everything to be brought to market which can contribute to the comfort of man, and cause the market to be supplied with the best qualities at the cheapest prices?

T.—I fully believe it.

H.—And that this will be done better by its being left in the hands of individuals than by the aid of the government, notwithstanding its greater power?

T.—I have no doubt of it.

H.—Then why are you afraid of dealing in a similar way with religion? You may regard religious instruction as a commodity which requires to be brought to market in order that a demand for it may be created, and to be supplied in sufficient quantity, and of proper quality, when the demand has arisen. Now, here are persons who have so much love to God and to man, that they feel both an urgent obligation to do this, and a great delight in doing it, at any expense, and at any labour. Leave it to them. Let the government neither bless them at all, nor curse them at all. And, if

they go about it in different methods, and form themselves into rival sects, still leave them alone. Let the government neither patronize any, nor discountenance any, but see only that every one has a fair field and no favour. The good work will be done better by unaided and unrestricted spontaneous effort than by any governments, or by any other instrumentality you can devise.

T.—But religion is so very important! Even if we leave other things to the chances of individual impulse, ought we not in the all-important affairs of another world to employ every possible instrumentality?

H.—Your argument tells against yourself. It is precisely because the concerns of religion are of infinite importance, that it is of the greatest moment to employ in its behalf the most just and energetic principle of action. You speak of the *chances* of individual impulse, as though the great principles of human action were of only occasional or of capricious operation; whereas, on the contrary, they are the most regular and stable of all elements in the management of the world. It is unspeakably more a matter of chance whether a government may act or not, than whether benevolence and the love of gain shall exert their destined influence on the condition of mankind.

T.—But what can individuals do? It seems an awful task to leave to such slender resources.

H.—To produce great results by causes of small apparent magnitude is characteristic of the Divine ways. The seeds which cover the earth with fruitfulness are small, and smaller still the rain-drops and the dew which nourish them. But, whatever may be your incredulity, you have, at all events, a magnificent and influential example. When Jesus Christ left this world, he confided its evangelization to the spontaneous efforts of twelve men. What would you have said if you had heard him pronounce his great commission?

T.—I am afraid I should have been unbelieving. But will the diffusion of religious instruction really create the demand for it of which you have spoken?

H.—Why, if it will not, then there is no use at all in government action for the purpose, nor in the localizing process for which Dr. Chalmers pleads. His whole argument rests upon this assumption, does it not?

T.—Why, yes; I see it does. He lays it down that, by

building another church in a parish, people who are now ignorant and careless would come to value and attend upon the religious instruction thus carried to their doors.

H.—And why should not the same effect result from the building of a chapel as from the building of a church? The truth preached, and the zeal and love manifested, are the vital elements.

T.—That must be admitted, certainly.

H.—But there is no need to fear on that ground. Religious truth finds man everywhere with the heart and the conscience to which it appeals, and to which God, its author, has never permitted it to appeal in vain. As well might a farmer trouble himself about the growth of the corn he sows, as a faithful preacher of the Gospel about the effect of his labours.

T.—After all, I cannot see what harm it would do for the government to act in this matter.

H.—Let me show you by a parable. There was a certain kingdom blessed with an eminently paternal government; and in it the king, seeing that bread was the prime necessary of life for his people, declared his intention to set up a government bakery. There was much to be said on behalf of this project. Not only was its object of universally admitted importance, but it was also plain that the government had a more perfect command of skill, capital, and all other needful resources, than could be possessed by private individuals; and it was held to be certain that the people would be supplied with a better article at a cheaper price, and in greater abundance, than by any other method. The government bakery was accordingly established, and, for a while, it went on swimmingly—it being, of course, protected against competition by suitable restrictions on rival bread-shops—and duly erected into a royal monopoly. After a time, however, it ceased to give the satisfaction it had promised. On the one hand, the persons who served at the counter were brusque and uncivil; they were put there by the government, they said, and were not bound to be cap-in-hand to their customers, who, they knew, could not get served anywhere else. On the other hand, those by whom the bread was manufactured were not so well skilled as they should have been in their business; and, indeed, such were the influences employed in the distribution of this valuable

patronage, that many hands were put into the government bakery who knew nothing about the business at all. The consequence of this necessarily was that the bread became both disagreeable and unwholesome, lumpy, sour, and half-baked; about which, however, to the additional mortification of the customers, the bakers cared nothing—they were put there by the government, they said, and, as their places were worth £500 a year to them, there they should remain. At length, there was added to these annoyances a third, of a still graver character—namely, a deficiency in quantity. The population increased rapidly, much more rapidly than the government bakeries, which, indeed, claimed a vested interest in the district which had been allotted to them, and grew dreadfully jealous one of another—so that, bad as the bread was, not enough even of that could be had to stave off starvation. The cry of the people when things were in this state was loud and awful, and they demanded, with a stern voice, permission to establish private bakeries for their own supply. Unwelcome enough was this demand to the multitude of government bakers, who were likely to lose both their business and their places, and long was it pondered over. As it could not be wholly refused, however, a compromise was proposed, after the following manner: the king said to the people, “You may have as many private bread-shops as you like, only you shall pay to the government bakeries the same as if you bought your bread there as heretofore.” For a time they were satisfied with this arrangement—delighted not a little to get bread enough, and better and cheaper bread than they had ever tasted before; but, at length, they began to say, “These government bakeries are of no use now, why should we pay for them? Free trade is the principle; down with the government bakeries!” It was rather a serious crisis, I must admit; but it did not last long, and when it was over the country was all the better for it. No people in the world are now supplied more abundantly, more cheaply, or more civilly, with the finest bread that can be eaten; and the government bestows not a thought upon the matter.

T.—Harry, you beat me. Government bakeries and government churches are founded on the same principles, and productive of similar mischiefs, and they ought to stand or fall together.

CIVIL ESTABLISHMENTS OF RELIGION
IMPEACH THE INTRINSIC POWER
OF THE GOSPEL.*

AMONG the objections we entertain to Civil Establishments of Religion, one of neither indefinite character nor inconsiderable weight is that they impeach the intrinsic power of the Gospel. They call in question its vital energy. The representation they give of it is that it has not power to stand alone, or of itself to win its anticipated triumphs : it is weak, and therefore they come to its aid. In this spirit a celebrated northern divine represents them as "an institute, of which he honestly believes that its overthrow were tantamount to the surrender, in its great bulk and body, of the Christianity of our nation."† They are, indeed, according to some persons, the only security that religion shall not be driven in dishonour out of the world.

We cannot acquiesce in such a representation. On the contrary, we believe that the Gospel has an intrinsic power, and that it is fully competent to attain its own destiny. So strong is our conviction of this as a truth, and so high is our appreciation of it as a matter of necessity and excellency, that we raise an argument against the civil establishment of religion on this ground. It is undoubtedly true, and it has been often said with great force, that such establishments bring into operation influences altogether incompetent to the diffusion of anything which can deserve to be called religion, and utterly hostile to the spirit and precepts of Christianity. The power of the Gospel is both impaired and superseded by them ; and, using a corrupt instrumentality, the fruits which they produce may be classed under the three terms—

* A Lecture delivered in Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, on 30th March, 1841, before the Liverpool Voluntary Church Association; and in Rusholme Road Chapel, Manchester, on 31st March, 1841, before the Manchester Voluntary Church Association.

† Dr. Chalmers's Lectures on National Churches, p. 180.

spiritual pride, formality, and hypocrisy. With all this we fully sympathize; but we do not need it. We can set it all aside, and yet raise, as we think, a valid objection against Religious Establishments. Without saying that they are mischievous to Christianity, it is enough to affirm that they are extraneous to it. Without saying that they impair the power of the Gospel, it is enough to show that they impeach it. Every system that calls in question the intrinsic power of the Gospel must be unsound; and unsound, therefore, is the system of upholding religion by secular establishments.

I. To make our ground good in this matter, it will be necessary, in the first place, to explain what we mean when we say that the Gospel has an intrinsic power. It will not be required of us, on the present occasion, to use the term Gospel in a restricted and technical sense. We claim rather to employ it with considerable, though not inappropriate or indefinite, latitude. We intend by the Gospel, as understood in this discussion, first, a system of truth addressed to mankind; secondly, an apparatus of means adapted to bring the truth into bearing; and, thirdly, a method of divine administration intended to secure its effect.

1. First, we consider the Gospel as a system of truth addressed to mankind. In this aspect of it we say it has an intrinsic power.

It has so inasmuch as it is truth, and on the general ground that all truth has an intrinsic power. There is a relation absolute and universal between truth and the human mind. So far as its capacity extends—of course, a necessary limitation—the mind of man is so adapted to the discovery and appreciation of truth in the widest sense, that whatever is true in any department of human knowledge is sure of progressive and ultimate prevalence. Truth has a rightful dominion over the mind of man; and, however long neglected or obstinately opposed, is sure in the end to win it. In this respect truth stands broadly distinguished from falsehood and error of every shade. These, however favoured by pre-occupancy or by patronage, or of whatever ancient date or wide diffusion, are but of temporary and evanescent influence; truth, in a surer, although, perhaps, slower progress, dislodges them step by step, until she takes possession of the whole arena of human knowledge. The familiar adage, *magna est veritas et prevalebit*, has long ago embodied the

sentiment I am expressing, as the dictate of the early no less than the later wisdom of the world ; and I suppose there can scarcely be found a person to question its correctness. By whom, or in what department of knowledge, is it doubted? In natural philosophy? No. In economical science? No. In political ethics? No. Every man is convinced that the secret of success is to be in the right, and that, with truth for his weapon, the world of mind may be subdued. Is the sentiment, then, which is unquestioned everywhere else, to be doubted only in religion? Is it in this field alone that truth shall be assumed to find no soil for the reception of appropriate seed, and no fertility to reward its cultivation? What is there that should make religious truth stand out from all other truth, to every particle of which it is close akin, so signally dishonoured? It is impossible! Were the Gospel false, it might be expected to fail of commanding the reception of mankind, or, with the systems of Paganism, to perish from the earth: but, if it be true, it is fitted to advance, like and with all other truth, through whatever obstructions, and after whatever delays, to universal dominion.

We may regard the topic now before us, however, a little more closely. The Gospel may be viewed, not merely as a portion of the entire body of truth, but as a portion of truth having a particular character. Unquestionably it has a character of great peculiarity. It comes into collision much more directly than truths of any other class with the cherished affections and prevailing pursuits of mankind; it challenges a more powerful influence, and requires the accomplishment of greater changes. It might seem that it was thus less likely to prevail; and that, having to fight its way through a host of mightier foes, it would too probably stand a defeated spectator of the triumph of all kindred truths.

It should be observed, however, that the truths of religion are far from being the only ones which run counter to the prejudices and immediate interests of men. In the department of political economy, to quote a familiar example, are many such; of which the existing agitation of the corn-law question affords a pregnant instance. Truths of this class, equally with those of religion, have to conquer the public mind; and their success demonstrates how very far from hopelessly insuperable are all the forms in which the passions and interests of men resist the progress of knowledge.

If it should yet be said that there is no hostility so desperate as that which the heart of man bears to the regenerating truths of the Gospel, we admit the allegation; but we reply, that in no other quarter are appeals made to man anything like so convincing and persuasive. It may require much to wean man's heart from the things of time; but of what immeasurable awfulness are the things of eternity! It may require much to subdue the enmity of a rebel to his Maker; but of what amazing power is the grace of God which bringeth salvation! It may require much to transform an unholy character; but of what constraining efficacy is the love of Christ! The fact is, that, in this, as in all other matters, God has made the considerations employed proportionate to the effects to be produced; and the truths of the Gospel stand out in as perfect an adaptation and adequacy to their end, as any other truths in the whole range of his administration. Neglected and resisted they may be, and so may all other truths; but, like all other truths, they cannot be honestly contemplated without answering their purpose.

2. We affirm, then, that there is an intrinsic power in the Gospel as a system of truth. Let us regard it, secondly, as an apparatus of means intended to bring religious truth into bearing on mankind.

Adapted and adequate as truth of all kinds is to make its own way in the world—with all the attractiveness of hidden treasure inviting research, and with all the authority of a governing power acquiring dominion—God has not left religious truth to the mere operation of its native energy. He has associated with it an instrumentality designed to aid its diffusion and its triumph.

First, he has embodied it in the sacred writings, and given it a substantial existence among the treasures of human knowledge. Hence it is not like the truths of science, which are left to be discovered by the genius or perseverance of men; and which are actually discovered in small portions, and at long distances one from another. Neither is there thrown over religious knowledge the doubtfulness which belongs to all knowledge besides, fruit as it is of the researches of beings who at best are fallible, and often are mistaken. The facts and doctrines affecting our spiritual and eternal welfare are exhibited to us, not as speculations

requiring to be tried by experiment, nor as the result of experiments of which every man may be suspicious till he can verify them for himself: they are declared to us on authority, and on an authority (the divine inspiration of the Scriptures being conceded) which admits neither of contradiction nor of doubt. The revelation made to us is truth; the whole of it is truth; it is unmingled truth; it is, in reference to our duty and welfare, complete and perfect truth. Our faith reposes, not on the wisdom of man, but on the veracity of God.

Nor is this the only excellency of the mode in which religious truth exists in the world, or the only advantage which it has over the sciences. Knowledge of other kinds is, almost universally, exhibited in a systematic form; and it must be acquired by the study of a treatise. Hence, the very simplest excepted, there is no kind of human knowledge which is fitted to be universal, and there is none which is universal. Some men are acquainted with philosophy, natural, mental, or moral; others with the sciences, physical, mathematical, or mixed; some with the arts, mechanical or manufacturing; others with trade, navigation, and commerce: but, as no one man knows all these things, so there is no one thing that will ever be understood by all men—no single art which all men will ever acquire—no single science which all men will ever master. None, at least, but religion. The Bible is the only great book of knowledge which the whole world can read; and, beyond the mere provision for their animal wants, religion is the only great course of action which the whole world can pursue. The narratives, the poems, the letters of the inspired volume, bring out to the plainest understanding the truths of religion; while those relating to every other subject are hedged in with definitions, or locked up in technicalities. He that knows only what every human being must know, can learn religion; and he can learn nothing else with anything like an equal facility.

Such is the primary element of that apparatus which God has instituted for the diffusion of religious truth, the embodying of it among men in a form authoritative, complete, and adapted to universal comprehension. Nevertheless, if this were all, the Bible might, perhaps, be still confined to the libraries of the curious, a volume of inert, although unquestionable, wisdom. In addition to this, however, God has

given to religious truth an animated and more impressive form. He has made it to dwell as living principles in the heart, and to emanate thence in powerful modifications of the temper and the conduct. There are religious men; and religious men are living truth, and perpetual preachers of it. The aspect of a consistent Christian forbids that religion should be derided as a trifle, or scoffed at as an artifice. He himself presents a demonstration of its power, for it has made him far other than he once was. He exhibits further a proof of its excellency, for it has made him far better than he once was, and better than the entire class to which he once belonged. The spectacle is a striking one. It does not merely excite curiosity; it appeals to the conscience, it touches the heart. It generates the salutary conviction, "That man is right, but I am wrong; I am miserable, but he is happy." Exemplary Christians thus become lights amidst the world's darkness.

If, on the one hand, religious truth has been accumulated in the Bible, where it may be said to resemble a fire, at which every benighted traveller may kindle the torch that shall direct his own steps; on the other hand, it has also been dispersed through the walks of life in the persons of its sincere professors, who may be compared to innumerable lamps, which have been lighted at the celestial source, and which diffuse its illuminating power, although uninvited, and perhaps unwelcome, around the very footsteps of the heedless travellers to eternity.

A consistent life teaches wisdom, but God has given to his truth a still louder voice. In commissioning his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, he has instituted a mode of action still better fitted to arouse the faculties, and to break in upon the slumbers, of mankind. The preacher's is the office of a herald, who comes, not to whisper in the ear, nor to speak in secret places, nor to drop his words amidst unrebuked distractions; he comes with the startling sound of a trumpet, to arrest attention, and to proclaim his message aloud to the awakened spirit. Such is the aspect of the Gospel ministry; which is fitted to secure regard by its adaptation to all the aspects of human nature, and which is to be pushed, by the command of its author, into all the habitations of the race of man.

This is not an effort of instruction merely; it is mainly

an effort of persuasion, to which the instruction which may be communicated by it is subservient. Every one knows how much the personal presence and the living voice are adapted to augment the power of persuasive appeals. But how much more, when the heart is so deeply engaged as it is presumed to be in the case of every minister of the Gospel! The God of mercy constitutes only those ambassadors for him who are themselves already reconciled, and whose hearts glow at once with love to his name, and compassion for the souls of men. These pleaders are eminently fitted to prevail. They carry with them the contagious element of a feeling heart. They not only understand the Gospel, but they sympathize with God in whose name they speak, they love the sinner to whom they address it, and they persuade as advocates who not only long to be successful, but cannot bear to be denied.

The apparatus for the diffusion of religious truth, however, is not completed by the institution of the Gospel ministry. Every Christian can teach what he knows so well, and is called upon to be an instructor; can pour out the feelings which glow within him so warmly, and is called upon to become an advocate for God. An immense multitude of well-adapted agents are thus brought forward, in comparison with whom the ministers of the Gospel are an inconsiderable band. Nor is this their only advantage. They are scattered through scenes and walks of life into many of which the ministers of the Gospel could never penetrate. They are permanently resident where ministers of the Gospel could appear only for a moment. They may act in a thousand ways, may avail themselves of a thousand opportunities, and, above all, may bring into operation a thousand influences available to labourers of no other class. In them the tender ties of relationship, the charities of home, the endearments of friendship, and the innumerable kindly influences of social life, become handmaids to religion. All these, immeasurably powerful for every other purpose, are made to contribute their utmost energy to this holiest and happiest of services.

Such, then, are the means which God employs for the diffusion of religious truth; and in this apparatus we say there is an intrinsic power. It has an adaptation to the nature and condition of man. It constitutes a machinery adequate to move the entire world of mind and passion. It

may be resisted, as means of every conceivable class may be ; but it is fitted to its purpose, and it deserves to be successful.

3. We have thus, with some latitude, used the word Gospel to denote, first, a system of truth, and, secondly, a system of means employed to bring the truth into bearing ; we regard it, in the third place, as a name for that part of the divine administration by which the effect of truth is to be secured.

In the hand of its author the Gospel is a sceptre, an instrument by which he rules. So far like the moral law, and of the nature of every instrument of government, it requires obedience, and it has its appropriate sanctions both of faith and unbelief. Now an instrument of government accomplishes its design with respect alike to the obedient and disobedient, if it secures the welfare of the one and the punishment of the other. A prince who punishes treason wields his sceptre as effectually over his enemies as over his friends. In this respect, then, it may be said that there is an intrinsic efficacy in the Gospel. It makes an appeal to the conscience and heart of man which constitutes an adequate basis for a superstructure of judgment and retribution. Those who believe and those who believe not will be equally judged by it, and will be dealt with according to their deeds ; the former, doubtless, will be happy, and the latter will be found so deeply criminal as to be righteously subject to the punishment which awaits them. The Gospel may be affirmed to take effect with equal certainty in both classes, although to one it is the savour of life unto life, to the other the savour of death unto death. It is an instrument of probation ; and it is efficacious if it elicit character, whether the character elicited be evil or good. It is an instrument of government ; and it is successful if authority be maintained by it, whether in the approbation of obedience or in the effectual punishment of rebellion.

I have the more explicitly made this remark, because I think it important that the conversion of sinners should not be absolutely identified with the success of the Gospel, or be spoken of as if this could be its only satisfactory issue. At the same time, I am, of course, aware that that part of the results of the Gospel which is constituted by the conversion and salvation of men is that in which we shall most warmly rejoice, and which we should most earnestly desire to promote.

Will the Gospel, then, I proceed to ask, in this sense be successful, and win its anticipated triumphs over the ignorance and misery of mankind?

In reply to this question, I do not hesitate a single moment to admit that, as a system of truth and an apparatus of means, it will be wholly inefficient without an adjunct altogether different and supernatural. It will be neglected, evaded, cavilled at, repelled, but not obeyed, even in a solitary instance, without the interposition of an almighty power. To speak more justly, however, this result should not be expressed by saying that the Gospel will be inefficient; we should rather say that mankind will be obstinate. It characterizes all means applied to rational agents that their efficacy is not irresistible and absolute, but dependent on the voluntary action of the parties addressed. In all cases resistance is possible; he who knows all things has informed us that in religion it is certain. This affirmation relates strictly and exclusively to the state of man's mind, and derogates not at all from the adaptation and sufficiency of the evangelical instrumentality.

Even this obstruction to the beneficial triumphs of the Gospel, however, is to be taken out of the way. The influence of the Holy Spirit of God, in grace and sovereignty bestowed, is the appointed remedy for the obduracy of mankind. Such is the promise; such has been the fact; and such the fact is to be yet more illustriously. Not a word can be necessary to demonstrate the adequacy of this provision. He that constructed man's heart can undoubtedly control it, and can modify its action without doing violence to its mechanism. Thus armed with celestial power, the Gospel shall assuredly achieve its predicted victories, and the arrows of truth shall be sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies. As many as are ordained to eternal life will believe, even the people who shall be made willing in the day of power. Against such an energy no obstacle has any force. Ignorance, prejudice, pride, ambition, covetousness, sensuality, scepticism, persecution, and whatever else may be added to the list, are, in respect of it, but as tow before the fire. With regard to the most appalling difficulties we adopt the language of the ancient seer, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

Such, then, is our meaning, and such the considerations by which we substantiate the sentiment, when we say that the Gospel has an intrinsic power. Consisting of pure and well-proportioned truth, so exhibited, and so applied, it is adapted and sure to prevail without the addition of any other element.

II. We now go on to observe, that this is a position which we feel ourselves warranted and required to maintain with firmness. We cannot give it up. We cannot suffer it even to be questioned. Two grounds may be assigned for our tenacity.

1. The first is, that the position is evidently and unquestionably true. Is there any person of any party who will gravely cast a doubt upon it? Even were we to admit—as, for the sake of argument, we may—that the means had an imperfect adaptation, would it not be conceded on all hands that whatever means it should please God to bless must be effectual to their end? Is he, the Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, who doeth according to his pleasure among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth—is he to be reduced to feebleness, and exposed to pity? Impossible! With or without means, he will do all his pleasure. But the means are as perfect as the power is irresistible. The understanding, the affections, and the conscience, are the faculties to which the Gospel has to appeal; and its appeal is made to each, according to its nature, with an accuracy, skill, and force, which cannot be surpassed. Whatever moves men in other things is employed in religion; and nothing is omitted, or feebly applied, to which human nature under any circumstances manifests sensibility. If there be no adaptation here, there can be none anywhere. To say that, as a system of truth and an apparatus of means, there is insufficiency in the Gospel, would be to say that in no case can means sufficient to an end be provided, and to deny universally the existence of an order of things adapted to the movements of rational creatures.

2. It is, then, true beyond question that the Gospel has an intrinsic power, and as a truth it must be maintained. But it is also a truth of pre-eminent value; and this consideration renders our hold of it still more decisive.

It is of great importance in relation to the Gospel itself.

The excellency of the Gospel partly consists in its sufficiency. For, as a designed element of action in the world, it behoves that the Gospel should be wisely adapted to its end. Were it not so, it could in this respect have no excellency. It would rather be an exhibition of folly, and it might justly become a butt for scorn. If the Gospel were not even perfectly adapted to its end, if it did not meet all peculiarities, if it did not use the best influences, and exhaust all resources, it could neither acquire nor deserve the respect of mankind. For it is thus that we judge of wisdom, and that God has made us to judge of it. Doubtless, it is thus that our Maker himself judges of it. To conceive of the Gospel, therefore, as not adapted to prevail, would be to stamp it as folly; and thus to dishonour at once the truth, the God of truth, and the Spirit of truth.

Or let us suppose, for a moment, that the Gospel is liable to this imputation, and that it appears in the world as intended for an agency to which it is incompetent without the addition of some extraneous element. This, it appears, according to the advocates of religious establishments, is not to be an irreparable mischief, nor a fatal barrier to its success. There are persons wise enough to discern the appropriate remedy, and skilful enough to accomplish its application. They propose to associate with the Gospel a certain contrivance—no matter what—and then they pronounce it perfect. Now, they tell us, it will run, and be glorified! Certainly, the modesty of this cannot but be admired. It might have been supposed that there were no eyes to which deficiencies would sooner have appeared than God's, and no wisdom to which, more early than his, a remedy would have suggested itself. But it is not so. The creature has found an opportunity of coming forward to amend the work of the Creator, and men have alighted on a device for invigorating the feeble constitution of the offspring of God! Were it only for very shame, let us take a position better befitting both our ignorance and our weakness.

If, however, we may not escape from the interposition which we deprecate, and if something of human device really must be added to the Gospel, it is at all events but reasonable to require that, before the operation is performed, the nature of a proceeding so pregnant with good or ill should be generally agreed on. We surely shall not be called upon

to open the door to changes of all sorts, and to concede a licence to every man to annex to the Gospel what invention he pleases. But the case is even so. Eminent and learned as the parties are by whom it is held as indisputable that the Gospel needs some addition to render it efficacious, they differ widely as to the nature of the adjunct required. Among those, for example, who maintain generally the efficacy of a State-union there are extreme diversities of opinion. Some are enamoured of prelacy, others abhor it; some revel in patronage, others agitate for the extinction of it; some set up a claim for spiritual independence, others affirm the necessity of obedience to the law. This is the happy consequence of our being detached from the wisdom of God, and flung upon the sagacity of men!

And just such must the result ever be. To regard the Gospel as wanting any human addition, casts us off immediately from all principles, and sets us adrift on the restless sea of imagined expediency. We thus institute a condition in which the wise and the foolish, the sober and the fanatical, the grave and the frivolous, the pious and the profane, have an equal right of action; and the consent which we might be disposed to yield to the suggestions of good men, we shall in vain endeavour to withhold from the whims of the fanciful zealot, or the impulses of the frenzied. It is evident that, upon this system, every man acquires a title to combine with the Gospel what he may think best; and we can no longer, with justice, complain of anything professedly intended for the purpose in view. Persecution itself may acquire a sanction in this manner; since not merely the mummeries of superstition, but the thunders of the Vatican and the fires of the Inquisition, are professed expedients for augmenting the efficiency of the Gospel. We cling, therefore, with unconquerable tenacity, to the position that the Gospel has an intrinsic power, and is adapted to all its purposes without any human addition. To retain it is our only security against a deluge of imbecility, fanaticism, and blood.

For these and similar reasons it is with us an axiom in religious science, and a fundamental principle of religious action, that there is an intrinsic power in the Gospel. We can admit nothing that is inconsistent with it, nothing that calls it in question. It is not merely a portion of truth, but an inestimable portion of it. The contrary opinion rests on

no basis, and results in no benefit: it leads, on the contrary, to conclusions so false and impossible as to demonstrate that the premises cannot be true.

The sentiment which we have thus been endeavouring to establish has the property of a touchstone for every class of measures to which it can be applied. Concerning any system of religious operation, the question is critical and discriminating—Does it affirm or impeach the intrinsic efficacy of the Gospel? A system which impeaches the intrinsic efficacy of the Gospel cannot be worthy of support. We need ask concerning it no question besides. This single characteristic is its condemnation.

This, then, is the nature of the objection we at present urge against civil establishments of religion. They impeach the intrinsic power of the Gospel. They come to its aid as though it were not competent to prevail alone.

We are, of course, aware that this objection is of limited application. It would clearly be of no force with those who deem such establishments to be of divine institution, and with such persons we should feel ourselves called upon to argue in a different method. It is notorious, however, that many of those who favour religious establishments, and some of those whose eloquent advocacy of them has attracted a large share of public regard, abandon this ground, and take one against which our present objection avails. Religious establishments, they allow, are not appointed by God, but devised by man; they are expedients of the friends of religion for facilitating its diffusion. It is with this view some good men proceed to place religion under the patronage of the State, to make large demands on the national resources, and to cover the face of the land with an endowed hierarchy. And in all this, if we profess to be lovers of the Gospel and well-wishers to its diffusion, they challenge our concurrence.

On contemplating such a proceeding, we are bound to acknowledge, in charity at least, the goodness of the motive. We admit that it is very kind, and may be eminently well intended. But we are constrained to ask, What are you doing? To come forth to the help of the Lord in his controversy with an ungodly world, is both right and noble; but the natural and correct way of doing so is to use the weapons which he has provided. Do this, and we shall not question, but applaud. Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the

word of life ; carry instruction and persuasion through your households and your general connexions ; teach in Sunday schools ; penetrate by Christian visits the streets and lanes of the city ; multiply places of public instruction, and engage a voluntary attendance at them ; do this, and whatever else may have a divine sanction, and we shall sympathize and rejoice. But when, with similar intentions, you begin to employ an instrumentality which God has not sanctioned, you do what seems to us objectionable beyond endurance. It is discovered to us then, that, amidst your anxieties for the triumphs of the Gospel, you are distrustful of its energies. You come to support it with other instruments than its own, because you deem them inadequate, and those you have invented more forcible. You employ the public purse, because you think religion cannot be upheld by private liberality. You build and endow churches out of the taxes, because you think Christians would not carry the Gospel through the length and breadth of the land. You want a hierarchy authorized by the State, because you mistrust the adaptation of the Gospel ministry, and the power of the Spirit of God. Again we say that this may be very kindly and piously intended ; but it cannot be allowed. It impeaches the intrinsic power of the Gospel. It assumes that the Gospel will not and cannot prevail without adventitious and unauthorized helps ; whereas we think, and are persuaded, it will prevail by its own machinery. The whole case is that you cannot trust in the wisdom and power of God, while we can. We immeasurably prefer this ground of repose to the best intentions and the wisest contrivances of man. It is safer for us. It is, indeed, our only security against a system which, whether characterized by relentless persecution or only by petty annoyances, is alike in principle objectionable, and in working intolerable. It is both more safe and more honourable for Christianity, which by this method only can escape from the load of pomps and ceremonies which, for ages, have constituted but the garniture of her tomb. It is necessary to the honour of the God whom we serve, for whom we claim loudly, and may claim with indignant jealousy, that his wisdom shall not be brought into degrading comparison with that of worms of the earth.

While we thus feel the ground we have taken to be firm beneath our feet, we may be permitted to express our surprise

that men of piety among the advocates for religious establishments should be altogether insensible to the force of the argument we have raised. As to those with whom religion is only a pretext, and in whose estimation the real value of an establishment lies in its secular advantages, we abandon the Utopian expectation of prevailing with them by argument. But among the zealous advocates of establishments are many pious persons, to whose character and motives we render cordial honour. They love the Gospel, and have felt its power. They appreciate its excellency, and honour its author. How is it that they have been accessible to the seductions of a meretricious instrumentality for spiritual ends? Do they really feel that, without an adventitious and unauthorized adjunct (for such we assume they would admit an establishment to be), Christianity in the world would be either retrograde or stationary? Do they really believe that the thoughts of man's heart can augment the wisdom of God; or that the puny efforts of a mortal arm can add force to the stroke of an almighty one? Are they afraid to leave the Gospel to its own resources, and the only wise God to his own plans? Faith, love, humility, reverence, all forbid it.

It is indeed true, that the state of our country, and the progress of the Gospel in it, are far from being satisfactory. With the deepest affliction it is to be admitted that multitudes are wrapt in a deep sleep, and that the masses of our population are to a lamentable extent unpenetrated, and apparently impenetrable, by efforts of religious instruction. Much, undoubtedly, remains to be done, and strenuous efforts are required to accomplish it. Upon all these points we trust we feel as sincerely, and we ought to feel as deeply, as the most zealous advocates of religious establishments. But there remains the practical question, What is to be done? It is not difficult to understand how, in such a crisis, the eyes of pious persons, anxious to see rapid advances of religion amidst an ignorant and depraved population, should be turned towards the national purse and the influence of government. We can imagine such persons, from the most excellent motives and in the simplicity of their hearts, saying, "How many churches could be built with one or two millions of public money! How many preachers could be set to work with half a million annually! How influential ministers would be were they armed with a warrant from

the ruling power !” But we cannot help regarding them in all this as inconsiderate, and forgetful of the true character and genius of Christianity. It would be remote from our present subject to assert—what, however, may be asserted with perfect truth—that the secular establishment of religion is adapted to hinder rather than to accelerate its progress, and that the experience of more than a thousand years demonstrates it to be so. It is enough, and all that pertains to us at the present moment, to say, that no conquests ought to be desired for the Gospel but such as can be achieved by its own weapons. It is evident that the author of the Gospel desires no other, since he has challenged the use of no other instrumentality, and we may well be contented to agree with him. While we ardently wish the Gospel to be diffused, let us seek this end by every method scriptural and consistent, but by no others. If, when such methods are employed to the utmost, it is still stationary, and the spiritual slumbers of men are unbroken, we have to recollect that God knows this as well as ourselves, and that with him lies the remedy for it. With him is the residue of the Spirit, and the time for the outpouring of it. In his bosom lie those profound considerations which have prevailed with him to permit an irruption of the powers of darkness on the arena which was apparently marked out for the speedy success of Christianity, but which was destined, in fact, to become the theatre of a protracted and seemingly dubious strife ; and to measure the times and seasons until the lapse of which his own triumphs and the Gospel’s should be held in abeyance. We long to accelerate them. It is well. But we cannot accelerate them by any other than hallowed weapons ; and, if we could, we ought not. It is something more just, more noble, and more true to the spirit of friendship with God, to stand by him patiently in defeat, if it be so, than to gain for him a victory by weapons which he repudiates. Without recourse to such a measure, we shall triumph when the time comes ; and, if this be soon enough for the Captain of salvation, it ought not to be too late for those who follow him, the “ called, and chosen, and faithful.”

We speak in this strain, however, only hypothetically. Every one perceives that the legitimate means of diffusing Christianity are very far from being fully employed ; and every one knows that they are nowhere faithfully employed

without an encouraging measure of success. These facts bring to light one of the worst features of the case before us. Civil establishments of religion might be less obnoxious, if they were an offering of human benevolence and sympathy after all that the Gospel itself requires has been done. But they are not so: they are expedients resorted to instead of that which it requires. They supersede its appropriate activities, and displace its sanctioned machinery. They impeach its intrinsic power. They represent that a better apparatus has been discovered by men than that which has been appointed by God. In the name of common sense and common modesty, let such a ground of action be abandoned. Let no unsanctioned weapon be employed by us for the diffusion of the Gospel, at least while armour of genuine temper lies neglected at our feet. If we really wish to aid the advancement of religion, let us apply ourselves to it by her own instrumentality, at least in the first place, and as far as it may be competent to prevail. Let us see that every one of us is doing his own duty. Let us use means for engaging the whole multitude of the pious to the fulfilment of theirs. Let us both acquire and diffuse correct evangelical sentiments, and endeavour to rescue the Gospel from those theological and ecclesiastical perversions which have done much to enervate the ministration of it. Let us exhibit its power by a course of exemplary and persuasive piety, that we may silence the loud imputation of hypocrisy by which so many parry the appeals even of the purest truth. Let us open every avenue to the efforts of Christian zeal, and insist that all obstructions to the employment of scriptural activity shall be taken out of the way. In a word, let us bring forth into the desert we would cultivate the entire host of well-adapted labourers, and let us diligently pursue its culture according to the will of him who is to be glorified by its fruitfulness. Our toil will assuredly be recompensed. While one plants and another waters, God will give an increase. They that sow shall reap, and they that sow in tears shall reap with the greater joy. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad by them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

CHURCH PROPERTY—WHOSE IS IT?*

THIS question is strictly relevant to the Anti-State-Church agitation. We avow, distinctly and without hesitation, that a new settlement of Church property is a part of the object which we desire to attain. We speak, indeed, of the separation of the Church from the State—an issue of which it may, perhaps, be possible to conceive, without involving in the idea we form of it any modification of the ecclesiastical revenues; but it is not so that we conceive it. In truth, we should not wish a separation between the Church and the State upon any other principle than this, that the Church thenceforward should provide for her own wants by the spontaneous liberality of her adherents. In point of principle, we hold that wherever there are State endowments there ought to be State control; and, in proportion to the amplitude of such endowments, State control obviously becomes the more important and necessary. In the particular case now before us, consequently, that of the Church of England, by far the most richly-endowed church in Christendom, our sentiment acquires its utmost intensity. We should experience a feeling of dread which it would be difficult to express, in the thought of so vast a revenue—it may be stated at about five millions† sterling *per annum*—with all its direct and collateral influences, being at the disposal of an independent ecclesiastical corporation. Mischievous as we believe the Church of England to be now, we are convinced that it would be far more mischievous then, and we confess that we should shrink from so perilous an experiment. No! we have no wish that the Church should be loosed from her chains, unless, in acquiring her liberty, she shall resign the noxious elements of her power.

* Tracts of the British Anti-State-Church Association, No. 28.

† In the first edition of this Tract, Church property was stated at double this sum, which was the current estimate of the period: subsequent investigation, however, has led to the adoption of the lower estimate above given.

In asking for a new arrangement of the revenues of the Church, however, we are not alone. We have associates; and some whom, for the occasion, we may be content to call good and honourable company, however little they may be disposed to return the compliment. Our companions need not be sought, either among any class of Nonconformists or any section of radicals or revolutionists. They are to be found among the most loyal sons of the Church, and conservatives of the purest water. The large and influential class of Churchmen familiarly called Puseyites have long complained of the bonds in which the Church is held by the State, and have carried their urgent pleas for her release into both the ecclesiastical and the civil judicatures; and the principle of their movement is the same as ours. With us, they want a new distribution of Church property, or which is the same thing, of Church patronage. They resent it, that the nomination of a bishop should vest in the Crown; and, by parity of reason, they must be held to be no less displeased that the Crown should dispose of a deanery, or a vicarage. It is well known, indeed, that they are bent on wresting Church patronage altogether out of lay hands, and concentrating it in spiritual ones. Their aim, then, it may be said, is the very opposite to ours. True; but it is taken from the same ground. The attempt to effect a new arrangement of Church property is common to us both, and, if allowed to the one, it cannot be deemed criminal in the other.

Let us, then, take up the question in the terms in which it is proposed:

CHURCH PROPERTY—WHOSE IS IT?

I. The most natural and obvious answer to this question would be, that Church property is the property of THE CHURCH; and this answer has often been given. Our acquiescence in it, however, is embarrassed by a suspicion that it really constitutes no answer at all. For what is the Church? A name—a distinguished and influential name—but nothing more. A certain something, if not essentially undefinable, yet left wholly undefined; and left undefined the more willingly, perhaps, because a definition would enable men's understandings to become familiar with it, to examine it, to measure it; and would thus expose to hazard—ay, more, to destruction—the prestige which it has

exercised for so many ages, but which, thank God, is now nearly at an end.

While, however, it is scarcely possible to know what the Church is, it is easy to ascertain one thing which it is not. *It is not capable of holding property.* "The persons who are legally capable of acquiring and possessing property," says Mr. Eagle, in his Legal Argument, "are of two sorts, natural and politic. . . . Natural persons are obviously such as are created by God; bodies politic are so called because they are created by the policy of man." These are called also bodies corporate, or corporations; and are divided into aggregate corporations, which consist of two or more persons—and corporations sole, which consist of individuals. Now, the Church of England has never been constituted a body politic, or corporate; consequently it does not exist in a form in which it can hold property. If the property of the Church have any owner, it must be looked for elsewhere. The phrase Church property, indeed, cannot be strictly understood, but must be taken to mean no more than that the property which it vaguely describes is appropriated to ecclesiastical uses.

II. Shall we then say, in the second place, that Church property belongs to THE CLERGY? This has often been said, and insisted on with no little vehemence. The assertion has, perhaps, some plausibility; but, when the qualifications to which it is liable shall have been fairly stated, it will be found to possess no substantial truth.

1. *Church property is not the property of the clergy as a body;* since, on the principle just stated, in order to hold property they must be a body politic, or corporate, which they are not. It is true, indeed, that all archbishops, bishops, deans, prebendaries, parsons, and vicars, are bodies politic, as are also deans and chapters, and other ecclesiastical aggregates; but this confers upon them no further power than that of holding respectively such property as may belong to the preferment enjoyed by each. The clergy as a whole are not a body politic, and, consequently, as a whole they can hold no property. The two Houses of Convocation are not incorporated, but are representative of the clergy for legislative purposes only.

2. *Church property, in as far as it may be the property of individuals, is not held by them in their natural capacity.* Where such property is held by corporations aggregate, as by

deans and chapters, for example, it is obvious that they hold it as bodies politic, for in no other capacity *could* they hold it. But the principle applies equally to individual ecclesiastics. The revenues of a bishopric or a rectory belong, not to A B or C D, but in perpetuity to the bishop or the rector of such a diocese or parish. Bishops and rectors, however, as social institutions, are bodies politic, and it is only when in due course of law individuals are constituted bodies politic, that they can become entitled to the emoluments. Hence, accordingly, all persons who are to hold Church property are first created bodies politic, in order that they may do so. It is evident, therefore, that ecclesiastical persons hold Church property not in their natural capacity, and, consequently, not in full right. Thus it is laid down that, although the freehold of the Church and the glebe-lands vests in the parson, the fee-simple does not, but is held to be in abeyance, or, as the lawyers say, in the clouds. It is, consequently, only a qualified property that any holder of Church preferment can have in it, inasmuch as it never comprehends the fee-simple, and is always both inseparable from his corporate capacity, and extinguished with it. He can neither give it away, nor sell it, nor bequeath it; and these restrictions do not arise from the will of another party vesting in the property merely a life-interest for him, but are inherent in the nature of corporate holding. And while his corporate capacity must necessarily determine with his natural life, so that he cannot in any case have more than a life-interest, it may determine at a much earlier period, as by an act of ecclesiastical discipline, so that he may have much less.

3. *Church property is not held by any individual for his own benefit, but only in consideration of service performed.* Some duties of piety, charity, or instruction, are, in theory at least, attached to all ecclesiastical benefices, and the profits are intended as a remuneration for the due performance of them. Hence the practical conversion of them into sinecures has always been matter of complaint, and laws have often been passed for enforcing the residence of the clergy. Hence, also, ecclesiastical persons and bodies are subject to inquiry and discipline, with a view to ascertain whether the duties respectively attaching have been rightly performed, and with authority to correct abuses. Cases will readily come to recollection in which peccant clergymen have been partially,

or wholly, deprived of their revenues for a season, and even unfaithful bishops deprived altogether of the episcopate. Or, if it be desired to put this assertion to the test as one of doubtful truth, let the clergy as a body abandon their functions, and see how long their revenues will be perpetuated to them. Not paid servants? "If the clergy are not paid servants," said Mirabeau in the first French revolution, with not less justice than severity, "they are either beggars, or thieves."

On this ground it is manifest that the clergy have a very qualified property in their benefices. In truth, the very idea of property, strictly speaking, vanishes, and what remains is merely the emoluments of an office held during good behaviour. "This," says Sir James Mackintosh, in his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, speaking of property being held for the benefit of those who enjoy it, "this is the obvious criterion between private property and a pension for public service. The destination of the first is avowedly the comfort and happiness of the individual who enjoys it; and, as he is conceived to be the sole judge of this happiness, he possesses the most unlimited rights of enjoyment, alienation, and even abuse. But the lands of a Church, destined for the support of public servants, exhibit none of the characteristics of property."

Nor is this sentiment either any novelty in itself, or confined in its profession to liberal Churchmen. "The word property," said John, Lord Harvey, a High-church member of the House of Commons in 1736, in his Reply to a Country Parson's Plea for Tithes, "the word property was never less warrantably used than it had been in that Plea. The tithes of the clergy are the wages which, as the servants of the public, they receive from the bounty of the laws." And, referring to the illustrious victims of the Act of Uniformity, over which, as "a zealous Churchman," he loudly rejoices, he adds—"I must say, for the reputation of the sufferers in that case, that, sensible as they were of their hardships, they had greater modesty than to call that property which they knew to be only a trust. *Nor would it have been endured that they should have had the insolence to treat any interest incident to their profession as a matter of property not belonging to the disposition of Parliament.*"

III. If, then, Church property be not the property either of the Church or of the clergy, shall we say that it belongs to THE PATRONS?

I do not know that this has ever been affirmed, and it is obvious that, if affirmed, it could not be maintained. All that the patron of a benefice possesses is the advowson, or right of presentation. This right may be worth something to him; he may have given a pecuniary consideration for it, or he may get a pecuniary consideration if he be disposed to part with it: but all this is very different from his possessing the benefice itself. He can present to it, but he cannot touch one farthing of the income; and, if he do not present a qualified person within a limited time, even the right of presentation lapses to another party. Church property, therefore, clearly does not belong to the patrons.

IV. Our question now returns upon us: *Church property—whose is it?* If not to the Church, not to the clergy, not to the patrons, to whom does it belong? Who else will have it? Is there any other claimant? I know of but one, and that is THE COUNTRY.

Is it, then, so? And must we rest in this conclusion, that Church property is national property? On this question let the following considerations be weighed:—

1. *If Church property be not national property it has no owner.* It had owners once. Its different portions belonged in former times to peoples, princes, and persons of various degree, who parted with it, either voluntarily or by legislative compulsion, for pious and charitable uses; but these are gone off the scene of worldly affairs, and neither they nor their descendants now present any claim. Yet there ought to be an owner. All property ought to have an owner, and, indeed, must be supposed to have one. Where is the owner of Church property? If a rector be really the owner of his benefice, why does he not take possession of it in full right? Who interferes to prevent him, or would interfere? The law: that is, the nation. And so with every other party who might attempt such a usurpation. Now this attitude of universal prohibition on the part of the nation is tantamount to a positive claim. The country may fairly be said to claim for itself what it forbids any one else to possess. It is in this case the only owner possible. And the deference which ecclesiastics and patrons of all grades show to the country's prohibition to usurp Church property to themselves, cannot be construed into less than an admission that the country's claim to it is just.

2. *Church property must be national property from the constitution of the Church itself.* I have already adverted to the undefined and apparently undefinable state in which the word Church has been left; I would now wish to try, however, whether some approach may not be made towards a practical view of this subject.

It is evident, then, that no Church can consist of clergy alone; there must be people also. If a body to instruct, a body to be instructed; if a body to govern, a body to be governed. Now, who the clergy of the Church of England are we know: it remains to ask, Who are the people?

I am quite aware that a comparatively small part of the people of England go to church, and that a much smaller part of them attend the communion there; but this is far from settling the question before us. The Church is not only distinctly, but ambitiously, called "The Church of England," "The National Church." And the theory of every national church, undoubtedly, is, that *the nation* constitutes it. Such, I entertain no doubt, is the theory of the Church of England. Are not the proofs of it manifest? It collects tithes from every acre of the land not specially exempted, and imposes church-rate on every householder. At one period it required, under penalty, the attendance of every inhabitant at his parish church, and was more consistent then than now in the forced relaxation of its claim. Yes, the term Church, so far as it relates to the Church of England, is capable of definition. The Church is the nation; and the property of the Church is, of necessity, the property of the nation. Startling as it may appear, to say this is only to say that the property of the Church is its own.

I derive a confirmation of this view from personages no less distinguished than Pope Hadrian VI., and Cardinal Cajetan, who are cited by Father Paul as maintaining the following proposition:—"That the property of all goods [ecclesiastical] belongs to the Church; that is, to the whole community of the faithful in that place to whom they were left. So that the property of the goods in the Roman Church [this is Father Paul's inference] belongs really to the whole body of the Roman people."

3. *Church property may fairly be argued to be national property from the fact that nations have constantly dealt with it as such.* Ecclesiastical power, indeed, has often fought a

stubborn and protracted battle on this ground, and has sometimes succeeded in establishing its usurpations; but, in the long run it has been beaten. Church property has been dealt with as national property, both in other countries and in our own; and this, not only in periods of excitement and convulsion—such as those of the Reformation in Germany, the Reformation and the Protectorate in England, or the first Revolution in France—but in times also of the most perfect soberness and tranquillity. A large part of English legislation has always related to the temporalities of the Church. The late Earl Grey, as prime minister, brought in and carried through the legislature a measure for abolishing ten Irish bishoprics; on the recommendation of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners the revenues of cathedrals have been diminished; and Parliament is at the present moment deliberating on a proposition for reducing the income of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Now, if Church property is not national property, all this legislative interference is clearly unjust and atrocious. Why is it not denounced? Has the Church no friends? Can even lion-hearted, albeit sweet-mouthed, Exeter find no utterance for the cry of spoliation? Spoliation? Why, the cry has been raised by a few adventurous individuals ever and anon, until condemned by constitutional lawyers, rebuked by enlightened statesmen, and scouted by an educated people, it may be said to have grown ashamed of itself, and blushed to death. If, however, it be spoliation, I demand, in a loud voice, *who* has been despoiled? Let *him* speak, and England will yet do justice in his cause. In response to this appeal there is not so much as a dog to move his tongue.

4. Let us examine, however, somewhat more closely, *the tenure by which Church property is really held*, that we may approach as nearly as possible to a conclusive answer to the question whether it is national property or not.

I lay down, then, two propositions: First, *That Church property is held exclusively under human law*: secondly, *That Church property is held under a specific modification of human law which determines it to be public property*.

(1). I affirm, in the first place, that *Church property is held exclusively under human law*.

I am, of course, not ignorant how strenuously the canonists have contended that Church property was held by *divine right*, nor to how great an extent this lucrative but baseless

fiction has obtruded itself into the ancient legislation of our country. Let me be allowed an observation or two with respect to it.

First, *If the jus divinum were allowed, it would not apply to the whole of Church property.* The argument is that, as in a particular age and nation God appointed tithes for the support of his ministers, so it is his will that certain ministers of religion should possess a similar revenue perpetually. Now, without testing this reasoning as to its real strength, but, for the sake of argument, allowing it to avail *for tithes*, it plainly can avail for nothing else. Men, even Churchmen, could never be allowed to reason thus: "Because God ordained tithes for his ancient priesthood, therefore Christian ministers are to have tithes, glebe-lands, rent-charges, and a hundred sources of emolument besides." "The truth is," says Selden, in the Preface to his History of Tithes, and speaking of those clergy who reproached him for having, by his learned researches, exploded the plea of divine right—"The truth is, that divers of them that [have] writ, with more will than judgment, for tithes, fall often from their *jus divinum* before they are aware, and talk of them as supposed due also by positive law and practice. . . . What do they else when they confound tithes and consecrated lands together? I trust they mean not that the Church had an original title also to lands arbitrarily consecrated to it."

The views of Selden are confirmed by Father Paul, who uses the following language:—"As to real estates, it is agreed by all that, wherever they are found, they ought to be called temporal goods, and that the Church enjoys them by human right; seeing it is certain that, after all communities and aggregate bodies had been prohibited from acquiring immovable estates, the Church, first by permission, and then by concession from the emperors, obtained that power."

I say, then, to the clergy, "Granting you tithes, will you stop there, and relinquish every other source of Church revenue?" The remaining sources of emolument are far too numerous and too productive to allow us to expect an affirmative answer to this question. The argument, therefore, fails by proving too little. It shows no title to even one half of what the clergy possess.

Secondly, *If the jus divinum were allowed, it would not apply to the cases of individuals.* According to the plea we

are examining, Church revenues are held by the canonists to be due "to God and Holy Church;" but there the divine right stops. It is not pretended to be a matter of divine right that £15,000 a year should be annexed to the archbishopric of X, or £1,500 to the rectory of Z; as, indeed, it is not a matter of divine right that either of these pieces of preferment should exist at all. As little is it matter of divine right that John Doe and Richard Roe should be put into possession of these valuable preferments respectively. All this is matter of mere vulgar human arrangement. I confess, therefore, that I do not see how any parson in particular can be said to have a divine right to his portion of Church property. It is alleged to belong to "God and the Church." Very well: but who gave it to *him*? The plea of divine right does individual holders of preferment no service at all.

Thirdly, *If the jus divinum were allowed, it would be found inconsistent with the facts of ecclesiastical history.*

An admitted divine right would create a more absolute property than has ever existed in relation to Church revenues. Selden asserts that the pretence of divine right, which has always and everywhere been matter of divided opinion, has not in any country been admitted in its full extent; but that the popular struggles amidst which this ecclesiastical yoke has been imposed have always issued in some modification of the claim. So that Church property, even where a divine right to it has been most extensively acknowledged, has been always held by, at least, a mixed tenure, partly divine and partly human. Upon the principle of the *jus divinum*, therefore, the Church, immense as her wealth is, has been universally wronged. She has still to enact the Church militant, and to fight anew the battle for *her own*. In this view the argument fails by proving too much.

Nor is this all. A divine right ought surely to be enforced exclusively by divine sanctions. "It is not conceivable," says Father Paul, "that the means of acquiring a thing should be of human right, and the enjoyment or possession of it should be of divine right." Under the Jewish code tithes were recommended to be *brought*, not collected; and if not brought, neither compulsion nor penalty was warranted from man. Why are not the alleged heirs of the divine right content with the same mode of enforcing their claims? If they would be so, dispute and complaint would soon be at an

end. Instead of this, however, they condescend to uphold a divine right by temporal processes, and they come forth from the holy place to institute prosecutions, and levy by force of arms. There would have been no Rathcormac—a name evermore synonymous with a tithe-murder—in Judea : with what consistency has there been one in Ireland ?

This begging of the support of the civil magistrate has brought with it a very palpable, but equally inconsistent, submission to his authority. The clergy have been obliged to allow the British parliament to inspect the roll of their salaries ; to say one is too large, another is too small, and to take measures for diminishing the inequality ; to extinguish benefices on a principle of compensation, and to commute one kind of payment for another. Their actual revenues have been taken away from the whole bench of bishops, and sums of money allowed them instead. The deans and chapters have been reduced to feed the working clergy. And by the Tithe-Commutation Act the whole tithe of the country has been taken from the Church, and “compensation” for it enacted in the form of a rent-charge on the land. Some of these measures, especially the last, have been rendered palatable to the clergy by being so framed as largely to augment their wealth ; but they are not on this account the less inconsistent with the pretended divine right by which some of them have affirmed their emoluments to be held.

I have thus far argued the insufficiency of the *jus divinum* on the supposition of its being admitted. I may now say that *it cannot be admitted*. There is in it no element of either natural, moral, or preceptive, obligation. For nearly five hundred years after the era of Christianity, the very notion of paying tithes to the clergy had no existence in the world ; and throughout Africa and the East they have never been paid to the present hour. The practice, according to Father Paul, originated in France as a suggestion of voluntary liberality, when military bishops absorbed the ordinary ecclesiastical revenues, and left nothing for the working priests. That there was a divine right for such payments was a mere after-thought—a very fortunate one, indeed—by which ecclesiastics endeavoured, amidst the struggles of centuries, and with only partial success, to rivet as a yoke on the neck of Christendom what was at first proposed, and for a long time accepted, as an exercise of charity.

As to the plea of scriptural obligation, nothing can be more futile. That redoubtable knight, Sir Henry Spelman, indeed, in his larger Treatise upon Tithes, carries the question somewhat far back, when he sets over one of his chapters the following title: "Tithes in the time of nature, first considered in the time of Paradise." Professing that he "would not be so curious as to seek the institution of tithes" in the abode of primitive innocence and love, he nevertheless holds "that Paradise was a model of the Church," and finds in it something so like tithes that he cannot avoid tracing the resemblance. It is the fruit of the tree of knowledge "which," says he, "God reserved from Adam when he gave him all the rest." And he goes on to describe this as "that portion only that justly and properly belongeth unto God, knowledge. And therefore," he continues, "this part particularly was assigned by God unto his priests, as the sacred keepers of this his sacred treasure, and therefore no other man might invade this his right and inheritance. 'Knowledge,' saith Malachi, 'belongeth unto the priest.'" Thus far the knight of Kent. As for Malachi, I am afraid that his acquaintance with priests was somewhat limited; or perhaps he was speaking of their duty to be wise, rather than of their right to monopolize wisdom. At all events, since they are no longer the keepers of knowledge, it might not be unreasonable, according to Sir Henry's showing, that they should, at length, relinquish their claim to the tithes.

But hear now what a writer of a different stamp has uttered on the same subject. "When," exclaims the immortal Milton, "when did God so clearly declare that he required the tenth as due to him and his Son perpetually, and in all places? When did he demand it, that we might certainly know, as in all claims of temporal right is just and reasonable? Or, if demanded, when did he assign it, and by what evident conveyance, to ministers? Unless they can demonstrate this by more than conjecture, their title can be no better to tithes than the title of Gehazi was to those things which, by abusing his master's name, he rooked Naaman of."

To add on this matter the testimony of a Romanist, I quote the following from the celebrated historian of the Council of Trent. Referring to the doctors of the canon law, the most strenuous and unscrupulous advocates of the *jus divinum*, Father Paul says:—"I cannot forbear doing that justice to

the understanding of these doctors, as to affirm that there is much more of artifice than ignorance in what they say on the subject, to gain credit with weak and unwary people, and to give a sanction to their pretensions of the strongest title in the world, which is the divine right. But here they seem to me to stand convicted, and to be left without reply. For in the same text of Scripture where God commands the tenth to be given to the Levites, he also commands that they shall not possess any lands or real estates, and that they shall content themselves with the tithes only. If, therefore, the people be obliged by this command to pay tithes, the Levites are under the same obligation to take no possessions of inheritance."

In one word, the Jewish tithe-system, while, undoubtedly, of divine origin and authority, was at once local, temporary, and secular. It was not a provision for a priesthood, but for a tribe, of which the priesthood constituted only a small part, and was in this respect the exact counterpart of the territorial allotments by which the other tribes were sustained.

In fine, the plea of divine right is as inexpedient as it is unfounded. For, in truth, it reduces the whole question of ecclesiastical revenues to a matter of opinion. This was clearly seen by Selden, who says, "Whoever relies only on *jus divinum*, or Holy Scripture, for the right of tithes, doth but make way for him whom he cannot persuade that they are due by the law of God to think that they are no way due." Certainly. What is the meaning of Holy Scripture is a question capable of endless discussion, and essentially incapable of authoritative settlement. Accordingly, this question of the divine right of tithes has always been in debate. The popes and the canonists never could agree about it, the inferior clergy in every age have differed on it, and it is at this day as far from being settled as ever. What could be more infatuated than to suspend the claim to Church property on such a plea as this? If the clergy intended ever to get their revenues, it is plain that they must have recourse to more vulgar machinery, must condescend to apply for an Act of Parliament, and to employ the constable.

This was Selden's peace-offering to the clergy of his day. "You are angry," said he, "that I have shown the nullity of your claim by divine right; but you should rather be thankful that I have proved its validity by human law."

And Judge Blackstone was of the same opinion. In his Commentaries, after expressly repudiating the pretence of divine right to tithes, he, somewhat slyly, says—"Perhaps, considering the degenerate state of the world in general, it may be *more beneficial* to the English clergy to found their title on the law of the land, than upon any divine right whatever unacknowledged and unsupported by temporal sanctions."

The *jus divinum*, then, failing, nothing but the *jus humanum* remains. If not held by divine right, Church property must be held under human law.

(2). I now advance to the second proposition laid down, namely, that Church property *is held under a specific modification of human law which determines it to be public property.*

All property is held under human law; but I am very far from affirming that all property is national property. The far larger part of it is, doubtless, held by individuals in their own right, under protection of the law. When I assert that Church property is national property, I am bound to show some peculiarity in its tenure by which the assertion may be sustained.

It has been said that Church property must be at the disposal of the State because it was given by the State; on the principle that whatever the State has given it can take away. "What a parliament can do," says William Cobbett, in his very remarkable book, a Legacy to Parsons, "a parliament can undo. If there be property of any sort that a parliament can take from one description of persons and give to another description of persons, a parliament can take that same property again, and dispose of it in a similar, or in any other, manner." I cannot but think this an unguarded statement. Blenheim was conferred by the State upon Marlborough, and Strathfieldsaye upon Wellington; but no one imagines that such grants can rightfully be recalled.

The peculiarity which really determines the character of Church property is that which has already been mentioned, namely, that it is held by the clergy as bodies politic, and not as natural persons.

"The property of a private individual," says the writer of a spirited article in the *Westminster Review*, "is held by him in his 'natural capacity;' that of a parson as 'a corporation;' as a creature of the law; as a being as purely fictitious

as a griffin or a centaur, although contrived by the legislature and by judges for public purposes, and not a phantom of the poet's brain. No chimerical creation is required to support the title of the lord to the manor of Dale. John Stiles, a man of flesh and blood, will transmit to beings like himself the estates which, by descent or by purchase, he has taken from similar existences. It is far otherwise with his rector. The rich warm blood may glow in the parson's cheek; and, so far from being deficient in flesh, the ponderous clerk may weigh as much as Mr. Stiles, and Mrs. Stiles, and the whole of their family; but neither his flesh nor his blood will help him to his ecclesiastical dues. He must claim them as a man of straw—as a shadow, as being less than a shadow, less than the privation of light; as a name, as a word, and nothing besides. If he would have his tithes, the Rev. Richard Roe must condescend to take them as *persona ecclesie*; as *persona fabulae, vel dramatis*; as a character invented by the State for the purposes of the State, and subsisting altogether at the will of the State."

By thus taking upon itself to create the forms in which property dedicated to public uses shall be held, the legislature necessarily charges itself with their regulation also. Having in the first instance deliberated on the question whether they should exist at all, on them lies the duty—not the competency merely, the duty—of considering under what modifications and to what period they shall continue to exist. "Every donation to a laudable, pious, or charitable use," says Plowden, in his Principles and Law of Tithing, "will find its reward from a just God, who sees the purity of the donor's heart; but, as it is only by the permission of the State that such appropriations of property can be made, so it is out of the power of the State to divest itself of that supreme or *altum dominium*, by which it permitted the gift, and must continue to superintend and control the property in the same manner it ever did, in whosoever hands it may be vested."

That bodies politic should be absolutely at the disposal of the State may appear the more reasonable, inasmuch as it must be always understood that they have been constituted, not for the benefit of the parties composing them, but for some object of public utility. Whether the object proposed by any particular incorporation is at the time of public

utility or not, is a question which must be supposed to have been considered in its formation; and it must also be presumed to lie continually in the bosom of the State for fresh consideration. For so variable are the aspects and conditions of human society, that what may be useful at one period may be useless, and even mischievous, at another. This is an argument strongly put by Turgot, in the *Encyclopédie*, against the expediency of foundations in general.

“I am willing to suppose,” says this distinguished writer, “that a foundation may have had at first an indisputable utility; that sufficient precautions may have been taken against its degeneracy through idleness or neglect; and that the nature of the property exempts it from destructive changes; but yet the permanence which the founders have aimed at is a considerable inconvenience, because time may bring changes which may render it useless, or even injurious. Society has not always the same wants. The nature and distribution of property, the relations between the different classes of the community, opinions, manners, the pursuits of the people at large, or of different portions of them, even climate, diseases, and other accidents of human life, undergo a continual alteration; new wants arise, and old ones cease; the number of inhabitants changes almost daily, and with them disappears the usefulness of foundations intended to benefit them. The wars of Palestine gave birth to foundations without number, the utility of which ceased with the wars themselves. Without referring to religious or military orders, Europe is even yet crowded with hospitals for leprosy, although for a long time a leper has not been known . . . There is every reason to suppose that a foundation, of whatever kind, and however useful it may appear, will some day be useless, and even pernicious.” Under such circumstances (and the case is not at all overstated), it is absolutely essential to good government that the State should have the power of acting upon all bodies politic at its pleasure. Were it not so, we might, indeed, make giants, but we might not kill them—being in this respect less powerful than even Tom Thumb is alleged to have been; and society must become the victim of the immutability of its own fictions. It never could be tolerated that every incorporation once existing should be deemed a permanent and indestructible institution, beyond the control, and, perhaps, far beyond the existence,

of the power that created it. Upon this principle, England ought to be still overrun with the pampered and profligate ecclesiastics who, in a former age, nestling in the miscalled "religious houses," deluged its fair fields with indolence and vice. Upon this principle, too, many of the angriest and most threatening sores of the great body politic must be sorrowfully pronounced incurable.

It may be said, indeed, that, admitting this general principle in relation to bodies politic which have been endowed by the State, it ought not to apply to those which have been endowed by individuals. The maintenance of good government, however, requires that all foundations, whether endowed by public or private bounty, should be under the control of the supreme power; since otherwise the most serious mischiefs might arise in the community, and perpetuate themselves without remedy.

Now the right in the State of abolishing a body politic necessarily involves the right of directing a fresh appropriation of all property possessed by it, there being in that event no other party but the State by whom such a step could legally be taken. The private origin of the property makes no more difference in this case than in the former. Upon this point, however, a contest has been strenuously maintained on behalf of the clergy.

The author of a Short Address to Plain Sense on the subject of Tithes, speaks in the following terms:—"Tithes were originally granted to the clergy in England by the free gift of the lords of the manors, or proprietors of the estates on which the tithes arise. These lords of the manors generally built the parish churches, and provided for the ministers who were to perform the duty by giving them the tithe of the produce of their estates; and their gifts were confirmed by many acts of parliament. Thus it appears at once that the tithes never belonged to the government or the public, and can in no just sense be called public property. They belonged to private individuals, who chose of their own accord to give them away; or, in other words, to make their estates subject to the payment of them for all future times. Thus the government or the public have no more pretence for claiming a property in the tithes, than they have for claiming a property in the private estates out of which they arise."

Without admitting the correctness of this statement of the case—for, in fact, voluntary tithes were given to religious houses, while parochial tithes were assigned by statute—I will take the argument as the writer intends it, and reply to it with all frankness. Clearly, there is a part of the Church property which did not originally belong to the public. It is an established rule of law, however, that all property belongs to the public when once it is formally devoted to the benefit of the public, or to a *public use*. Now it is obvious, and is, indeed, admitted on all hands, that an ecclesiastical use is a public use, since the public—not the priest—is contemplated as the party to be benefited by all ecclesiastical functions, whether of piety, charity, or education. Property dedicated by private liberality to religious foundations, therefore, as it is no longer the property of the individual donors, who have “given it away,” so it is not the property of the ecclesiastics, who are merely the servants by whom the work intended is done, but of the public—the master to whom and for whom it is performed. To the public, substantially, it has been given, and, in one way or another, the public ought to possess it, either for the use for which it was primarily destined, or for some other use, if that be found impossible or undesirable.

I nowhere find this argument for the fixed tenure of Church property put in fewer words, or with more point, than by the author of *Six Letters to the Farmers of England*. “If,” says he, “I have not a good title when I can show that my estate was lawfully given to my predecessors by the lawful owners, and that my predecessors have enjoyed it for hundreds of years, according to the giver’s intentions, then there is not a good title in England.” Let us see what is the force of this.

The author uses a freedom altogether unwarrantable, when he speaks of his benefice as *his estate*. The interest which he has in it, as I have already shown, is of a kind far too extensively qualified in various ways to sanction the use of such language. Again he totally misstates the case when he says that his interest, whatever it is, was “given to his predecessors by the lawful owners.” The “lawful owners” did no such thing. They simply annexed the property by their gift to a certain rectory, without entertaining the remotest intention that he, or any one of his predecessors

(except, perhaps, the first of them) should enjoy a fraction of it. Nor is he more correct in assuming that his predecessors in the benefice have, in some way or other, conveyed it to him. They constitute a series, not of connected, but of separate, links. No one of them either received it from another, or conveyed it to another; and he himself has received it, not from his predecessors, from whom in law he stands entirely disconnected, but from a party who must be held to have acted on behalf of the State herein. To which it is to be added, that the property was annexed to the rectory, not for the benefit of himself, or of such other individuals as might be presented to it, but in order to secure and remunerate the performance of certain duties of piety and charity. The title of a parson to his emoluments, consequently, although perfectly good for what he holds, is altogether different from the title of a landed proprietor to his estate, and the two cannot with justice be brought into comparison.

This gentleman, however, who pleases himself so much in enjoying ecclesiastical property "according to the giver's intentions," would, of course, be no less mindful of the intentions of the giver as to the duties to be performed. He would clearly, as in many cases required, pray for the soul of the founder, and say masses for his liberation from purgatory. He would never think of taking the revenues of popish endowments in remuneration for the performance of anti-popish ceremonies! If there *were* a purgatory, such a deed might well be supposed to beget an awful anticipation there.

The argument, indeed, that Church property may be held to be private because it is of private gift, is in reality a plea for a public robbery in order to a private benefit. For it amounts to this, that, even if the nation would no longer accept the services of the Church, the clergy should still in perpetuity retain their emoluments. Now it is clearly competent to the nation to determine whether they will or will not employ the clergy, and it is quite conceivable that the nation might come to a resolution to dispense with their future services; but, even then, it seems, the priests would clutch the money with a grasp that should not relax itself, even in death. Why, this is a villanous business. The nation says to the Church, We will dispense with your labours: the Church says to the nation, Good; but we will

retain the revenues which were given to pay for them. The master says to his valet, I discharge you: and the valet says to his master, Very well; but you shall continue my salary!

No better illustration of the whole case before us can be desired than that which is supplied by the history of the Knights-Templars. This religious and military order, instituted at Jerusalem in the time of the Crusades, and originally called "The poor of the Holy City," acquired through the mistaken liberality of the times enormous wealth. At length their luxury, arrogance, cruelty, and other vices, led to their suppression by Pope Clement V., amidst loud expressions of universal rejoicing. What, then, became of the lands they had possessed? It does not appear that the plea was then set up that, because they had been given by private individuals, they might be retained as private property. On the contrary, the dissolution of the order so palpably extinguished their right to the property, that, in England, the king and other lords of the fees, as they were technically termed, or representatives of the original grantors, seized it, as if it had reverted by escheat into their hands. This, however, was not allowed. Parliament interfered, claimed the lands as the property of the public, and enacted that they should be given, on condition of service, to the brethren of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.

New distributions of the property of ecclesiastical corporations have been so often effected by the British legislature, and the grants thus made enter so largely into the settlement of estates, both lay and clerical, at the present moment, that one cannot but wonder at the raising of any question respecting the legality of them. To say nothing now of some noble and distinguished houses which will immediately occur to recollection, I will adduce an example from the history of the Church itself. The deans and chapters of Canterbury, Winchester, Worcester, Ely, Carlisle, Durham, Rochester, and Norwich, were endowed by Henry VIII. out of the estates and tithes of dissolved monasteries. If the dissolution of these foundations was contrary to law, the venerable bodies I have named hold their emoluments wrongfully, and should refund them: if it was according to law, they cannot, since they are of a similar constitution, deny their own liability to a similar process. Their reverences may take which horn they please of this dilemma.

The circumstance which saves the Bedfords and other lay impropriators from the force of this argument is, that what has been given to them has been given to them not as bodies politic, but in their natural capacity.

As a general confirmation of the views I have submitted to you, I shall now adduce a quotation from a high legal authority already named, Francis Plowden. In his *Principles and Law of Tithing*, and the chapter which treats of the persons who are entitled to hold Church property, he speaks as follows:—

“The first essential quality by which the civil magistrate enables persons to enjoy or hold tithes or other Church property in England, is the corporate capacity with which he invests them.

“This always was the case, even before the Reformation. For then, although the State permitted individuals to give and consecrate their lands and other property for ever to the maintenance of communities of religious men and women, . . . they were so moulded or formed by the civil laws of the State that their profession became a civil death. The parties professed, on renouncing the world, made their wills and appointed executors, as if preparing for their corporeal demise, and their inheritances went over, as if the parties had been naturally dead. The superior and community were on the other hand invested with a corporate capacity, to preserve their property. In that corporate capacity they never died, and their corporate inheritances became inalienable.

“At and after the Reformation the civil magistrate withdrew the corporate capacity from all religious orders indiscriminately; and as their property never belonged to the individuals, so, when they were resuscitated from their civil death, and divested of their corporate capacity, they could neither claim nor hold as individuals what they had enjoyed till then in their corporate capacities. Their property, therefore, reverted to the State, which had so long permitted it to be in *mortmain*, or in a state of inalienability; and, therefore, there could be no reversion to the heirs of the donors or founders, neither by express nor implied resuscitation. It became then the duty of the legislature to appropriate it to the uses best calculated, in their judgment, to promote and preserve the peace, welfare, and benefit of the nation. Whether they did so conscientiously appropriate it is immaterial to consider. They alone possessed the dominion of the property, and from them alone could any lawful title to it be derived.

“When the supreme legislature of this country thought proper to divest all religious men and women of their corporate quality, . . . it gave to other persons, whom it considered as Church governors or Gospel ministers, a corporate capacity of holding and transmitting to their successors in the like function, mission, or quality, tithes and other Church property in perpetuity. These provisions having been originally substituted as commutation for the conscientious Gospel maintenance, have been continued from the Reformation to our times; as they will continue while the nation continues Christian, and shall

think, as it now most wisely does, that the Church governors who minister to their congregations or flocks the spiritual things of the Gospel ought not to be left to the precarious, unsatisfactory, and onerous duty of voluntary contributions."

This is leaving the matter precisely as we wish to have it left. The British Anti-State-Church Association provokes no discussion respecting Church property for its own sake. Let the disposal of it follow, as it naturally will, the decision of an antecedent inquiry. While it is thought fit by the government to uphold the bodies politic who enjoy it, let Church property be guarded by the laws. What we wish to discuss is the utility of these bodies politic themselves—in other words, the utility of a National Religious Establishment. Should we succeed in winning over the people of England to our opinion that such an establishment is not only useless, but pernicious, and that it is high time that the bodies politic which enjoy its revenues should be extinguished, the fresh distribution of this property, we conceive, would follow of course. Supposing those bodies politic to be no longer in existence, indeed, how would it be possible that revenues should remain attached to them? They are but legal fictions now; then they would be nonentities. What can be more becoming than that the State should be at once their guardian while they exist, and their residuary legatee when they expire? Or, perhaps, I ought rather to say, that the fee-simple of the estates which, since the creation of the ecclesiastical bodies politic which enjoy them, the lawyers hold to have been seated in the clouds, will, upon the extinction of these bodies, naturally return to the earth, and that the British people will, thenceforth—to use a technical but sufficiently intelligible phrase—be seized of them in fee.

ON SCHISM.*

SEPARATION from the Church of England is currently said, by the advocates of that hierarchy, to be an act of schism; and in the hope of its being influential, if not to reclaim the wanderers, at least to bring them into odium, and to prevent others from following their example, schism has been studiously represented as a peculiarly aggravated crime, and even as a deadly, or unpardonable, sin. The High-church party in this country have taken pre-eminent delight in hurling this accusation against the Protestant Dissenters; and, however little effect it may have had in convincing us of our error, it has admirably answered their purpose in terrifying the ignorant, and in exasperating the malignant, within their own communion. It has extensively made bitter Churchmen hate us, and timid Churchmen afraid of us; but, for ourselves, it has been as harmless in its results as it is innocent of any meaning or force in itself. It is, in truth, nothing but a scare-crow, and has, times without number, been exposed; but, as long as a blind appeal to human authority on the one hand, and to human passion on the other, shall continue to influence mankind, and the hierarchy shall have any emoluments worth contending for, so long will this blazing, though pointless, accusation continue to be fulminated against us. Our hope of seeing the fire-brand extinguished lies in the present progress of knowledge and reflection, and in the concurrent hastening of religious despotism to its expiring hour; and at such a period we again, as we have often done before, cheerfully stretch forth our hands, and answer for ourselves.

Upon this, as upon many other occasions, religious animosity has employed the artifice of disguising itself in unintelligible jargon. Schism, according to the monopolists of church power, is horribly wicked, and Dissenters are guilty of schism. But what is schism? The word itself conveys no

meaning to an English ear. It is taken from the Greek language, we know; but why was it transferred from the Greek into the English in its foreign and unintelligible form, and not, like words in general, translated? Were there no English terms that could express its meaning? Undoubtedly there were, and are, several. It might, for example, be properly translated *strife*. But this would not have answered the purpose of the parties who employed it. It was needful to their ends that the word should have a peculiar ecclesiastical sense, just such as ecclesiastical rulers might choose to give it, and conveniently variable at various times. Hence we have the word *schism* thrust into our mouths; a word which nobody understands, and which the Churchmen do not wish you to understand, further than to believe, on their authority, that it is a very great sin, and that it is committed by Dissenters. We are requested to leave it in this convenient darkness, since it is "a topic of all others the most difficult to be defined, and made comprehensible to the uneducated."*

When, however, our accusers are constrained to give an answer to the question, What is schism? they tell us that it is a violation of the unity of the church of Christ; "a breach of that unity, that oneness, which our Lord and his apostles so earnestly inculcate."† And all persons who separate from the Church of England, it seems, are guilty of this.

Now, admitting for a moment, and for the sake of argument merely, that Dissenters from the Church of England do violate the unity of the church of Christ, and acknowledging that, in this case, they are guilty of a fault, we may truly say, that their fault does not deserve the hard measure which has been dealt to them on account of it. Violating the unity of the church of Christ is but one among many sins, and it is difficult to see that it possesses any peculiar enormity above its fellows. Worldly-mindedness, covetousness, and a long list of other evils, are of too frequent occurrence, both among Dissenters and Church-people; but we never hear of their being held up as peculiar enormities, or as exposing the unhappy perpetrator of them to public odium. Those who violate the unity of the church, on the contrary, have been stigmatized as monsters of iniquity, and rejected, not only

* Quarterly Review, December, 1824: Art., Progress of Dissent.

† Berens's Sermon on the Christian Priesthood.

from religious fellowship, but from the rights of civil, and the charities of domestic, life; while the awful name of schismatic has served, like the badge of the Inquisition affixed to the sufferers at an *auto da fè*, at once to indicate and to justify their doom.

According to High-church partisans, we may be as worldly and as profligate as we please without any reproof, or with a very gentle one; but if, though in other respects godly and unblamable, we violate the unity of the church, rebuke becomes vociferous in an instant, and such thunders of ecclesiastical wrath utter their voices as upon any other subject never were heard. We have a right to demand some reason for this, and to know wherein the alleged enormity of our fault consists. We cannot otherwise be humbled for it, and repent.

We remember, indeed, to have seen it stated, that the violation of the unity of the church of Christ must be a very great sin, because our Lord, in his intercessory prayer immediately before he suffered, prayed so fervently that the unity of his church might be preserved.* We shall find a more proper place for remarking that the unity here contemplated is by no means that for which our accusers contend. All that we are concerned now to say is, that the passage quoted is utterly inadequate to the use made of it. Even looking at it by itself, it has no peculiar forcibleness; but partakes merely of the general character of tenderness and power which pertains to the whole of this intercessory prayer. Taken in connection with the other parts of that prayer, it has still less pretension to peculiarity; since unity is far from being the only object for which the Redeemer prays, and is equally far from being implored with any speciality.

We are very far from insinuating that our Lord did not set a great value on the unity of his church, or that his tender reference to it in his last prayer is not adapted to press it on the sedulous cultivation of his disciples; but it is obvious that Christ set an equal value on his people being sanctified, and kept from the evil that is in the world. And if so, what becomes of the *peculiar* criminality of violating the unity of his church?

But Churchmen have made at this point a melting appeal to our feelings, and a very moving exhibition of the tender

* Berens's Sermon on the Christian Priesthood.

mercies of secular religious establishments. They have told us that, if schism is not a very heinous sin in itself, it is attended with peculiarly fatal consequences to us. According to them it is a "deadly sin," one which is directly and absolutely destructive to the soul; so that a person dying a schismatic cannot be saved. Hence the original lamentations of popes and cardinals on account of the broken unity of the church; and hence the copious tears of the kind-hearted clergy in every succeeding age, down to that of Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England! 'Tis pure compassion for perishing souls! Nothing, no, nothing else, but concern to prevent our eternal perdition! Should we be ready to suggest that pity might have manifested itself in some gentler modes than by torturing racks and murderous wars, we are told that these things most effectually open to us the marvellous intensity of their love. "How great it must have been," say they, "to have led us to treat even beloved brethren so harshly, to have set us on such violent efforts to repress the yearnings of our bowels, and to have led us, for the salvation of their souls, not only to plunder them of their property and to imprison and torture their persons, but even to consume their bodies in the fire!"

This is no exaggeration of the language of Papists on the subject of schism. And though it was only a pretext, yet *they had* a pretext for it in the doctrines of their church. Holding that the Romish was also the catholic, or universal, church, and that out of the universal church no person could be saved, they inferred with reason that no person could be saved out of the Romish communion. Hence they were warranted, according to their views, in calling schism, meaning thereby separation from the church of Rome, a "deadly" or soul-destroying sin, as it plainly must be if it effected a separation from that universal church out of which none could be saved. Their notion of purgatory supplied them, on the other hand, with a method of explaining how persons might die in other sins, and yet be saved; since, if they were in communion with the church, every sin might be atoned for by its masses and its prayers.

What we marvel at on this subject is, that divines not popish should have adopted a sentiment which popish notions are absolutely essential to support. "The deadly sin of schism" is a phrase which has often proceeded from the

lips of the Protestant priesthood, in tones of sepulchral solemnity well adapted to terrify, if not to convince. But in the mouth of a Protestant clergyman what can be the meaning of it? Does *he* mean to say that there are *any* sins in which a man can die, and not perish eternally? If he does, let him show on what grounds this sentiment rests; if he does not, he allows every sin to be as “deadly” as schism. We ask, moreover, whether the clergy of the Church of England look upon *that* church as *the* church catholic, or universal, apart from which there is no salvation? And if they do not, how can any such schism as consists in separating from it be destructive to the soul at all? Whence does it appear that those may not still be united to the church universal who have separated themselves from the Church of England?

Again, do High Churchmen mean gravely to affirm that schism, thereby meaning separation from the Church of England, is “deadly” in fact; that is, that persons living and dying in such separation cannot be saved? Do they mean to say that the whole host of pious Dissenters, from the time of the Puritans to the present, and including the worthiest of her own children, the two thousand non-conforming clergy whom this would-be tenacious mother ejected from her own bosom in one day,—do they mean to say that all these are now in perdition? Yet they unquestionably are so, if schism, as now understood, is a deadly sin, for in it they lived and died. If such sentiments be held, in the name of all that is reasonable and honest, let them be avowed; if not, let the fiction that schism is a deadly sin be ingenuously abandoned.*

The peculiar pity of our spiritual protectors when they see us in danger of this sin of schism is very liable to suspicion.

* That this challenge is not superfluous will appear from the following brief quotation from a living bishop, whose language will clearly show the leaning to which the hierarchy is subject, as well as the dread of being explicit:—“We profess our unshaken belief that those persons who persevere in conscientious communion with the church are in the sure road to salvation; but we are not to be understood as delivering an opinion that salvation will be withheld from those who conscientiously separate from the church. . . Thus much, however, I conceive I may *safely* say, that no promise of salvation appears to be given in Scripture to those persons who are not in the church.”—*Sermons for Parochial and Domestic Use*, by Richard Mant, now Bishop of Down and Connor. The church of which the bishop speaks is, of course, the Church of England; and his doctrine bears as hard upon all other established churches as it does on the Dissenters.

We know that Dissent is the only sin by which the clergy lose anything, or which threatens the existence of ecclesiastical monopoly; and this, perhaps, may be the real reason why they have been so much terrified at the commission of it. There would probably have been as little notice taken of schism as there has been of drunkenness and debauchery, if these guardians of our spiritual welfare had not kept a jealous eye on their own temporalities. The cry of schism would never have been raised if Dissent had not affected the wealth and power of the clergy; and, now that it has been raised, it is nothing more than the expression of that instinctive apprehensiveness with which this richly-endowed body, like other monopolists, cling to the multitude of tithes and offerings.

We should fail of doing justice to our accusers, however, if we were not to notice the evident complacency, and the almost boundless charity, with which they trace the act of separation from the Church of England, though of little evil in itself, to an origin fearfully malignant. "The evil of schism," says one of them,* "appears from the evil root from which it springs. I would not willingly," he adds, "give offence to any, and allow that it sometimes proceeds from a sincere though mistaken piety: too often, however, it has its origin in that pride and self-conceit which is so natural to sinful man; that spirit which produces sedition and rebellion in the State, and dissension and schism in the church." According to this reverend calumniator, therefore, Dissent is synonymous with rebellion, and although sometimes, marvellous to say, this bitter fruit may be borne by a good tree, yet "*the root* from which it springs" is no other than the spirit of "sedition." Is it possible that the spirit of political rancour has so long survived its appropriate age? Does this hateful demon still linger in the bosom of the Church of England? Is this indeed the instruction which industrious and estimable parish priests give, and are largely paid by the country for giving, in the nineteenth century, to the population of Great Britain? Is this the manner in which the ministers of mercy exemplify the charity they preach, and strive to diffuse throughout society the spirit of kindness and good will? Is it in this way even that the good will of

* Mr. Berens,—Sermon on the Christian Priesthood.

the Dissenters, of whose designs the hierarchy sometimes profess themselves to be afraid, can be conciliated towards the Church? Is it not rather adapted to inflame the worst passions of the people, and to fan the smouldering animosities between Churchmen and Dissenters into fury; as well as to make Dissenters feel that, so long as an endowed priesthood shall exist, they can never be secure from base insinuations and unmerited odium?

We have been arguing thus far on the supposition that separation from the Church of England *is* a violation of the unity of the church of Christ. But we now take up another position. We affirm that separation from the Church of England *is not* a violation of the unity of the church of Christ. This position we feel ourselves prepared fully to maintain; and if we should succeed in doing so, we shall, of course, demonstrate that separation from the Church of England is not schism; and that the accusation of schism, whatever may be the weight of it, is unjustly fulminated against us.

In pursuing the course of argument on which we now enter, it becomes our duty to examine the grounds on which church advocates have maintained the affirmative proposition, that separation from the Church of England *does* violate the unity of the church of Christ. We do not know that we can proceed in this matter more fairly or more satisfactorily than by permitting our opponents to speak for themselves, and state their own case. We shall present our readers, therefore, with an extract from a little work published by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge,* in the belief that we quote what will be allowed to be good authority, and that we shall approach as nearly as possible to the orthodox doctrine on the subject. The author of this work writes as follows:—

“Those persons are properly said to be in communion with each other, who, being members of a particular church, attend *regularly* its congregational assemblies for the performance of all public acts of devotion. Particular churches are in communion with each other, the respective members of which meet interchangeably as occasion may occur for the like religious purposes. And, as the one catholic or universal church is composed of particular churches spread over the face of the earth, the communion of that church consists in, and

* The Claims of the Established Church.

is preserved by, the external communion (as above defined) of the particular churches of which it is composed. Every member of one of those churches is a member of the universal church; whilst, on the other hand, a member of a particular church who is regularly excluded from its communion ceases to be in communion with the catholic church.

“It appears, then, that regular communion is the tie which keeps Christians together as members of the same church; it constitutes the bond of that Christian unity the preservation of which is so earnestly enjoined in Scripture. Surely, then, it behoves Christians to beware of inconsiderately separating from an established church. . . . As such separation cannot take place without a breach of that unity which is the great bond of Christian charity, those persons incur an awful responsibility to their Maker who, *on insufficient grounds*, separate from the Established Church of their country” (pp. 50, 52).

We presume we may take this as a fair and adequate statement of the course of reasoning by which it is proposed to convict Dissenters of schism, or to show that separation from the communion of the Church of England is a violation of the unity of the church of Christ. Let us briefly examine it.

We shall hereafter have a few words to say as to the soundness of the principle adopted in this argument; but we take more immediate notice of the lameness and impotency of the conclusion. Suppose we admit—what, however, we do not admit—that the unity of the church of Christ does consist in “the external communion” of it, let the reader observe what inference this writer draws from it. He concludes that Christians ought not to separate from the *established church of their country!* What manner of logic is this? If the argument is good for anything, it goes much further than our author carries it, and clearly requires that Christians should never separate from the communion of any Christian society at all. Upon what principle of sound reason or common sense are “established churches” to have the exclusive benefit of this jealousy against separation?

But this writer has felt himself obliged to modify his conclusion by another limitation, which deserves a passing remark. Since the unity of the church of Christ consists in the external communion of Christian churches, he tells us that we ought not to separate from the Established Church of our country “*on insufficient grounds.*” Why, this is truly marvellous! It is acknowledged, then, that there may be “sufficient grounds” for separating from the Estab-

lished Church of our country. But such separation is, according to High-church advocates, a violation of the unity of the church of Christ; there may be "sufficient grounds," therefore, for violating the unity of the church of Christ, and for committing that dreadful sin of schism against which the loudest thunders of ecclesiastical wrath, and too often the severest inflictions of the secular arm, have been unsparingly directed. How fortunate it would have been if this idea had been entertained two or three centuries ago! It might have inspired a little compassion into the heart of the merciless persecutor, to have recollected that the alleged schismatics might possibly have "sufficient grounds" for their separation. Then, however, it was the orthodox opinion that schism could have *no* justification; and, though the age is now gone by when it could be maintained that there can be no "sufficient grounds" for separating from the Church of England, we are of opinion that the old doctrine respecting schism, the word being properly understood, was much more correct than the new.

For schism, or, to speak more intelligibly, the violation of the unity of the church of Christ, has in it, we conceive, an essential and unalterable criminality. The preservation of the unity of his church is a duty which Christ has thrown upon every individual member of it, not in a qualified, but in an absolute, form. Like all other branches of holiness, it is of uniform and indispensable obligation, and a departure from it cannot by any circumstances be justified. To say that there may be "sufficient grounds" to violate the unity of the church of Christ, is no less objectionable than to say that there may be sufficient grounds to indulge intemperance, or to commit a robbery.

We are not at all afraid of the bearing of these remarks. If we thought that separation from the Church of England was a violation of the unity of the church of Christ, we would instantly acknowledge it to be unjustifiable. And we charge it as an inconsistency upon High-church advocates, that they, holding separation to be schism, allow nevertheless that it may have sufficient grounds. Doubtless, there may exist sufficient grounds for separation; but then it is impossible that such separation, or anything else for which there may be sufficient grounds, can be a violation of the unity of the church of Christ.

It is amusing to see the writer whose statements we are examining afraid to argue from his own premises. Having set out with affirming that the unity of the church of Christ consists in the external fellowship of Christians, nothing could be more direct than his way to the conclusion that the fellowship of Christians, wherever it might exist, should in no case be departed from. This, however, would have carried him to alarming lengths. It would have established a principle of intolerance, which, in the nineteenth century, even the Church of England thinks it prudent to disown; while it would make it as great a sin to separate from the Dissenters as to separate from the Church, and would leave the Church of England herself without the shadow of a justification for her separation from Rome. We may safely interpret this unwillingness to follow up his own premises as an indication that they are actually unsound, and, perhaps, that he knew them to be so.

Having shown the impotency of the conclusion at which this writer arrives, we must bestow a few words on the principle from which he reasons. "The catholic, or universal, church," he informs us, "is composed of particular churches." To his enlightened vision "it appears," also, "that regular communion" constitutes "*the bond* of Christian unity." These are cardinal sentiments, truly; but to us they are somewhat startling, and they must at all events be subjected to examination.

And, first, for the constitution of "the catholic or universal church." We take it for granted that, by this term, the writer intends to denote the church of Christ; since, if he does not, his statements bear no relation to the controversy in which he has embarked. Now the church of Christ, viewed as catholic or universal, is a spiritual body, in possession of spiritual privileges, comprehending all those who in any place are united to Christ, and none other; and this, our author tells us, "is composed of particular churches." We might here ask him *of what* particular churches the catholic or universal church is composed, and whether the churches formed by the Dissenters might not happen to be of the number? But we will not stay to embarrass him with this inquiry. We observe, rather, that the supposition that the catholic or universal church is composed of any particular churches whatsoever leads to an incredible and impossible

conclusion. It is as much as to say that all persons contained in those particular churches are members of the church universal, and that no persons besides are, or can be so, without becoming a member of one of those particular churches; or, which is the same thing, that none but the members of these particular churches are, or can be saved, and that all who are members of them will be so. On the one hand, it matters not that some of these privileged members may be "earthly, sensual, and devilish" persons, "whose god is their belly, and who glory in their shame"—they are safe; and it matters as little, on the other hand, that some who are not members of these "particular churches" may be believers in Christ, and may glorify his name by a godly conversation—they are "without the pale of the catholic church," and must eternally perish. Does any man in his senses believe this?

We see no way for our author to extricate himself from this dilemma, but to say that by the catholic, or universal, church he does not mean the whole number of those who *possess* religion, but the whole number of those who *profess* it. In this sense, doubtless, the universal church "is composed of particular churches." But, if he were to be understood in this sense it could not help his argument, because the universal church must then comprehend all who profess religion in any way, without any possibility of being limited to the established churches which stand so high in his favour. Dissenting churches *profess* religion as well as the Establishment, and, upon this ground, have an equal right to a place within the pale of the church universal.

To have used the term in question, however, "the catholic or universal church," in the sense last supposed, would be too gross a piece of ignorance to be imputed to such a writer, or to his patrons.

But, if the catholic or universal church be composed of all persons, whether professors or not, who experience the power of godliness, and of no other, then obviously it is not composed of particular churches; since those who are comprehended in particular churches may be wicked, and those who are not may be pious. It is evident, indeed, that the question of a man's connexion with the church universal is not a question of profession, or external communion, at all, but of character exclusively. It is a renewed and spiritual mind which unites a man to Christ, and to all others who have

experienced a similar transformation. The union is one of the heart, and not of profession; and the bond of it is not external communion, but love.

But, since this idea that the unity of the church of Christ is an external unity, and that it essentially consists in the maintenance of one communion, is the principal, and, indeed, the only ground on which separation from the communion of any church can be deemed a violation of Christian unity, it may be worth while to enter a little more at large into this part of the argument, and to show how utterly absurd such a representation is.

No persons, we believe, the Romanists only excepted, have ever insisted on the necessity of a uniform ritual over the whole world, but all have allowed of diversities in worship in different countries; as, for example, of Episcopacy in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland, the Greek church in Russia and the Lutheran in Germany; and, in short, a different form of worship in every country under heaven. It appears, then, that the unity of the church is not violated by actual diversities, but only by their existence in certain localities; so that the whole of this mighty controversy, about which so many angry passions have been excited, and in which so much blood has been shed, resolves itself into a mere question of rivers and boundary lines. On this side of the Tweed you shall be an excellent Christian, on the other a horrible schismatic; and this without any alteration, either internally or externally, either in the shape of your gown or the bending of your knee, but simply by the transfer of your person across this wonder-working stream. Would it not be better that these things should cease to occupy the attention of the grave and learned body who have so long and so assiduously treated them, and be transferred to their more appropriate place in Goldsmith's Geography for children?

But, if our opponents had all they asked for—namely, the extermination of Dissent from established churches, they would not achieve the external unity of the church. For we ask any person of common sense to look on the catholic, or universal, church as made up of these “particular churches,” and to say whether this is an exhibition of the much-lauded unity. So far as what is external is concerned, is it one and the same thing that we see in England, Scotland, Germany, and Russia? A greater diversity can scarcely be imagined. In these

several churches, as to externals scarcely any two things are alike, and the pride of one is almost invariably the aversion of another. In the catholic, or universal, church, therefore, according to the view which our opponents take of it, there is no external unity; and, if its only and essential unity consists in externals, it has no unity at all. Upon the ground taken by High Churchmen, there is no rest short of the papistical doctrine of a compulsory uniformity of ritual throughout Christendom.

To go a step further. Even if all the Christian churches throughout the world could be induced to adopt a uniform ritual, this circumstance would not constitute any unity of external communion. Suppose, for example, that the service of the Greek church were to be henceforth assimilated perfectly to that of the English, what unity of external communion would this create? Would the respective members of these churches commune with each other any the more on this account? Clearly not. They would be as widely separated as ever, and nothing would be gained by their ritual similarity. External communion, as the writer whose statements are before us maintains, consists in actually joining together in the worship of the church; it is evident, therefore, that external communion can exist among no other persons than such as can worship in the same place. Those whom distance so far separates that they can never actually worship together cannot, by any possibility, have any external fellowship; if any unity exists among them, it must be internal, and of the heart. Hence, therefore, by the necessity of the case, as to external communion the catholic, or universal, church is actually broken up into many parts. It cannot have any external unity while immense distances divide its parts one from the other, and set at defiance all conjunction except that of the spirit. To say that the unity of the church of Christ is essentially external, therefore, is to say that it has, and can have, no unity at all.

That the unity of the catholic, or universal, church should consist in external communion, may further appear to be impossible, from the fact that the external communion of all particular churches excludes some who are of the catholic church, and comprehends some who are not. Every one will admit that there are pious people not in communion with any church, and that there are in church-communion persons

destitute of piety. Now that which constitutes *the tie* which holds the universal church together must be something that embraces all its members, and comprehends none besides. Whatever fails in either of these respects, it can have no pretensions to the essential unity of the body. But external communion fails in both these respects. Binding some to the church which are not of it, and excluding some who are, it cannot be *the bond* of its oneness.

We do not, however, stop here, but go on to say that, if the unity of the church did consist in externals, it would be of no value. In a union of spirit there is a very intelligible excellency and influence. It indicates a fundamental agreement of character. It awakens delightful sympathies. It generates and diffuses powerful impulses. But in external union there is no vitality, no power. It is a union of mere form and ceremony, not including any community of feeling, any identity of principle, any sympathy of the heart. What character can it evince? To what pleasure can it give rise? What impulses can it originate? Absolutely none. If these or any other benefits exist, they must spring from a totally different and independent cause.

Such an external union as is pleaded for by the advocates of the Church of England, and of established churches generally, is, indeed, far worse than useless. Bringing people together without any reference to previous or present character, it associates persons of opposite principles and incongruous habits; persons who have nothing in common but the cloak which disguises them, and who, while they are mocked with the semblance of union, are, in their feelings and pursuits, as widely divided as the poles. Far from doing any good, this is obviously an evil. It tends to prevent persons of kindred minds from discovering each other, by constraining them to mix with the throng who separate them. Forbidding their withdrawal from the multitude, it prohibits equally their fellowship with each other, and compels every real Christian to stand alone, insulated in a crowd, except as accident may throw him in the way of some congenial mind. Such a method, far from constituting a bond of union among true Christians, is rather the spell of their dispersion.

The external unity of Christians is worse than worthless, even for that very purpose for which, by High Churchmen, it has been so much vaunted. "The church is to be one in its

external fellowship," they tell us, "in order that it may appear beautiful to beholders, that it may be worthy of Christ its author, and that the world hereby may know that God hath sent him." An excellent and important object, no doubt, and one to which the real unity of the church will be found eminently conducive. If the unity of the church be that of the heart; if it be founded on a similarity of character, and exhibited in a oneness of interest and pursuit; if it be observable in a love which unites all hearts, overlooks all faults, and surmounts all differences; then, indeed, it is easy to see that every beholder will have reason to acknowledge it not only wonderful, but divine, since nothing but a divine power can be supposed to have wrought so marvellous a conjunction, and to have reduced the stubborn selfishness and jarring passions of mankind to so blessed an amalgamation.

But let us see how the external unity of the church would promote the same end. All the people that are willing to be called Christians, it seems, must go to the same edifices, and worship after the same manner. Everywhere there must be heard the monotonous voice of the Common Prayer, with the dull responses of the parish clerk, and the mechanical mutterings of charity children; and everywhere there must be seen the white surplice of the desk, and the gown and bands of the pulpit, and the waving heads and bended knees of the congregation, "bowing at the name of Jesus." And this the beholder is to admire, and to acknowledge such a unity to be an eminent display of the glory of Christ, and the divinity of his mission! And this, too, at the very moment when, without looking a hair's-breadth beneath the surface, he may hear the pulpit contradicting the desk, and the pulpits contradicting each other; when he may find the form of godliness disguising the hypocrite, the formalist, the profligate, and the infidel; and when, pursuing this *united* congregation into the world, he may see them diverging into all conceivable paths of iniquity and shame, "hateful and hating one another." So far from contributing anything to the glory of Christ, this spectacle has contributed more than all things besides to his dishonour, and has given the chief occasion which infidels and men of the world have ever found for doubting the divine origin of Christianity.

The very design of producing uniformity of religious worship betrays, indeed, such a total ignorance of human nature

as can never be imputed to the Author of our being. Religious diversities arose in the earliest ages of Christianity; and all experience shows that the attempt to destroy them cannot be prosecuted with success. Methods of reason and persuasion have never been effectual. Those who have been bent on accomplishing the object have invariably been obliged to have recourse to violence. To the voice of human authority commanding uniformity, has succeeded the process of legislation enacting penalties for the breach of it; and this has been followed by many a sanguinary deed of the secular arm, and a deluge of animosity and hatred scarcely less to be deplored. And what has been the result even of these measures of coercion? Their success as to difference of worship actually maintained never was complete, inasmuch as we learn from ecclesiastical history that, amidst the most triumphant tyranny of the Papacy, the valleys of Switzerland contained at all periods a considerable number of Christians whose mode of worship was not reduced to the dominant standard. During the whole of this period, likewise, diversities were continually breaking out anew in various parts of Christendom, so that every country and every generation required the same horrible discipline of fire and sword. At length even this became insufficient, and, amidst convulsions which made the whole civilized world heave to its centre, the yoke of religious intolerance was finally thrown off by several of the nations of Europe. Kings and statesmen have at last acknowledged the futility of all attempts to induce religious uniformity, and Dissenters are now tolerated, even in Turkey. It is only the priesthood and their partisans who yet clamour against them, and continue to engage in an absurd and fruitless, but now, happily, not a bloody, crusade against the irrepressible exercise of human opinion.

To imagine that a scheme requiring such means for its success, and so fruitless notwithstanding the employment of them, can have been pursued with the sanction of the Author of our nature, is altogether impossible. He that made man to think, can never have intended to suppress the exercise of thought; he that inspired man with an impulse to do what he thought right, can never have intended that his convictions should be stifled in the fires of martyrdom; he that on religious matters appeals to men only by reason and consideration, never could have intended that these methods

should be superseded by the dungeon and the sword; he that in all things accomplishes his pleasure, never would have embarked in a design in which the very nature of the creature he has made ensures discomfiture and defeat. Even with respect to the formation of moral character, which is in all points of view more important than uniformity of worship, the Maker of man uses no coercion, but methods of persuasion exclusively; and, since he suffers men, if they will, to be irreligious and profane, it is incredible that he should not suffer them, if they choose, to vary their forms of religious worship.

Since papal tyranny has been overthrown, no idea of a general uniformity can, indeed, be said to have been entertained. It has been a conceded point that nations may choose for themselves, and settle their own modes of worship, or, at least, that kings may do so for them. This the great men of the earth found it convenient, if not necessary, to allow to each other; and subsequently the war of bigotry has been directed against the individuals, or the smaller communities, of which nations consist. But what absurdity is this! Why should not the different parts of a nation have liberty of choice as well as the whole, or as well as those individuals, whoever they may be, who actually choose for the whole? And how far more practicable, or less incongruous with human nature, is the attempt to coerce one nation into uniformity, than the already baffled attempt of coercing several? Every single kingdom, as to diversities of thought, presents an epitome of the world, and will as effectually resist control. Of this our own country has been an eminent example, and it exhibits as decisive evidences of the futility of Protestant, as of Papal, tyranny.

If it should be said that the present advocates of uniformity use no methods of coercion, but appeal to a sense of duty alone to prevent separation from the Establishment, to a certain extent we admit the fact; although we must say that few thanks are due to them on this score. Until very lately, the accusation of schism has had some substantial associations of the nature of civil penalties; and, if at length it is otherwise, it is not owing to the tender mercies, or the liberal views, of High Churchmen. The obliteration from our statute-books of penal laws for religious differences has been a very long and tedious process, and one by one as they have

been modified or withdrawn, it has always been amidst the wailings of the priesthood for the falling bulwarks of "their church." It is only to a certain extent, however, that we can admit it as a fact that High-church advocates are even now using only fair means to induce religious uniformity. There is an odium still attached to the name and character of a schismatic. The charge of schism is one which, instead of appealing to reason, inflames animosity. Its nature and use are the same as those of the tortures of the Inquisition and the fires of queen Mary, though it is a little milder in its operation, and somewhat more easily contemned. But it is a weapon which should fall from the hand of every Churchman who disowns the spirit of persecution; and not until the accusation of schism shall cease to be hurled against separatists from her communion, can the Church of England be said to have entirely parted company with the faggot and the fire.

But if the fact be so, that Churchmen have now no recourse to means of coercion, having, indeed, none at their command, then how much more absurd does it become to lay so much stress upon the external unity of the church! If this was not attained by the most deep laid and consummate system of mental tyranny the world ever saw, how can it be accomplished when the nations are free? If the human mind rent asunder the iron chain of Popish superstition, how shall it be bound by the feeble ties of Protestant bigotry? A priest who had racks and gibbets to enforce the design might be dreaded, though he could not be successful; but those who have nothing to work with but hard names and bitter words may truly be laughed to scorn. With a full sufficiency of accusation and hatred, schism, as it is called, has grown and increased in England; and the manifest uselessness of attacking it might well reconcile even the highest Churchmen to let it alone.

To pursue our proof that external unity, or uniformity, is not that in which the unity of the church of Christ consists, we observe that such unity is never enjoined, or represented as a duty, in Sacred Writ. Great stress is laid, indeed, upon Christians being one, and upon their preserving the unity of the church; but the unity referred to is nowhere described as external, but everywhere as internal. Let the words of our Lord's last prayer, for example, be examined:—"That

they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." A reference to external union cannot here be supposed. Christ and his Father are one in character, in feeling, and design; and so he prays that his disciples may be one. Or let us take some of those passages to which we suppose the writer whose statements we have animadverted upon refers, as "earnestly enjoining" the preservation of "external communion." In one the apostle says, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* This clearly does not mean an external unity. It is the "unity of the Spirit," a oneness of feeling and affection, "the bond" of which was "peace," or a benevolent and gentle deportment; as appears decisively, not only from the words themselves, but from the verses which introduce them: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in [or by] the bond of peace." If it had been unity of communion he intended to enjoin, the apostle would surely have recommended it, like our author, to be secured by "regular attendance." We have elsewhere an exhortation to the saints to "be like-minded, having the same [or mutual] love, being of one accord, of one mind,"† and many more of the same kind.

In one place (1 Cor. i. 10) a passage occurs, which, as translated, gives more *apparent* sanction to the idea of an obligatory union of opinion than any other in the Bible. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment." All critics, however, acknowledge that the words properly denote a union, or consent, of feeling, or a union of purpose and object. And that this was in the eye of the apostle is evident from what immediately follows: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are *contentions* [not differences of opinion] among you;" and he proceeds to rebuke their manifestations of party spirit. The phrase "being of one mind" is perpetually used in Scripture

* Eph. iv. 3. † Phil. ii. 2.

for a consent of purpose and pursuit; and in Phil. iii. 15, 16, the apostle employs the following decisive language:—"Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

We are quite at a loss to discern in these and similar passages any injunction of *uniformity*, though there is an earnest enforcement of *unity*. Conducting ourselves by similar principles, pursuing similar ends, kindly co-operating with Christian brethren, and exercising a fervent and long-suffering love, are different things, we conceive, from attending in the same assembly, using the same book of prayer, and employing the same postures of worship; they are duties, too, which our accusers have shown themselves often much less inclined to fulfil.

If any passage of Scripture can be adduced enjoining more than unity of spirit and of purpose, let it be quoted, and we will obey it. We are prepared to maintain, on the contrary, that, as uniformity of worship is not enjoined, so diversity of worship is permitted. Even as to unity of purpose and operation, we are exhorted to "walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing," *only* "so far as we have already attained" in our views of divine truth, and the methods whereby God may be glorified; and, if this limitation is made with respect to those important duties, how much more in reference to the minor matters of the place and the manner of our worship? If an agreement of opinion is to be the guide and limit of our concurrence in the one case, why not in the other?

In all cases, indeed, and as a general principle of duty, it is indispensable that our conduct should be directed by our judgment. Our understanding is intended for this purpose, and God himself always calls it into action. He utters no precept without exhibiting the grounds of its obligation, and expects no obedience further than they are understood and appreciated. The accordance of our conduct with the results of our considerate judgment, is that which in all cases he requires and approves. Hence he has prohibited us from "following a multitude," or from a blind following of the example of others. We are to judge for ourselves what is

right, and, at the risk of his disapprobation for having improperly judged, to carry our judgment out into action. The supposed obligation of religious uniformity is totally at variance with this principle. It requires that the exercise of private judgment should be surrendered, and that we should do what others do; that we should shut the eyes which God has given us, and walk blindfold in the crowd—a course as contrary to his direction, as incompatible with our own welfare.

But it is not only that there is imposed upon us an obligation to exercise our judgment in all matters. The surrender of our private judgment in this particular case is expressly prohibited: "Let no man, therefore, judge you," says the apostle, "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days."* Let no man think for you on these subjects, and, from whomsoever you may differ, heed no man's condemnation: you have both a right to exercise, and a duty to perform; and let no man deter you from either. Here, therefore, is an absolute and direct prohibition of religious uniformity at the summons of others, and any further than as it may on our own part be voluntarily rendered, either in agreement with our own convictions, or as a concession to the feelings of our fellow-Christians.

If at this point a High-church advocate should say, with an air of candour and kindness somewhat unusual, "Grant it to us, then, as a matter of Christian courtesy," we shall not be found unwilling to do on this ground what we never could do on that of authoritative requirement; only it is important to observe, that *what* we shall do on this ground it is left to ourselves to decide, without our decision, be it what it may, exposing us to the charge of violating the unity of the church of Christ, or furnishing any reasonable pretext for the hostility of our brethren.

We may now, perhaps, close this part of our argument, which has been directed to prove that the unity of the church of Christ does not consist in its external fellowship. If we are asked, Wherein, then, does the unity of it consist? we answer in the similar character, privileges, pursuits, and prospects, of all those who belong to it. In these respects

* Col. ii. 16.

the catholic, or universal, church, *is* emphatically ONE. There is no member of it who has not the same character and privilege as all the rest; and among those who do not belong to it not one resembles them. This is a union of the most noble and exalted kind, resembling even the ineffable union between the eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ; to preserve it unimpaired is no mean duty, and to violate it an unquestionable sin.

What, then, is schism? it may be asked. There is such a thing; and, if it be not what it has been represented to be, what is it? The question is a fair one, and we are very willing to take as the answer to it the definition which has already been given. Schism *is* the violation of the unity of the church of Christ. If that unity consisted in external communion, as High Churchmen allege, it would be violated by separation from the Church of England, or from any other church; Dissent would be schism. But, if the unity of the church of Christ does not consist in its external communion, then separation from its external communion cannot violate that unity. Dissent, therefore, is not schism.

Schism is a violation of the unity of the church of Christ. Now the unity of the church of Christ consists in similarity of character, feeling, and pursuit, among its members, all of them adapted to generate love, sympathy, and co-operation. Hence, therefore, it is the want of co-operation, sympathy, and love, which violates the unity of the church of Christ, and which constitutes schism. Schism exists when the hearts of Christians are divided, and their affections estranged from each other; when there is hatred, strife, or envy; when there is rivalry, jealousy, or opposition; when there is self-will, domination, or anger.

We have already hinted that the word *schism* is of Greek origin, and a glance at its derivation may serve to illustrate both its real import and the liberty which has been taken with it by ecclesiastical writers. *σχίσμα* is a noun formed from the verb *σχίζω*, which signifies *to cut, to rend, to divide*; and, metaphorically, *to produce discord*. Hence, accordingly, the primary meaning of *σχίσμα*, is *a cut or rent*; and, metaphorically, it means *dissension or discord*. In its primary sense it is used in Matt. ix. 16: "No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and *the rent* [*σχίσμα*,

schism] is made worse." It is more frequently employed, however, in its analogical sense, and with great uniformity of meaning. Thus in John vii. 43, "So there was a *division* [a schism, a discordant feeling] among the people because of him." In the ninth chapter of the same evangelist we are told that there was a *schism*, or dissension, among the Pharisees on account of the healing of the man born blind. In the passage already quoted from 1 Cor. i. 10, the apostle rebukes the party spirit of the Corinthians as a state of *schism*, or discord. In chap. xi. 18, he calls their discordant method of eating the Lord's supper a *schism*; "for in eating every one taketh before others his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken." In his comparison of the body and the members, in the twelfth chapter of the same epistle, he introduces the same idea: "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no *schism* in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (ver. 24-26). The passage evidently refers to the sympathy, the community of feeling, which pervades the natural body, and which is analogous to the mutual love which, as he infers from the comparison, should pervade the mystical body of Christ.

From the use of the word *schism* as it occurs in the Scriptures, the reader can thus readily judge of its meaning for himself; and he can scarcely hesitate in coming to the conclusion that it signifies *discord* or *dissension*, or the want of any measure of that community of feeling for which a proper foundation in any case may be laid.

It may now be curious to inquire, by what process the word *schism*, as turned into English, has been made to signify *separation from the established church*—for this is the meaning attached to it in ecclesiastical controversy. It is certain that it has no such meaning, either in the Scriptures, or in any other writings but those of comparatively modern religious monopolists. It is, therefore, a meaning entirely new and peculiar, introduced for the purpose of the dispute between Established Churches and Dissenters, and appropriate to it alone. We do not deny that the original term *σχίσμα*, *arent*, supplies an analogy by which the use of it in such a

sense might be excused; but then it ought to have been introduced as a new term, and to have been conjoined with an entire set of new and appropriate associations. The aim of ecclesiastical writers, on the contrary, has been to attach to schism, in this new and unscriptural sense of it, all, not to say more than all, the criminality which pertains to the scriptural idea; and a delusion of no inconsiderable magnitude, and of most pernicious influence, has thus been extensively practised upon mankind.

We do not say, indeed, that any High Churchman has acted in this respect dishonestly. But we do not hesitate to affirm that this erroneous view of schism has been taken, in all cases, *either* from fraud or from ignorance; and it is immaterial to us which alternative is chosen. If ecclesiastical writers plead ignorance, we can only say, first, that it was their duty to have informed themselves better, especially in a matter so simple and obvious, before they undertook to lead public opinion, and to inflame the passions of men with the most vehement and unquenchable animosity which has ever taken possession of the human mind; and, secondly, that it is their duty now to correct the error, without evasion and without delay. If it be the fact that the bitterness of past ages, the venom of which too evidently lingers in the present, has been generated only by an honest mistake, nothing can be more imperative on the present race of Churchmen, and one would suppose that nothing could be more gratifying, than to repair the unintentional wrong, by informing the world, with all the weight of their authority (an authority, by the way, which has often been used for much worse purposes), that the mistake is now discovered—that separation from established churches is not schism; that it is not schism in the scriptural sense of it, at least; that it never did, and does not now, deserve the severity with which it has been treated, or even the odium which has been cast upon it; and that the real charge of schism lies upon those only who have indulged a spirit of dissension and of strife. Until this is done, even if it were admitted that the mistake was committed honestly in the first instance, it must be deemed to be clung to for dishonest purposes in the second. Those who perpetuate an acknowledged delusion because they find it serviceable to their cause, are guilty of as base and wicked a fraud as though they had invented it.

If, on the other hand, there have been any who could not with a safe conscience put in the plea of ignorance, who knew that, while they were identifying the schism of the New Testament with separation from established churches, they were misrepresenting their Maker and misleading their brethren, they justly merit the contempt and indignation of mankind. To have pursued the scheme of religious uniformity, with all its measures of coercion and of torture, its fetters for the mind, its racks and fires for the body, its devastation of social peace, its deluges of human blood,—to have done this, or any part of this, *by mistake*, is no enviable matter; but to have done it *on purpose*, and for such a purpose to have wrested the Scriptures, and imposed a known fraud on the understandings of men in order that their most diabolical passions might be inflamed by a torch itself lighted from hell, and to have used for a sanction to this fraud the name of the merciful Saviour and the character of a minister of Christ—this is pre-eminent among the worst combinations of wickedness and mischief to be found, in such melancholy abundance, in this fallen world.

But enough of the miserable legerdemain, whether ignorant or fraudulent, by which a term of obvious and simple import has been so mischievously perverted. Let us now advert for a moment to the inferences which may clearly be drawn from the meaning which we have shown the term *schism* to convey.

If the essential nature of schism be *ill-feeling*, want of appropriate love in any of its forms, then it is manifest that schism is not identical with the separation from the external communion of any church, whether established or otherwise. It is true, indeed, that such separations have often been accompanied with heart-burnings and contention, and in these cases there has undoubtedly been schism; but it is the strife, and not the separation, in which the schism consists. Let separation be conducted in a spirit of peace and mutual good will, and then there is no schism. If we acknowledge that this is difficult, we must maintain also that it is not impossible; nay, that it has been done sometimes, and may be done always. Let it but be done, and “the unity of the Spirit” be preserved by “the bond of peace,” and then the entire unity of the church of Christ is preserved (for in this its entire unity consists), although its external communion

should be divided into ten thousand parts, and although all the established churches in the world should be dissolved and forgotten.

For ourselves, therefore, we say, that as far as we have at any time cherished a spirit of bigotry towards Christians, whether in our immediate fellowship or not, of jealousy respecting their operations or their success, of alienation from their persons, of unwillingness to co-operate in their useful endeavours, or have failed in any respect of the due and full exercise of Christian love, so far we have been guilty of schism, and ought to be both humbled and transformed. Let our brethren rebuke us for these faults, and we will bless them. But as Dissenters, the accusation of schism cannot be brought against us. The fact of our separation from the Church of England is not schism; and every attempt to represent it as such is a piece either of gross ignorance or of grosser fraud.

And while we thus answer for ourselves, we say to all other persons upon whose minds the question of separation from the Established Church may have made any impression, Be not afraid to entertain it. At all events, be not deterred by the cry of schism. It is nothing but an ecclesiastical bugbear. With many others of its kin, in ages past it stalked through our land in riotous and hateful revelry; but it has now well-nigh retired to the gloomy cloisters from whence it issued, and in which it will soon expire. The Episcopal clergy, perhaps, tell you that schism is an horrible thing, and that Dissent is schism. But why, if Dissent were schism, is that more horrible than a thousand other sins which are treated so much more leniently? Is it not a suspicious circumstance that your rector should do little or nothing to guard you against any other crimes, and should be so dreadfully agitated with compassion for you when you approach within any measurable distance of the single sin of schism? But you have now seen that Dissent is not schism. Schism is constituted by nothing but bad temper towards your fellow-Christians. See that you love all who love Jesus Christ, and you may separate from the Church of England without being guilty of schism; nay, if you think it right, you ought to separate from it—it is not your right only, but your duty. Dismiss, therefore, all groundless and irrational fears. Act from conviction, with a just independence. We wish for no

Dissenters but upon conviction ; and there is no reason why persons whose convictions lead them to be Dissenters should hesitate to become so.

Here, perhaps, we may be asked, whether, after all, there is not a desirableness in maintaining an external unity, as well as an internal, in the church of Christ ; and whether the circumstance of the church, in its external fellowship, being broken up into so many fractions, generally hostile to each other, is not in fact highly disadvantageous to Christianity ? To this question we are quite prepared to answer, without any qualification, that, in our opinion, religious uniformity is not at all to be desired. Even if it were universal and voluntary, it could do no good, because, forms and ceremonies being of little or no moment in religion, an agreement in them could be of little or no value as an exhibition of it ; while, if it were compulsory, the aspect of unrighteous authority, of mental coercion, of injured liberty, of insulted common sense, and of multiform real differences under the veil of uniformity, could not fail to disgust every sensible observer. Such has, in fact, been the character and the influence of the unity of which the Romish church has so loudly boasted. Her uniformity exists conspicuously in Spain ; but what honour does Christianity derive from it ? Does not all the world know that it is the mere whitewash of a sepulchre which is full of the most loathsome rottenness ; and that, under the cloak of Catholicism, vices of all kinds, and infidelity of every shade, revel at their ease ? Has not Romanism, by its very principle of exalting and maintaining an external unity in the church of Christ, made more infidels than any other cause that ever operated ?

Or, if this is deemed an extreme case, take some of the Reformed churches, or any church in which uniformity is required ; say, for example, the Church of England, as best known to ourselves. What man of observation reveres Christianity 'the more for the aspect of unity exhibited by the Church of England ? Every man of common understanding sees that unity to be one of ceremonies merely ; while among the members of the church he discerns all diversities of character, among her clergy all diversities of doctrine, and among her congregations all diversities of party. Notwithstanding her boasted uniformity, the Church of England is nothing better than a deplorable mass of

incongruity and discord; and so is every church under heaven in which uniformity is compelled.

As to the ill impressions respecting Christianity which are alleged to arise from the existence of different forms of worship, we strongly deny that this difference is the cause of them. The real reason why Christianity suffers in consequence of the aspect of the visible church, is that it has presented a scene, not of diversity merely, but of *strife*. What has made infidels think religion to be a farce? It is not that it has left men's opinions diverse, but that it has failed to cement their affections. Religion has never been expected by reasonable observers to reduce the understandings of men to a common dimension; but it has been supposed to present a common centre for their hearts. And here the disappointment has been felt. If, when the church had been surveyed from without, it had exhibited a multitude of men characterized, of course, by a multitude of diversities, but actuated by common principles, labouring for common ends, bound together by mutual esteem, and exercising an affectionate forbearance, this would have been her glory, and would have perpetuated the honourable tribute paid to her in the age of her purity—"See how these Christians love one another!" But instead of unity was substituted uniformity, when endeavours were made, not to remove differences, but to suppress the utterance of them; so that the church seemed to be under the dominion of some iron-handed despot, crushing alike the liberty of all, and turning every man into an enemy to that of his neighbour. Nor has the love of domination been confined to the Papacy. Too many persons have retained the spirit of the usurpation, and endeavoured to grasp the sceptre which a mightier tyrant found wrested from his hands. Every fragment of the Papacy has aimed at establishing a dominion in the spirit of the parent monster, availing itself for this purpose of whatever secular power could be induced to court or accept its alliance. Hence came the fashion of a church expecting to be the church of a country, as the Church of *England*, for example; and of directing against Dissenters in that country the very same hostility formerly used against itself, when viewed as dissenting from a church which claimed to comprehend all kingdoms. Fragments of these established churches, which are but one remove further from Popery, have inherited too

much of the same temper, and hence, ever since the Reformation, the visible church of Christ has presented a scene of discord and strife by which Christianity has been deeply dishonoured. Let our unhallowed dissensions cease, and the reproach will be wiped away. It is not uniformity that is wanted for this purpose, but unity. Let it be seen that, however we may differ in judgment, we are united in heart; that Christians of different denominations and modes of worship love each other as though they were brethren; that we cover each other's faults, that we help each other's labours, that we rejoice in each other's success. Let there be henceforth no hostility, no monopoly, no rivalry, no airs of superiority, no spirit of estrangement, no look of scorn. Let there be no partiality of charity, no bribes to the parish church, no threats of aggravated poverty for attending the conventicle. These are the schismatical proceedings and tempers, the abandonment and extinction of which will do more to convince the world of the truth and power of religion than all the thunders of the Vatican, and the less powerful, but still not uninfluential, scowls of a waning Protestant hierarchy.

From the obvious meaning of the word *schism* we have drawn one inference—namely, that there is no schism in Dissent. We may now draw another, which is, that there is a great deal of schism in the Church. In truth, by far the greater part of the schism charged upon Dissenters has been committed by Church-people themselves. Though we do not mean to say that the strife which has been so commonly connected with separation from the Establishment has been wholly on the part of the Church, unquestionably the greater part of it has been so, and from the nature of the case it must have been so. If Dissenters had done anything to produce contention, it would naturally have been by endeavouring to stay in the Church, and to introduce into it their own peculiarities. We do not know that they can, to any extent, be charged with such endeavours. They have generally, if not uniformly, sought to retire, as much without molesting others as without being molested themselves; and it is this quiet and peaceful act which has aroused the anger of High Churchmen, to various degrees at various periods, but seldom with any great moderation. Here then commences the schism, the dissension, the rent of affection and

of real unity. But upon whose part is it? Plainly, not on that of the Dissenters, who would withdraw in the spirit of peace; but on that of the Churchmen, who are determined to make this peaceable withdrawal the occasion of a merciless war. It seems, therefore, that, while fiery ecclesiastics have been fulminating against Dissenters the accusation of schism, it is they and their partisans who have been chiefly guilty of the crime. It is they who have most grievously violated the unity of the church of Christ, by their bigoted hostility towards differing brethren; and if, as they have loudly declared, schism be so enormous a crime, they have made a rod for their own back, and may be commended *ad libitum* to the ancient monastic discipline of scourging themselves therewith.

But this is not the only respect in which the Church of England is eminently chargeable with schism. Besides what has been exercised towards the Dissenters, much of it exists within her own body. Her uniformity is far from constituting unity. Look at her actual members, and you see characters of all phases and the most extreme contrariety, together with a corresponding contrariety of attachment and pursuit; so that they have absolutely nothing in common but the cloak of uniformity which the State has thought proper, at the solicitation of the hierarchy, to throw over their differences, that they may be called ONE. There is no unity of religious sentiment. Whatever diversity or heresy may be found elsewhere may be found also in the Church of England; the only difference being, that elsewhere it puts on an honest coat, and in the Church of England a hypocritical one. There is no unity of affection. The several parties, orthodox or evangelical, and their several sections, in some instances so bitterly hate and oppose each other that, if it were possible, they would put one another out of the church as its worst enemies; and, in others, where temper is less violent, they are as widely separated from each other by a voluntary and cherished estrangement, as they could possibly be by a division of external communion. The oneness of external communion for which ecclesiastical writers contend, requires that every member of the Church of England should regularly attend *his parish church*, or some appropriate chapel of ease in the same parish. To go to another place of worship, although belonging to the Church of England, is

as schismatical as to go to a dissenting meeting-house;* it involves the exercise of the same right of private preference and independent action, the use of which has exposed the Dissenters to so much obloquy. Such persons, no less than ourselves, are guilty of putting away from their lips the nourishment (or poison, as the case may be) which their doting mother church has prepared *for them*, and of the wicked heresy of choosing, with itching ears, instructors for themselves. Yet what multitudes do this! The fact is that, notwithstanding its cloak of uniformity, the Church of England is a body rent by schisms in every direction. It may be affirmed to have more discord and strife within its bosom than any other church under heaven, and to be, therefore, the most schismatical church in existence. Yet it is from her lips that the accusation of schism has been hurled against others with so much copiousness and vehemence! Let her begin to cleanse herself from her own sins, and let her tongue be silent in this respect until she has reduced her own children to unity and love. Let her direct her energies to quench the flame of discord which has long been burning, with no mitigated rage, against the evangelical portion of her own clergy, and thus exterminate a schism which, more than any other existing in this age, dishonours Christianity, and causes infidels to triumph. Such efforts as these would show that Churchmen are sincere in the abhorrence they have professed to feel for the sin of schism; but, if the divisions in their own house be unheeded, we shall be justified in coming to the conclusion that they have little real concern for the unity of the church of Christ; that they care, in truth, only for their monopoly of ecclesiastical emoluments and power; and that the cry of schism is nothing more than the watchword of party malignity, the convenient war-whoop of men determined to be hostile so long as candour or justice shall be expensive or hazardous virtues.

We are not willing to close these remarks without acknowledging, as we do with unfeigned pleasure, that, both among the clergy and the laity of the Church of England, there are honourable instances of Christian liberality. One of the

* "In deserting your regular minister," "the clergyman of the parish in which you reside," "you would" "be guilty of the sin of schism."—Perens's Village Sermons, vol. i.

bishops acknowledges that "there is no sin in separation from an established church," and that to maintain the contrary "is equally monstrous and uncharitable."* If many are of the same opinion, we not only rejoice for the sake of Christianity, but we render just honour to themselves. No Churchmen of this stamp, of course, will appropriate our remarks. But, making every exception, cause enough remains for all that we have written.

* Bishop of Peterborough, — Comparative view of the Churches of England and Rome.

ON THE CONGREGATIONAL SYSTEM.*

RELIGION itself is necessarily personal. There can be no such thing as religion of any other kind; and, though persons frequently speak of family religion, social religion, and national religion, these phrases properly denote nothing more than personal religion as exercised in various ways. Whoever does not mean this by them suffers himself to entertain erroneous ideas, or to use words without any ideas at all. Religion consists essentially in the state of the heart; which, of course, expresses itself appropriately in all the circumstances in which a man may be placed.

Superadded to the existence of religion itself, however, is that of RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, or bodies of men associated under religious denominations, and for religious ends. Upon the slightest observation it is manifest that these communities, as they now exist, are not all formed on the same plan, either in detail or principle; but, without noticing minutely the current varieties, it is our business at present to engage the attention of the reader to one particular class of them, those which are established and conducted on what is called the CONGREGATIONAL SYSTEM. Upon this system are formed a large proportion of the Protestant dissenting communities, comprehending especially the Independents and Baptists, in the British Empire; together with a still larger proportion of the religious societies in the United States of America, as well as many in other parts of the world. Although the body thus constituted is not rendered attractive or imposing by associations of regal splendour or secular authority, it is nevertheless sufficiently interesting in point of actual magnitude, of real worth, and of effective capability, to justify an attentive consideration of the principles on which it is established.

In treating of the subject which thus lies before us, we

* Library of Ecclesiastical Knowledge.

propose, in the first place, to exhibit a brief view of the Congregational System itself, and then to notice its general character. We shall next present to the reader what we conceive to be the advantages of the system, and advert to the evils which have been alleged to arise from it; after which we shall endeavour to point out the causes which have diminished its results, and the manner in which it should be carried into effect.

I. Our attention is directed, first, to the *elements* of the Congregational System.

1. Religious communities of this kind are formed *under the influence of personal and voluntary considerations*. No man belongs to them because he was born within a certain geographical boundary, or because his parents were so before him, or because a religious rite of any kind has without his consent been performed upon him; but, if he is a member of any such society, it is of his own choice, and because he feels it his pleasure, or perhaps his duty, to be so. The society itself is a *congregation*; a company of persons not taken in the mass as they may happen to lie, but gathered together out of the mass by personal and voluntary considerations.

2. Religious communities of the Congregational order are not merely congregations; they are congregations of persons *professing to be of a peculiar, that is, of a religious, character*. In a word, they are, according to the definition given of a church of Christ by the Church of England, congregations of "faithful men;" of men who, by their voluntary profession, confirmed by the evidence of a consistent life, appear to believe and obey the Gospel. This is an essential point in the Congregational System, apart from which it would lose all its value, and even its entire character.

3. It belongs to Congregational bodies *to regulate all their affairs within themselves*. No one of them is so dependent upon another, or upon any external power, as to allow a claim of authoritative interposition in the management of its concerns. In this respect each society stands alone, and exercises as sovereign and supreme a rule over itself as though no other society or power were in existence. Of course, it will be understood that we refer to human power alone; the authority of God, the eternal Lawgiver, being acknowledged with the utmost solemnity, and submitted to with perfect readiness, throughout the whole of their affairs.

4. In such communities, finally, *all concerns are ultimately referred to the body at large, and conducted under their general superintendence.* If they have officers, those officers are chosen by themselves, every member having not only a voice, but an equal voice, in the election, and the persons chosen being responsible to the body for the faithful discharge of their office. If the management of any part of their affairs is intrusted to one or more of the community, it is by the good pleasure of the rest, and subject to their entire control. Upon every question, in short, the society maintains its right both to be consulted and to decide, though there are numerous cases in which, as matter of expediency, this right is not exercised. The mode of deciding questions submitted to a Congregational religious society is to ascertain, in the easiest and most satisfactory method, the wish of the whole or the major part of them.

We have already intimated that religious communities formed on the Congregational System, while they insist upon exemption from the interference of human authority, most readily and solemnly acknowledge that which is divine. The will of God as relating to the objects, the constitution, and the government of religious societies, they conceive to be revealed in the sacred Scriptures with sufficient fulness and clearness for their guidance; and this it is their essential aim to ascertain, and to fulfil. They cannot be considered, therefore, as lawless bodies, doing as they please; but rather as composed of persons whose thoughts have been brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and whose pleasure it has become unitedly to perform his commands. They have derived from his Word their belief that religious societies should be constituted as we have described those of the Congregational System to be; and that they should comprehend also the two offices of pastor, or bishop, and deacons—the former being intrusted with spiritual, the latter with temporal, affairs. If there are societies to which the description above given may not with perfect accuracy apply, they may be considered as deviations from the general rule.

II. We notice, secondly, the *general character* of the method of religious association which is before us.

1. It is obvious to remark, that *it is extremely innocent and unexceptionable.* It wears no aspect of treason or sedition, or of hostility to any creature. Those who adopt

it do nothing more than exercise the admitted right of judging for themselves respecting the manner in which it may be most accordant with God's will that they should promote his glory and the good of men; points upon which none but God himself can give them just and satisfactory information. Nothing can well be less adapted to provoke hatred, or to subject men to reproach, even if it be an error.

2. But the advocates of the Congregational System cannot content themselves with taking this ground. They conceive it to be *not only innocent, but right*. They hold it to be in accordance with the primitive and apostolic model, and, therefore, with the mind of Christ; a topic, however, on which there is no occasion to dwell here, as it has been already treated in a former number of this work. But it may be additionally remarked, that this kind of association for religious purposes naturally grows out of the very existence of religion itself, and accords strictly with the nature and tendency of all religious feelings. It is a union of persons who have individually felt alike on the most important subjects, for the promotion of ends which are deeply interesting to them all, and in joint obedience to a rule to which they have previously submitted themselves. Out of such feelings such an association naturally grows. It requires no force to bring such persons together, but they approximate, like particles attracted by a common power, of their own accord; the force would be required to keep them asunder. And when they are thus united, the feelings which brought them together find scope to operate, both with benefit and delight; while it needs nothing more than the vigorous and continued operation of them to carry that benefit and delight to the highest pitch, and to realize all the objects for which the association was formed. Let this kind of union be contrasted with one that is compulsory—which herds men together by virtue of mere local proximity, irrespective of similar character or common interests, and which, when they are brought together, restrains, thwarts, and vexes them, by an authority which uses power without conviction—and it will be seen in a moment, that the superior accordance of the former with the social principles of our nature stamps it as the institution of the Author of our being. Congregational union, indeed, is the only kind of religious association which could have existed for ages after Christianity was in

the world; since human authority and worldly power were for three hundred years bitterly hostile to it, and armed for its extermination.

3. We must go yet further, and affirm not merely that the Congregational System of religious association is right, but that *it is obligatory*. It is the *only* right method of proceeding in this respect. We request attention more particularly to this point, because it has been frequently and extensively held that the constitution of ecclesiastical communities is immaterial; that if one is right, so also is another; that any form, in short, may be adopted at our pleasure, provided we therein pursue the glory of God, and the good of men. That matters of church constitution and government are not of so much importance as repentance and the fear of God, we freely allow; and we could go the whole length of the statements we have referred to, if no discovery of God's will had been given to us. We hold it to be certain, however, that the contrary is the case; and if it be so, on what principle of love, or submission, or reverence to the Most High, are these expressions of his will to be set aside, and a point which he has decided to be thrown open to the varying judgment of men? Could we deem this to be justifiable, we should feel much more readiness than we now do to yield to the opinions of our brethren, and should lose much of the courage we have hitherto felt in maintaining peculiarities exposing us to no slight inconveniences, which, indeed, we are content to bear for fidelity to God, but which we should very reluctantly incur for the sake of our own whims. Believing that the great Author of religion has imperatively made known the method in which he would have religious communities formed and conducted, we may not, we dare not, deviate from our views of the divine and the inspired model.

We are confirmed in this conviction by the fact, which observation fully establishes, that a departure from this model invariably leads to immediate wrong. Let the principle of the Congregational System be violated, either by composing religious societies of irreligious persons, or by establishing over them or within them any human authority, and we affirm that there immediately exists something essentially wrong and anti-scriptural. Such methods are not merely unauthorized by the Word of God, but are positively con-

trary to it; they are not, therefore, among things which may be chosen if thought good, but among things prohibited, and under all circumstances to be let alone.

We have deemed it important in the first instance to exhibit the Congregational System of religious association in its rectitude and its obligation, because, if these points could not have been established, it would have been of little use to discuss its alleged advantages or disadvantages. Although we have no fear of entering upon this ground, and shall, indeed, almost immediately proceed to it, yet we must maintain that questions of church constitution and government are not to be disposed of on the ground of expediency alone. Under the plea of expediency were introduced all the numeries of Popery; nor is there any effectual method of ridding the church of these and kindred evils, but by insisting upon an appeal to the law and the testimony. The stress of the argument lies here: Is the Congregational System scriptural, and therefore obligatory? If it be not, we offer not a word in its defence upon any ground of supposed advantage. If it be, we bring forward nothing more in its support. It stands firm, and needs no auxiliary appendages. Whatever may be said of its beneficial tendency will add nothing to its rectitude; neither will the most aggravated view of contingent evils diminish anything from its obligation.

III. Nevertheless, as we have already said, we are by no means unwilling to enter upon the consideration of its apparent *advantages*, or disadvantages; a line of inquiry having great importance as adapted to illustrate the wisdom and design of God in its institution, together with the scope which exists for our own activity, and the direction in which our efforts should be made. To these topics, therefore, we now, in the third place, address ourselves.

Before we proceed to the details, we may make one general observation—namely, that a fair and strong presumption exists in favour of the Congregational System, inasmuch as whatever is right must be beneficial. We could not for a moment allow such an imputation upon the wisdom of our Maker, as to suppose that he had so constituted the universal system that what is right should be injurious; or that he has ordained institutions ill-adapted to their ends. The very fact of a divine appointment authorizes the conclusion, that the method so appointed is not only adapted to its design, but

better adapted to it than any other, even if appearances should exist to the contrary. If, therefore, the Congregational System of religious association be of divine origin, we cannot hesitate to believe that it is both well and pre-eminently adapted to all the purposes for which it was designed.

The constitution of every community which is wisely framed will be characterized by two principal features—namely, an adaptation to the specific ends for which the community is formed, and a capacity to maintain and increase its own vigour and prosperity. If association in any case is entered into without some specific ends, it is but a waste of energy; and, if specific ends are contemplated, the wisdom of the form which the association takes must be proportioned to its conduciveness to their attainment. But, however fitted to attain any objects, the creation of a society is still marked by lamentable folly, if it be not adapted to sustain its own energies, and advance its own welfare, to such a period, and to such an extent, as the attainment of its objects may require. If within more contracted limits its springs of action lose their elasticity, or if it degenerates into a mass of slumbering forms, or if it developes elements of discord and destruction, these are demonstrations of an afflictive want of adaptation to its end. Let us pursue the two avenues of inquiry which are thus opened to us.

1. What then, we ask, are the *ends* to be answered by religious association? As the principal and most important we assign the three which follow.

(1). *Christian communion.* By which, however, we do not mean merely, or pre-eminently, their joint reception of the Lord's supper, a service in which, under circumstances easily supposable, there might be no Christian communion at all; but we refer to the interchange of thought and feeling elicited and maintained by religious intercourse, and the various exercises of social piety. That such communion of heart affords great benefit and delight needs no proof; or let any one who imagines it ought to be proved, think only how desolate the condition of a Christian would be who should be altogether solitary in a crowded world, and never have an opportunity of communication with a person of congenial mind. The production and maintenance of such fellowship, with its connected benefits, we place among the chief ends of instituted religious association.

(2). *Conspicuousness of character.* It is that those who are Christ's disciples may the more widely be known to be so. Were they to continue insulated, indeed, the peculiarity of their character would indicate itself to those who might nearly observe them; but, by being brought together into companies more or less numerous, they become more readily cognizable, and acquire a more visible magnitude in the eye of the world. Nothing can be more expressive of this design than the following words of our divine Lord: "No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel, or under a bed, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Ye are the light of the world; a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid."

(3). *The diffusion of the Gospel.* It was only by activity for this end, in fact, that Christians could become the light of the world, since they themselves are but a small body, and existing in a very few places; and for this very purpose, in truth, was "the faith committed to the saints." Hence the instituted ministry of the divine word, and the high command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Now the excellency of any institution, we have said, is to be tried by its adaptation to the ends for which it is designed: and such being the intended purposes of religious association, in order to ascertain the value of the Congregational System we have only to inquire into its fitness for promoting them.

First, then, in reference to *Christian communion*, we conceive it must be obvious that the Congregational System has an eminent adaptation to produce and cherish it. In order to an agreeable interchange of thought and feeling, there is above all things necessary a similarity and congeniality of character. Persons of dissimilar feelings and pursuits can have in fact no communion, since they have nothing in common; and, if they should be brought into forcible association, they could derive from each other no pleasure. That method is evidently most adapted to generate and enlarge Christian fellowship, therefore, which pays the closest attention to the character of the persons associated, and takes the greatest pains to prevent the intrusion of such as are not of congenial mind. Some modes of church union entirely overlook this consideration; as do all national churches, which reckon their members by geographical boundaries. But it is essential

to religious societies on the Congregational System to pay a scrupulous attention to this point. No person becomes a member of such a community but by his own desire; and, while there is very little among us to excite such a desire on any other than religious grounds, it is a matter of uniform and careful inquiry whether the applicant gives evidence of a renewed and gracious mind. Notwithstanding every precaution, indeed, unsuitable persons sometimes gain entrance, deceiving others, and perhaps also deceiving themselves; but the point on which the stress lies is that they are not willingly admitted, or received as known or suspected to be such. No societies, we believe, either do, or can, exercise so much jealousy in this respect as those which are Congregational, and in which, therefore, every member is entitled to use his own opportunity of observation, and to contribute his aid towards the propriety of the general decision. Such care being taken in the admission of members, it is obvious that the society consists of persons pre-eminently fitted for religious association. Whatever there is peculiar or powerful in religious experience they have all alike felt, not, indeed, with perfect identity in the detail, but with a sufficient similarity in great points to make the difference only instructive and advantageous. Their fears and their hopes, their sorrows and their joys, their aims and their labours, all are common to the whole body; so that every member can sympathize with the rest, and there can be no expression of feeling on one part without a correspondence on the other. In such a society truly Christian fellowship *may* exist; nay, it *must* exist. In what other society can it exist as well? In churches composed of persons indiscriminately taken, there may be, in many cases there are, individuals acquainted with Christian experience; but they are in the midst of far greater numbers who are totally strangers to it, and with whom, though members of the same church, they can upon this subject have no fellowship whatever. By force of common character and feelings they find out each other as individuals, and with each other they have fellowship, but not through any adaptation of the church constitution to produce it; *that* has merely brought together a mass of incongruous materials, from which they have, in fact, been obliged to separate themselves.

Secondly. As to *conspicuousness of character* it is surely

impossible to entertain a doubt. The way to make anything conspicuous is to separate it from other objects; or, if we would render conspicuous any number of objects at present scattered and insulated, it would surely be by gathering them all together with as little mixture as possible, and exhibiting them by themselves. This the Congregational System does with regard to religious professors. It leads to the formation of communities consisting exclusively, if possible, of persons who have felt and exhibited the power of religion; it separates them from the world in which they are otherwise dispersed; it unites them together so as to present a more considerable aspect to general observation; and it thus renders Christian character more conspicuous. But what takes place in religious societies formed upon any other system? In a national church, for example, where several millions of people living in a particular space are indiscriminately considered as members, and called Christians, while not one in a hundred, perhaps not one in a thousand, has any pretensions to religion at all; is anything done here to make Christian character conspicuous? On the contrary, everything conduces to hide it. People are called Christians, ninety-nine out of every hundred of whom are in fact people of the world; and in this multitude the hundredth individual, the Christian indeed, is almost entirely lost. If this be the church, then what is the world? There is no longer any difference between them, and the opportunity of establishing the distinction has been used for the purpose of obliterating it.

A similar observation may be applied to the discipline to which religious communities are subject. It must be acknowledged that unworthy characters may, and do, appear in every department of Christian profession, and it is of great importance that societies should be so formed as to be able to separate the offending member, and wipe away the dishonour. Yet churches which receive members without asking whether they have any religion or not, are not likely to exclude them because it is found that they have none; and we know, accordingly, that no such attempt is made, nor can it be made. Men of notoriously worldly, and even of immoral, character remain acknowledged and undisturbed members of national churches. But the case is widely different upon the Congregational System. With whatever imperfection

discipline may actually be administered (a point upon which we shall touch presently), the exercise of strict discipline is its principle, and its rule. As no person is admitted without profession and evidence of piety, so is the character of each made a matter of affectionate watchfulness and cultivation; and, in case of habitual inconsistency, any person may be declared to belong to the community no more. Every stain may thus be wiped away from the Christian name, and the light kept pure which is to enlighten a benighted world.

Thirdly. With reference to the *diffusion of the Gospel* the state of the case is not at all less clear. Among the means of extending the influence of divine truth are clearly to be ranked, not only the exertions of an official ministry, but also the exemplary character and zealous endeavours of Christians at large. The adaptation of any community to the advancement of religion, therefore, bears an obvious proportion to the character of the members of which it is composed. None but such as are really spiritual can be supposed to have any capacity of diffusing a spiritual influence. Hence, if a religious society be so constituted as to favour the admission of persons giving no evidence of gracious character, it is manifestly far less adapted to promote the extension of piety than one in which the possession of true godliness is more scrupulously required. Now we have shown it to be the tendency of the Congregational System to form, and to preserve, societies comprehending a larger proportion of real piety than any other; we are authorized to conclude, therefore, that they are better adapted than any other to the spread of religion. With the utmost stretch of charity, it never can be supposed that a national church, for example, will consist entirely, or even in any large proportion, of real Christians; but if a Congregational church be what it may be, and what it ought to be, every member of it will be a holy man. He will be one, therefore, whose entire character and influence is adapted to operate beneficially on all around him. He will be one whose heart burns for the glory of God, and melts with pity for men; who knows the way of salvation, and is adequate to teach it; who has in his hands a remedy for the sins and sorrows which surround him, and in his heart the impulse which will constrain him to apply it. Every such man is fitted to extend religion; he may with justice be regarded as a light in a dark place, or as

salt in a putrescent mass; and every community made of such men is more adapted to the diffusion of piety than any other community of equal size can possibly be.

It may be added, that the principle on which Congregational churches are formed affords pre-eminent facilities for the extension of religion. The fact that none but persons of visible religious character are admitted into them, establishes in the outset a broad mark of distinction between the godly and the ungodly; it fixes a brand on wicked ways and a worldly spirit, and proclaims aloud the necessity of repentance and conversion. The formation of a body which is to be acknowledged as *religious* upon any principle which intentionally comprehends irreligious men (and this is the principle of all national religious establishments), has a tendency to efface this all-important distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Both alike are members of the church, both alike are called Christians, are entitled to the privileges of the church during their life, and encouraged to cherish its hopes in their death. Hence springs an idea that religion itself is nothing more than a name and a form; together with a notion that there is no necessity, nor, indeed, occasion, for a change of heart, and that those who insist upon it are enthusiasts: and hence the very constitution of the church itself begets the most mischievous errors, engenders a most fallacious hope, and withdraws the persons whose conversion would be contemplated almost totally from the reach of conviction or instruction. In this method established churches have been a most melancholy and incalculable impediment to Christianity, the promotion of which could, at this instant, be much more advantageously pursued if none but Congregational churches had ever existed.

It may be remarked further, that religious societies on the Congregational plan enter very easily upon exertion. Their machinery is exceedingly simple, and may be put into motion without difficulty. There is no pressure of superincumbent authority by which the energies of any portion of the body can be confined. Every individual in his station is not merely at liberty, but is required, to give full scope to his zeal without hearing of obedience to a superior. The case is the same with every minister, with every church; each may act freely, and any or all may freely concur in action; but no power can restrain, or forbid. No offence is given if a

good design be set on foot without the sanction of a diocesan or provincial dignitary, nor is it needful for the humbler Christian to abstain from exertion until those in high places can be induced to precede him. The Congregational System avails itself in a moment, and far more readily than any other, of the insulated energies of individuals, and of the combined energies of the body.

2. We have observed above, that communities should not only be adapted to the ends for which they are formed, but suited likewise to the preservation of their own existence and welfare. By this test we now proceed to estimate the excellency of the Congregational System.

The adaptation of any society to the maintenance of its vigour and the promotion of its welfare, clearly depends, in a great measure, upon the nature of the controlling power, and will be proportionate to the degree in which that power possesses, first, a just and faithful regard to the general welfare; and, secondly, a wise discernment of what is suited to promote it. Besides this, however, it is of great importance that provision should be made for the treatment of irreconcilable differences, or the relief of possible discord, without the destruction, and, if it may be so, without the injury, of the body. Whether the Congregational System does possess this adaptation to the permanent welfare of the societies which are formed upon it has been doubted by many, and by some denied. We will assign some reasons why a contrary judgment may be maintained.

(1). First, then, let us look at the nature of *the controlling power* in Congregational churches. We have already stated it to reside ultimately and essentially in the members at large, who possess the right of bringing every matter before them, and by the major number of whom every disputed question may be decided.

The first quality to be desired in those who possess the controlling power in any society is, as we have just hinted, *a just and faithful regard to its welfare*. Without this it is not to be supposed that its prosperity will be promoted, because, in fact, it will not be sought: private or subordinate interests being cherished instead, the measures adopted will receive a corresponding direction. Now, without bringing any charge against office-bearers of any class, we conceive that a regard to the general welfare may be expected from

the entire members of any society with more confidence than from any individual, or from any portion of it. No individual, whether in office or out of it, is exempt from the possibility of indulging feelings of partiality, or of private interest; a similar spirit may spread through portions of a society of a less or greater extent; but it is manifest that the prevalence of it becomes more difficult and unlikely in proportion to the number of individuals through whom it must be diffused, and that it is most unlikely of all to be diffused through an entire community. The probability of the general good being disregarded, therefore, increases in exact proportion as the extent of the controlling body diminishes. A few persons who may have been selected for the management of a society are more likely to adopt private or party ends than the whole would have been, and one person would be still more likely to do so than several. The best security against such an evil—and, if it be not in all cases a complete security, still it is the best—is the right of interference in the whole body; not its actual intermeddling in everything, but its acknowledged power of bringing everything, when it may seem expedient, under its own review and decision. In the whole body a variety of private or party interests will tend to neutralize and correct each other; while there will scarcely fail to be a portion, in all probability a considerable portion, of impartial and independent feeling, by which all party tendencies may be counteracted and rebuked.

We are not at all unwilling to be asked whether we think that pastors and deacons of churches, treasurers, trustees, or persons intrusted with power under any other name, are wolves in sheep's clothing, and disguised devourers of the flock. Most fully are we convinced that this is not the case, but that, with a very few exceptions, the spirit of these persons is one of real devotedness to the welfare of the societies with which they are connected; and we are truly happy in being able to bear such a testimony. But, with all this, our general principle remains untouched. Every man *may* be corrupted; the larger the number of men the more difficult their corruption becomes; and, therefore, to place the ultimate control of any society in the hands of the whole is the best security against corruption. This is the fundamental principle of the representative system on which all free governments are founded; nor can it very easily be objected to,

without exposing the objector to suspicions which we should very unwillingly entertain.

In Christian societies of the Congregational order not even a shadow of ground for objection to the principle of universal suffrage exists; because as to religious concerns, as to all which those societies contemplate or effect, there is a perfect equality among the members. Where, as in society at large, there are privileged orders and vested rights, and where the good of the whole is conceived to arise out of the connected promotion of these local and partial interests, always clashing and sometimes irreconcilable, the body to whom such affairs are referred should doubtless comprehend a fair representation of the several interests to be adjusted; and, upon this principle, it is very easy to see why an appeal to the entire members of a national hierarchy would not be deemed conducive to its prosperity. Here is a highly privileged class, the clergy, whose prosperity is by no means identical with the welfare of the members of the Establishment at large, but which, nevertheless, must be protected, even at the neglect, or the sacrifice, of the public good. But no such thing exists in the structure of Congregational churches. If the system be fully acted upon, all property is the property of the body; there are no individual, or local, or partial, interests to be consulted; there are no vested rights which may by possibility be injured, or princely dignitaries to tremble for their honours. No object being contemplated but the advantage of the whole where all are equal, no impediment exists to an appeal to the entire body. If at any time the whole should be deficient in regard to their own welfare, which is barely possible, still more reason is there to expect similar deficiencies in any portion of their number.

A second, and not less important, requisite in the controlling power of a community, is *a wise discernment of what is suited to its welfare*. Apart from this no expectation could be entertained of a beneficial result, however ardently the object might be desired, or however devotedly it might be pursued.

It may, perhaps, appear to some persons a strange and hazardous opinion, if we say that, in this respect also, we should place more reliance upon the whole body than upon any portion of it. But we will show our reasons.

In the first place, it may be observed that the questions

which arise in the management of Congregational churches are, perhaps without any exception, quite level to the judgment of their individual members. They relate to matters upon which plain people may have not merely an opinion, but a just and reasonable opinion; to matters which require nothing more than a knowledge of their own constitution, which any member of a society may easily have, and ought to acquire, with the considerate exercise of common sense. The proceedings of such bodies give rise to no complex and difficult problems, defying the solution of any but practical tacticians, or even calling for the exercise of profound sagacity. Everything is to be judged of, and decided, on the simplest grounds, and may be duly weighed by persons of the humblest capacity.

Next to a knowledge of the constitution of the church, the thing which is most important, and the only thing which is indispensable, to the formation of a right judgment in such matters, is the existence and influence of real religion. This leads to a clear perception of the objects to be pursued, and the most appropriate methods for their attainment; it realizes the grounds on which every decision should proceed, and withdraws the mind from the various collateral and subordinate influences by which it might be warped or intimidated. In all such matters, if it may not be said in the abstract that piety is wisdom, it is certainly the first and most important step towards it. There is scarcely a chance of wisdom existing without it. The whole affairs of Congregational churches have a simplicity and spirituality about them which a carnal eye altogether fails to perceive, and missing which, there is the highest improbability that any measure would be devised in harmony with the system; while, if the eye be open to this peculiarity, it becomes almost equally difficult to commit an error. Now it is a prominent feature of Congregational churches that they aim at comprehending none but persons of real piety. Every member of them is to be supposed, therefore, to possess that adaptation to right judgment of which we have been speaking. Superior to the blindness of a carnal man, and delivered from the influence of worldly passions, his opinions may reasonably be regarded as enlightened and wise.

The formation of a right judgment by the members of a Congregational church is facilitated—we might say it is

secured—by the existence of a real community of interest in the body. It is chiefly interest, real or imaginary, which blinds men's eyes. Few men are blind to what they conceive to be their interest itself; nor to what is really wise, when it concurs with their apparent interest. Hence, therefore, questions which arise in Congregational churches may be considered as of easy solution, even by the least skilful of their members, because each has only to ask what is for his interest in that capacity. What reason is there to suppose that a plain man should form an erroneous judgment here, rather than in points which relate to his temporal welfare? If the case were one in which the interest of a part were *not* that of the whole, then he might, and almost to a certainty would, err; but Congregational churches being so formed as to comprehend no rival or clashing interests, afford the greatest security that every man shall judge rightly for the welfare of the body, because, in order to do so, he has only to judge rightly for his own.

It is true, indeed, that individual members of a church may either fail in discernment, or yield to the influence of private or party interests, blinding them as much to their own real interest as to that of the church itself; but this consideration strikingly exhibits the advantage of an ultimate reference to the body at large. If perplexity exists, there is a greater probability of the best expedient being hit upon by some among many competent judges, than by one among a few; and there is almost a certainty that, whatever party patronage might be engaged for ill-advised measures, the concurrence of a whole society would never be obtained. Individuals, or portions of a body, may much more easily fall into error than the whole; and a reference to the whole is far the most likely method of furnishing a check to the possible deviations of a part.

It is to be remembered, moreover, that, according to the model of Congregational churches which we have presented, the reference of matters to the judgment of the whole is not habitual, but only occasional and ultimate. The members at large are not discussing and directing everything, but, in a well-conducted society, in fact scarcely anything. They appoint, under Christ their head, an executive body; a pastor to act in spiritual concerns and deacons to act in temporal ones, while the general affairs of the church are

matter of the joint consultation of both. The cases submitted to the church are only such as involve perplexity, or exceed the delegated authority of the appointed officers. Neither are such cases laid before the brethren at large in a crude and immature state; but first of all they engage the careful deliberation of the executive, whose proposed measures form the matter for the consideration and decision of the church. Upon such a plan, the general body is not appealed to upon trivial matters, nor with unnecessary frequency; and when it is consulted, the transaction is in most cases little more than a unanimous approval and sanction of the measures proposed. If it be otherwise, and there is either a modification of the measure proposed, or a divided opinion in the church, there is scarcely a doubt but the decision of the major number is the wisest in any particular instance, and no doubt at all that a course of proceedings pursued under such control is wiser than any other.

The process we have been describing combines the advantages both of individual and collective wisdom. So far as the church pleases, its officers act without them, regulating all affairs by the Christian prudence with which it is to be presumed they are endowed. Beyond this limit, the considerate proposals of the same officers guide the church, subject only to such suggestions as, if they gain the approbation of the majority, may fairly be regarded as amendments. Besides, the very fact that in all cases an appeal lies ultimately to the church at large, is adapted to exercise a most salutary influence on the church-officers themselves. No man can be confided in to make the same use of irresponsible as of responsible power. Even pastors and deacons of churches, giving them credit for high excellence in their offices, are sure to act with more caution, correctness, and fidelity, when they know that everything they do may be inquired into by the church. It makes them feel much more powerfully than they otherwise might, the necessity of regarding the interest of the church rather than their own gratification. The facility with which the church may interpose tends to render that very interposition unnecessary, and in the most tranquil manner to accomplish the most important ends.

(2). It has been already stated that a provision for the treatment of irreconcilable differences of opinion, or of

feeling, in associated bodies is of great importance to their permanent welfare. Such differences *may* arise at any time, and in any place; and, though much may be done to guard against them, there has yet been found no absolute security against them in the church of God. They are occurrences not merely painful, but hazardous. They tend to the injury, as well as to the discomfort, of the society. They diminish its strength, and may possibly occasion its dissolution. No society can have a pledge of permanent prosperity which has not the means of encountering such perils with effect.

Here it is obvious to observe, that the constitution of Congregational churches is eminently adapted to the prevention of discord. It confers upon every member of the body equal rights and equal privileges; and thus withdraws all the ordinary, and almost all the possible, causes of complaint. If the murmurs which may be too often heard in communities of every kind be inquired into, they will be found in most cases to arise from inequalities in some respect furnishing matter of perpetual irritation. In Congregational churches, however, there are no peculiar and inaccessible privileges, there is no oppressive superiority; no individual is trampled on, none enthroned. Here is everything to make a reasonable man satisfied and happy.

Should any occasion of difference arise, or divided opinions induce an earnest discussion, the freedom of that discussion itself is the best security for its tranquil issue. Differences of opinion are most mischievous when they may not be uttered. The fire is then pent up in a man's own breast, and either makes him unhappy, or generates more extensive injury; when, if it could but have vent, it would harmlessly exhaust itself. Disagreement in sentiment is of comparatively little consequence in a society where every member may freely express his opinion, and give his vote; where, therefore, his views have a fair chance of gaining the respect to which they may be entitled, and where, if contradicted, it is not by the dictation of a superior, but by the collective voice of his brethren. He that is not content in such circumstances, even when defeated, shows a temper wholly unsuited to social intercourse, and fitted to nothing but a despotism of which he himself should be the head.

Extreme cases, however, may arise, in which, either from irritated feelings, or from conscientious motives which deserve

far higher respect, some members of a church can no longer concur in its measures, or be happy in its communion. It is then manifestly most desirable, not for the individuals alone, but for the church itself, that their separation should be effected, and with as little interruption of Christian kindness as possible. To retain them against their will, if it were possible, would only be an injury to the society, since they could add nothing to its vigour, and would only mar its peace; nor would it be wise, indeed, to suffer persons to continue in it whose influence must be hostile to its general prosperity. Such have been the absurdities to which the formation of national religious establishments has uniformly led; by endeavouring to retain discontented members by forbidding them to depart, or by visiting their departure with punishment, in some cases of the most dreadful kind. The system of Congregational churches is totally different. From them any member, or any number of members, are at liberty to withdraw whenever they think it their duty, without incurring any censure, or provoking any resentment. While Christian character is not abandoned, the exercise of Christian love need not be interrupted; but those who cannot happily co-operate in direct association may harmoniously labour in the same cause at a distance not far removed. Peaceable and Christian separation, when separation becomes inevitable or expedient, is the maxim of the Congregational System; and it has always been found to be, not only a sufficient safety-valve for the occasional disturbances of the churches, but a means of rendering those very disturbances conducive to the extension of Christianity.

It thus becomes the glory of the Congregational System to obtain the advantages of religious association without trenching upon the rights of conscience. It affords facilities for every man to unite with others so far as he can do so with satisfaction to himself, without questioning the right, or resenting the exercise, of private judgment. It is union among men divested of the authority of men. It combines their exertions without subjecting them one to another, and consolidates the whole force of Christianity without impairing the independence of individual character. It is the only form of religious association which lays its basis in the heart, and aspires to no dominion over the conscience.

IV. We can forgive the surprise of some readers in perceiving that we have dwelt at so much length, and perhaps *con amore*, on the advantages of the Congregational System. We have not done so without knowing that it is the habit of others to descant upon the *evils* of which it is productive; and it is right, perhaps, that we should now pay them a little regard. Often and confidently as it has been alleged that the system we have described is connected with great evils, we are not afraid to survey them, and we trust with candour.

At the outset, however, we may be permitted to observe, that the mere *liability to evil* is no valid ground of objection against this, or any other, system of action. The very best institutions, divine as well as human, are liable to abuse, and therefore to evil. The administration of any system is obviously liable to be affected by the imperfection of human character; nor is it to be expected that either the rectitude of its principles, or the wisdom of its arrangements, can preclude the *possibility* of mischief. An office may be not only well, but admirably, adapted to the good of the community; but, if it is held by a person who neither values the design of the office, nor enters into its spirit, it is clear that his administration can do little good, and probable that it may do much harm. The force of this observation has been so powerfully felt as to induce some persons (though we think erroneously) to undervalue principles altogether, and to concur in the sentiment,—

“Whate’er is best administered is best:”

while all the efforts which have been made to render the forms of civil government conducive to the general good have proceeded upon the principle of bringing antagonist powers to balance each other, and to limit, if not altogether to prevent, the abuse of any. In order to render mischief *impossible* human character must be *perfect*, which at present it is not, either in the world or in the church. If no institution, therefore, can be pointed out or conceived which would not be liable to evil, the existence of such liability can be no objection to any; nor can an objection be thus raised against the Congregational System.

As little force is there in the *actual occurrence of evil* among the Congregational churches; a point in which they do but share the common lot of everything on earth. But, if the best institutions may be abused to mischief, and the

possibility of this is no argument against their excellency, neither can the actual occurrence of such abuse be so. The question to be asked is, whether the evil results from the abuse of an institution, or from its use; whether it is an accident, to be referred to the existence of ignorance or bad temper; or whether it be a proper result, either from the direct tendency, or the imperfect adaptation, of the machinery. By this test we are quite willing to try the merits of the Congregational System, and we are convinced that it will come out with honour from the trial.

Let us now look at the actual evils which have arisen among the Congregational churches. From the very full admissions of a writer from among ourselves which have been so prominently put forward by no very candid opponent of our system, we select the most aggravated items, and insert them in a note below.*

Little pleasure as we can feel, on any ground, in this

* "Distraction and division of churches have frequently resulted from the election of ministers." "Some ministers plunge themselves in debt, or involve themselves in politics, or many unsuitable pursuits;" "others are of bad temper," "so that a fire of contention is soon kindled, and the whole church is enveloped in the flames." Some "deacons make kindness and assistance a cloak for their own tyranny, or a silken web to wind round the fetters they are preparing for their pastor." For "what is the deacon of some of our dissenting communities?—the patron of the living, the bible of the minister, and the wolf of the flock." Some of the people "love their minister dearly with their lips, but hate him as cordially with their pockets." "In many of our churches the pastor is depressed far below his level. He has no official distinction or authority. He may flatter like a sycophant, beg like a servant, or woo like a lover; but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler. His opinion is received with no deference, his person is treated with no respect, and, in presence of some of his lay tyrants, he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust." "Discipline is relaxed, to admit wealthy members of unsanctified dispositions." "Alas! alas! how many of our churches present, at this moment, the sad spectacle of a house divided against itself." "Church-meetings have exhibited scenes of confusion little recommendatory of the democratic form of church-government;" they become "a Court of Common Pleas," and it is necessary "to bind one to keep the peace." Individual members of property, carrying the spirit of the world into the church, "endeavour to subjugate both the minister and the people." "The Antinomian spirit has become the pest of many of our churches." "Many pulpits now devoted to the propagation of Unitarian doctrines," were "once the fountains of purer principles." "It does not unfrequently happen that, when two or more churches of the same denomination exist in a town, a most unhappy, unscriptural, disgraceful temper is manifested towards each other."—*The Church of England and Dissent; a Review of James's Church-Member's Guide.* A pamphlet very ably replied to in *Mr. James's Dissent and the Church of England.*

enumeration, we have nevertheless introduced it, first, in order that it may not be said that we shrink from viewing the mischiefs of our system in their greatest magnitude; and, next, because we are confident of their proving nothing against our cause.

And, in the *first* place, we observe, that the evils described bear but a small proportion to the general excellence and welfare of the Congregational body. They have been most uncharitably and most falsely presented to the world as a "picture of Dissent," as though no other features were necessary to a perfect likeness. We maintain, however, without fear, and we challenge the correction both of friends and of enemies, that the Congregational churches are far more extensively characterized by peace and concord, co-operation and prosperity, than by the contrary. The oppressed pastors and the lordly deacons, the domineering oligarchs and the turbulent democrats, the churches at war among themselves or quarrelling with each other, are not the many, but the few. One glaring case of this kind is known and animadverted upon through the whole kingdom; and if among several thousand congregations they were of general occurrence, certainly much more would be heard of them. To this it may be added, that the evils which have been noticed, when they do exist, are for the most part but the blemishes of an excellent character, and very small in proportion to the excellencies to which they are unhappily attached. They are scarcely ever the rampant passions of unsanctified men, appearing in the hideous forms, or producing the enormous mischiefs, which are often found in secular establishments; they are the lingering infirmities of good men, with much to soften their aspect, to mitigate their influence, and to control their power.

We may observe, in the *second* place, that the evils described as occurring under the Congregational System are all of them accidental, and not systematic. That one is domineering, and another positive; that at one time discipline is relaxed, and at another neighbouring churches are quarrelling, proves, not that the principle of proceeding is faulty, but that those who act upon it are so. No form of church government has been devised, or can be, by which evil tempers shall be exterminated, nor any, therefore, under which they may not be drawn out into action. Never was it imagined that

the Congregational System could operate well unless the societies formed upon it consisted of sanctified men, nor any further than they are so: to show us, therefore, evils which spring from personal imperfection is but to remind us of that imperfection itself, which, we suppose, has a similar existence in every communion, and everywhere produces more or less similar results. Can it be shown that the tendency of the Congregational System is to *generate and foster* the evils under review? Does the popular election and responsibility of pastors and deacons tend to render them tyrannical, or to protect them if they become so? Does the habit of consulting the whole body encourage aspirations after preponderating personal influence? Does the equal interest and influence which every member of a society has in its affairs tend to induce a spirit of discontent or neglect? Upon any principles of common sense, the answer to these questions is instantly obvious. The whole influence of the Congregational System goes to the prevention of these mischiefs; and no man who imbibes the spirit of the system will ever fall into them. The reference which we have thus made to the theory of that system may be confirmed by an appeal to facts. Bad principles produce bad results, and every tree may be known by its fruits. If it be the tendency of the Congregational System to produce the alleged evils, then they should be the general and prevailing characteristics of our body. We challenge any person, however hostile, to say that this is the case. We, on the contrary, fearlessly express our conviction that our churches are characterized by a spirit of Christian love, of harmonious co-operation, of mutual submission, and of official devotedness, not only generally, but eminently; and far more so, as a body, than any other community of Christians in existence.

Thirdly, for every evil which unhallowed feelings may generate, the Congregational System provides a principle of cure; and, if it be promptly and thoroughly acted upon, of very speedy and effectual cure. This lies in the right of every member to bring any subject before the brethren, and to take their sense upon it. All the evils which can afflict Congregational churches, or indeed any other communities, are in the first instance evils of individual character, and they may be easily checked in their early stage, if there be any adequate power to which a successful appeal may be made.

Now a religious society, as a body, is clearly superior to any one of its members, not excepting even its highest officer; and, however insignificant a single member may be by whom any matter may be brought forward, yet, if the church as a body concur in his views, and will act upon them, his insignificance is lost in the supremacy of the body. Hence the means possessed by Congregational churches of applying an immediate and effectual remedy to evils of any kind; whether errors in doctrine, or faults of temper, they may readily be brought before the whole body, and remedied; because it is not to be supposed that, at an early stage of their progress, the whole, or even the majority, of the church will be under their influence. Had this fundamental and all-important part of our constitution been justly acted upon, no evils of long standing or of considerable magnitude could have existed among us. Those which have acquired such a character may distinctly be traced, either to the neglect of discipline, or to the silence and acquiescence of parties who preferred their own quiet to the general good. In this case mischiefs become inveterate; but what is to be blamed for them? The Congregational System, which provided ample powers for their immediate cure? or the supineness which, notwithstanding such a provision, suffered them to grow? We may add that, under the Congregational System, even inveterate evils are not hastily to be set down as incurable. The church-meeting, or, if our antagonist will have it so, the "Court of Common Pleas," affords the means of bringing an apprehended mischief again and again before the eyes of the brethren, and of using all methods of argument and persuasion for its removal. Such efforts are not necessarily nor uniformly unavailing. And even when they are so, one remedy still remains, namely, a peaceable withdrawal, and a new association with more congenial elements.

We have, we trust, little inclination to censure others, and still less to plume ourselves at their expense; but, considering the measure dealt out to us, it can hardly be reckoned unfair if we say, that all the observations we have made will appear more strikingly true, when we put the churches of the Congregational order into comparison with others.

Formidable as the evils may appear on which we have been dwelling, and lamentable as they really are, they are less so than the evils of any other system. There are no tithes,

or other compulsory contribution, to set the teacher and the learners at perpetual variance upon matters of pecuniary interest, and to make the whole ministration of religion, and the very person of its minister, odious in the eyes of a great part of the population. There is no systematic exclusion of the laity from a share in the management of ecclesiastical concerns, to induce a feeling that they have nothing to do with religion but to support the splendour of its establishments and the wealth of its dignitaries, and to alienate them at heart from the church which persists in calling them her sons. There is no system of patronage, avowedly perverting that which should be for the people's welfare into a means of family aggrandizement or political influence, reckless at once of the fitness of the pastor and the benefit of the flock. There is no doctrine of efficacious forms, by which a spirit of apathy as to the power of religion is deeply wrought into the heart, and under cover of which irreligion, infidelity, and vice, in all imaginable ways, revel unrestrained and unrebuked. Such things as these are pre-eminently worthy of the name of mischiefs; and, in comparison with any which have been charged on the Congregational body, they are evils of gigantic magnitude.

Where evils of a similar nature are to be found both in Congregational societies and in those of a different description, they are more abundant in the latter, almost beyond comparison. Some ministers of Congregational churches are ignorant, petulant, and immoral; but what multitudes are so in churches that are established! Some deacons are lordly; but what is this to the tyranny of the whole body of churchwardens! The election of a minister produces a perilous crisis; but the gift of a living often disgusts the parish, and sometimes empties the church. Some dissenting pulpits have degenerated into false doctrine; but, till within these very few years, it was difficult to find a single preacher in the Establishment that was sound. Dissenting churches sometimes show an unchristian spirit; but the very bosom of the Church of England is rent by bitter hostility towards the most laborious and valuable portion, both of her clergy and her laity. We could easily extend this contrast, but we forbear. If that be the best system, however, which has most effectually prevented the mischiefs which an evil heart, and an imperfect character, tend everywhere to produce, the Congregational System can well bear the test.

The mischiefs arising in Congregational societies we have shown to be accidental, and not essential; not springing from the operation of the principles on which they are constructed, but from the neglect of them. The same thing cannot be said of religious Establishments. The principle that every inhabitant of the country may be, and shall be unless he affirms the contrary, considered as a member of the national church, tends to bring into it a whole host of unsuitable characters, and puts all selection at defiance; while the only mode of proceeding with respect to improper persons equally defies all endeavour to diminish the evil. That there should be incompetent ministers in the church arises out of the very principle of patronage; nor, while that principle is maintained, can it ever be otherwise. That church-patronage should be made the tool of political party springs likewise inevitably from the connexion, long so warmly pleaded for, between the Church and the State; and, while the gift of livings and bishoprics belongs to the minister for the time being, can any man in his senses suppose that it will not operate to the production, and be employed for the recompense, of political servility in the clergy? Whence, in like manner, we may ask, arise the alienation of the lower and middle classes from the Establishment, and the growing contempt for the clergy, but from the entire separation of their interests from those of the people at large, and the anti-national character inseparable from every national establishment of religion? The evils which infest national churches spring out of the very principles on which they are built, and the more thoroughly they are acted upon the worse their condition will be. If anything now mitigates the mischief, it is that their principles are suffered in part to lie dormant, and nothing will cure it but their entire renunciation.*

* Nothing, perhaps, can afford a more striking confirmation of our sentiments than the article on the property and government of the Church of England in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for November, 1830. Proceeding, as it manifestly does, from the High-church party, and complaining bitterly of the Catholic Relief Bill, the writer *calls loudly for the separation of the Church from the State!* These are his words: "Without speaking of the manner in which the king became the head of the church, and thereby acquired a power possessed by no other sovereign, and submitted to by scarcely any other religious body, we will observe, it is as clear in experience as in reason that such power ought never to have been his. We know not where a greater error could be found than this—the

It can now scarcely be needful to draw a comparison between Congregational and Established churches as to their respective facilities for the correction of existing evils. In the former, we have seen that everything is open to modification and reform. In the latter, he is a bold man who will even venture to *examine* the abuses which may exist; it requires yet more courage to *expose* them; and, when this is done, what follows? That the writer closes up the path of preferment, and the mischiefs he has bewailed are perpetuated as before. Interested parties are so numerous and so powerful, such an outcry is raised about private property and vested rights, that the voice even of lamentation itself is effectually drowned.

Although our remarks in this comparison have borne chiefly on national churches, they will be found to have a proportionate bearing also upon other religious communities, according to the degree in which the principles of the Congregational System are departed from. We may now dismiss this part of our subject, by saying, with confidence, that on no point is the Congregational System less vulnerable than its often alleged tendency to the production of evil.

V. At the same time we are ready to confess, with deep and unfeigned sorrow, that the principles of the Congregational System, so far as they have been adopted by religious societies, though they have done much, have not been productive of all the benefits which might have been expected from them. Of this the evils which have been already

giving to any ministry the power to make the clergy support it without reference to the character of its measures; yet this power, under the present system, must be possessed by any ministry which may exist. A national church is established, and then she is placed under regulations which cripple her, impel the population to dissent from her, restrict her from use, and make her the source of abuse. The clergy must be party men, or they can gain no patronage; from this, those who oppose them in politics must avoid them as religious teachers; and thus the church is perverted into an instrument of dissent and irreligion. The church has nothing to expect from the continuance of her slavery but certain ruin. Because her clergy are degraded into the menials of the ministry, she is in essentials deprived of a laity—because the ministry is despised, she is overwhelmed with unpopularity—because she is a political tool, she is fought against as a religious body by the mass of the people. The laymen are neutral, or ranged with her enemies, in the schemes which are advocated for despoiling and destroying her; and her clergy can do nothing in her favour, but, on the contrary, can be used as instruments for inflicting every injury that ministers hostile to her from necessity or creed may devise” (pp. 805, 807).

enumerated, and the existence of which, to a greater or less extent, cannot be denied, is a decisive proof; and others, to us scarcely less afflictive, may be found in the small measure in which the advantages of the system have been realized, when compared with its manifest powers. It is both a fair and an important question:—*If the Congregational System has the beneficial adaptation you describe, why has it not accomplished the great things which might have been expected from it?*

On this topic we are not so much desirous of making a valid answer to an enemy, as a faithful and influential appeal to our friends. We have done less than we might, because *we have wielded the instrument we possess with defective energy and skill*. Few things can be more important than for us to look attentively and candidly at these deficiencies, in order to avoid or to remedy them.

1. The results of our system would have been more considerable if we had shown more *consistency*. The essential principles on which our communities are founded have not been kept in view with an unwavering steadiness, and acted upon with an unflinching uniformity. In part, perhaps, they have been unpleasing, in part forgotten, in part not even understood.

One of the fundamental points thus defectively regarded, we conceive to be the annihilation of personal preponderance. In a religious body of the Congregational class, if we have understood or described it correctly, in all that relates to the interests of the body, or to the objects of its formation, there exists theoretically a perfect equality. No member of it is superior to another, unless by office, to which his brethren have called him, and his superiority in respect of which is purely official, not personal. The privileges and rights of membership belong equally to all the members, without any prerogative of dictation on the one hand, or obligation to submit on the other. Members of rank or wealth are entitled to contribute no more to the decision of any matter than the meanest and the poorest; every question being presented to the church at large for the consideration and determination of *the body*, and there being no way of obtaining the sense of the body but by eliciting from every member a free and equal voice. It is clear that such a constitution aims at the annihilation of personal preponderance; and that every person

who enters into a society thus constituted, if he drinks into the spirit of it, makes a resignation of all his own personal influence to the body with which he amalgamates himself. He means to be nothing more than one among many, and to aim at no more than an equal share in the management of affairs.

Our readers will probably recollect, more rapidly than we can detail them, instances in which a spirit somewhat different from this has been manifested. It is not always, nor perfectly, that members of our churches have been free from an inordinate desire to have their own way; more especially when the probabilities of obtaining it have been increased by the possible influence of a determined spirit, of wealth, of office, of age, or of family or party strength. Some of us have not only wished, but expected, to exercise a considerable, if not a predominating, influence in the church; by no means unwilling that they should give way to us, though contrary to their judgment, lest they should hurt our feelings, or lose our support. There has arisen in some cases a disposition to manage the church concerns as private affairs, not only without due solicitation of the scrutiny and sanction of the body, but, occasionally, to the resistance of their anxious entreaty. In other instances we have seen disappointment and mortification when a favourite measure has not been carried, with, perhaps, an ebullition of ill temper, or a withdrawal, threatened if not actual, of intended or customary aid. Now, the love of personal influence is a principle of great power in the heart of man, and not very easy to mortify; and it is the less easy to mortify in the church, because it is so much pampered in the world. Accustomed as we are to attain our wishes the more readily in other affairs according to our pertinacity, our connexions, or our fortune, it is scarcely wonderful if we carry somewhat of the same expectations with us into those of religion. It is manifest, however, that, in whatever degree we may do so, we come short of the true spirit of the Congregational System, and that every such departure from its spirit is adapted to disturb its operation. It can work well upon no other supposition, than that every member is willing to merge his individual consequence in the far greater importance of the whole body. It makes no provision for authorized dictation on the one hand, or for obligatory submission on the other; but stamps every attempt at dictation with the

character of usurpation, and sanctions every effort of resistance. Hence the manifestation of a domineering spirit so speedily interrupts the harmony of a Congregational society, producing strife, confusion, and every evil work; or, if this immediate result is prevented by silent submission, there are a thousand chances that the tranquillity is only like that of a volcano, preparatory to a more ruinous convulsion. To this cause, we are convinced, a very large proportion of the ecclesiastical troubles in our body are to be attributed; and nothing would contribute more to their cure than the mortification of the evil from which they have sprung. Next in importance, however, to the mortification of this tendency by those in whose breasts it may arise, is the correction of it, whenever manifested, by the brethren towards whom it is directed. With all due estimation of Christian meekness, and deference to office, to age, or to other personal qualities, there is neither rectitude nor wisdom in deferring to dictatorial measures. Quietness may be the easiest way in the first instance, and may be recommended on various grounds; but it is treachery to the interests of the body, and to its Head. It affords facilities for the growth of the evil, until, perhaps, it becomes too powerful to be effectually resisted, and ultimately produces mischiefs of overwhelming magnitude. If a domineering member of a Congregational society transgresses its spirit, scarcely less so do they who submit to domination. Not at all less to be regarded as a departure from the spirit of the Congregational System, or less to be deplored in its effects, is a tendency sometimes observable, especially in feeble societies, to court the exercise of domination, by showing a readiness to give up everything to the hands of an influential person, in order to receive his support, or to identify him more closely with the cause.

Another of the great principles of our system not always fully regarded, is the ultimate decision of every question by the community at large. Not, as we have explained before, the actual reference to them of endless details, many of which they have confided to the hands of their officers; but the reference to them of every matter they wish to be so referred, and the decision by their vote, fairly taken, of every case on which divided opinion may exist. As our former observation related to the influence of individuals, so this relates to the influence of parties, or bodies of persons however constituted, if less than the whole society.

Some societies which apparently belong to the Congregational body have the management of their affairs vested, either in whole or in part, in committees, or select bodies of some other name, in some cases not appointed by the society, and in more not responsible to it. These societies are plainly *not* formed upon the Congregational model; and the only observation we are called upon to make respecting them is, that, whatever of good or evil may occur in their history, the principles we advocate are equally remote from the praise and the blame. Such societies approximate closely to the Presbyterian churches, into which the leaven of Arian or Unitarian sentiments has been so largely insinuated; an evil which is with manifest injustice charged upon the Congregational System, and which the operation of that system would have done much, if not everything, to repel.

The same tendency, however, may be traced in churches strictly Congregational. Whence, otherwise, is the fear which church-officers sometimes entertain of submitting a matter to the church, lest its decision should not be according to their views? Whence, otherwise, is the secret consultation, and previous canvassing, not always without a degree of artifice, when a measure is under discussion which awakens party feelings? Whence, otherwise, is the occasional petulance of a minority, the alienated affection which sometimes results from a disagreeable decision, or the causeless division of a society itself? These, and all similar things, indicate a forgetfulness of the principle that the will of the whole body, expressed by real majorities, is the only law. The expression of this will ought to be most readily and most fairly taken at all times, and submitted to with the most entire tranquillity. Even if conscience itself be violated, there is no just occasion for ill temper; the remedy for such a case lying in a voluntary withdrawal, which may be effected with as much peace as the voluntary introduction of a member.

The point now under notice is liable to be overlooked, also, in the treatment of a minority, especially if it be considerable for number, for influence, or for pertinacity. In such cases the church has sometimes recalled its own decision. We know the pleas used to justify such a step, and are far from reckoning them of small moment; but we think them insufficient for the purpose. To recall a decision of the body because the dissentients are influential or violent, is not

merely to renounce one main principle of our constitution, but to put a bounty upon a turbulent and a domineering spirit. It is to foster and to reward a temper which ought to be checked and reprov'd. It is to nourish an infant tyranny, which, if it should grow into sufficient strength to rule over the church, would only show the natural tendency, and produce the just recompense, of their folly. Such a course as this tends to attach discomfort to every appeal to the body on matters of divided opinion, because it sets every member on endeavouring to carry his opinion by personal or party influence. It encourages a rich member to say with emphasis, "I cannot agree to it," and a poor one to throw himself into a passion; till it is, perhaps, the general feeling that the proposal endangers the peace of the church, and had better be withdrawn. On the contrary, in our opinion, this is the very worst thing that could be done. Into what state is a church come, when even its own sense upon a question cannot be peaceably taken? The way to quell these humours is not to indulge, but to mortify them. Members of every class should know and feel that, in comparison with the body of which they are members, their wealth is nothing, their anger is nothing; but that, in disregard of either or of both, the sense of the church will be taken, and acted upon. We believe no method attains peace so soon, or maintains it so long, as this.

Our readers may, perhaps, have observed, that we have laid stress on the sense of the church being *fairly* taken. We have done so because, in our church history, instances have not been wanting of endeavours to obtain a colourable majority only. When the attendance of parties has been pressed in order that there may be a majority, when it has not been known by persons on the opposite side that the question would come under discussion, when advantage has been taken of the accidental absence of members, when tenacity has been manifested respecting a small actual majority—perhaps of one—while it might be doubtful whether the real sense of the church would be on that side, or when any difficulties whatever have been put in the way of arriving at the sense of the church clearly and undeniably—in all such cases the principle of appealing to the body is substantially departed from, and an imminent hazard is incurred of the most serious disturbances. No wish should be shown by persons in or out of office, either to repress the sense of the church, to

evade it, or to misinterpret it. On the contrary, the language of all, and of the officers especially, should be, "Only let us know what you really wish, freely express your sentiments each of you, and then fearlessly hold up your hands, and your will shall be ours." In such a method there can be no material or continued discontent; and it has been known to reduce to peace societies which have been long and violently agitated.

A third case of disregard to the fundamental principles of the Congregational System may be found in the spirit of legislation which, to a greater or less extent, insinuates itself, perhaps, into every society, as it is unquestionably an inmate of every heart. That what Christ has enjoined should be held indispensable is, undoubtedly, both just and obligatory, nor do we mean to breathe the slightest complaint of the importance which may be attached by any societies to his commands, or to what they may conceive to be his commands, even if in any case they may be in error. What we deem inconsistent with our principles, is the placing of matters which Christ has not commanded upon the same level with those which he has; the enactment of laws where he has not legislated, and the indispensable requirement of things which he has left optional. As a specimen of the class, we may refer to the mode of admitting members to our churches, which in many cases is prescribed with as much exactness as the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and a departure from it is visited with as much severity and indignation as if it were an ordinance of Christ himself. We ask, with a glow of almost indignant feeling, *Why is this?* In a church which claims a "power to decree rites and ceremonies" we could understand it; but in those which profess to resist and disclaim such a power, what has a practice, nay, a class of practices (for it is not solitary), to do which, in principle, are identical with the imposition of kneeling at the sacrament, of the cross in baptism, and the Book of Common Prayer? It has been conceived to be an indisputable maxim that every society has a right to make laws for itself; but we not only dispute, we deny it. Even if it be true of all other societies, it is not true of the church of Christ, and all Congregational churches are founded upon an entire disclaimer of it. The members of such a society unite for obedience to Christ, and in all other respects to be free. Various measures may be

thought expedient by larger or smaller portions of the body, or perhaps by the whole; but concurrence in them should in all cases be considered as optional and not obligatory, and any deviation be allowed without difficulty, so as still to attain the great ends of their association, and to maintain the authority of their Head. A different line of conduct has been productive of incalculable mischiefs. It has fostered in our churches a most injurious spirit of domination and self-will; it has given occasion to causeless, endless, and bitter, contentions and divisions; it has opened a door to the enactment of regulations most hurtful to the enlargement and prosperity of the churches; it has in part superseded the wisdom of Christ by the ignorance and folly of men; and it has made us to no inconsiderable extent the laughingstock of our neighbours in the religious establishments from which we have separated, by giving them reason to say that we have only thrown off their authority in order to subject others to our own. The tyranny of a miscalled Congregational church is, indeed, of all tyrannies, the most petty and contemptible. It has neither wealth to gild it, nor dignities to exalt it, nor profit to recompense it, nor learning to advocate it, nor sagacity to direct it, nor applause to sweeten it. *With* all these things we have declared religious tyranny to be intolerable; and it is nothing short of infatuation if for a moment we submit to it *without* them.

2. Our success would have been greater if we had maintained better *discipline*. This is manifestly a fundamental, and a very important, part of the Congregational System. The entire guardianship of the character of church-members pertains to it; and, where selectness of character is the very basis of union, the maintenance of it is obviously of the utmost consequence. In such circumstances every fault works mischief, because every one has a full scope for exerting its influence. The prosperity of Christian societies may be calculated in exact proportion to the perfection of their discipline—the rule of the New Testament, of course, being taken as the standard; and nothing, therefore, can be more important than the maintenance of it in a high degree of purity.

By saying that we have shown a want of discipline, we do not mean to bring any sweeping complaint. But, combined with a general and very honourable administration of the

discipline of the New Testament, there are occasional indications of a regard to it in a painful measure defective and inconsistent. The admission of members, in which a due reference to character is most easy, and which, moreover, is far from being in all cases too eager, is not always free from the influence either of a desire for mere numerical increase, or of the gratification of receiving persons who may be serviceable to the cause apart from truly spiritual considerations. A much greater evil, however, is to be found in the retaining of persons as church-members when their character plainly unfits them for such a station. Instances have not been wanting in which persons of notorious immorality, such as habitual drunkards and others, have remained in undisturbed possession of their membership; while in other cases there has been manifested a considerable unwillingness to inquire into accusations, and to bring faults to light, and to act with consistency and decision upon them when proved.

The occurrence of such things as these is by no means surprising. Corrective discipline touches so often upon the tender feelings, that no part of the duty of the church is liable to more obstruction, or requires more resolution. It may seem hard to make public a fault which is now private, and so to increase its ill effect; or the mention of it may wound the feelings of relatives, or hurt the reputation of a family; or the promoter of inquiry may subject himself to disagreeable suspicions of private motives; or the proceeding may respect a person whose support is essential to the interest of the church; to which and to many similar considerations the heart is so quickly alive, that the steady exercise of discipline requires a firm conviction of its obligation and necessity. The ground of such a conviction, however, is deeply laid, and it ought at all times to be felt, not only strongly, but imperatively. However tender our feelings in other directions may be, nothing ought to be so dear to us as the purity of Christian profession. Instead of resenting or deprecating the origination of church censure because it alights upon a relation or a friend, we ought the more solemnly to acknowledge its rectitude; nor ought it ever to be dreaded by a society because it may diminish their immediate strength, or even threaten their continued existence. The evils which are sure to arise in the end, and perhaps very speedily, from the neglect of discipline, are incalculably

greater than any which can spring from its faithful and resolved administration. It sullies the honour of the Christian profession, not only in the case of the individual, but in the character of the whole church which retains him ; it impairs a general rule as applicable to other cases ; it affords a plea and a shelter for new criminals ; it prepares materials for unhallowed and contentious proceedings ; it violates the command, and forfeits the approbation, of the King of Zion.

3. We should have accomplished more if we had shown proportionate *zeal*. We refer now, of course, to the effect of Congregational societies in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, which is one of the great ends of their formation, and to which we have endeavoured to show they are pre-eminently adapted. To this end, in truth, they have also very largely contributed ; by far the largest portion of exertion and success in the diffusion and revival of true piety having originated in, and been maintained by, the principles of the Congregational System. But if, as we confess, much less has resulted from these principles than might have been expected from them, it has been in part because zeal has been wanting to carry them into consistent and just operation.

Much as has been done within the last forty years, it is not yet *every* society which has shown a vigorous activity in the promotion of village preaching, or other endeavours for the enlightening of the dark places in its immediate vicinity. Much less do our churches regard themselves as charged with the obligation and responsibility of seeking the conversion of the population in the midst of which they assemble, and out of which they are gathered. So far as the stated ministry of the Gospel is concerned, and a Sunday school, with, perhaps, a recently formed Christian Instruction Society (though these are far from being universal), there may be machinery in operation ; but we ask whether this is all that our principles call for, and enable us to effect ? Is not every member of a Congregational church, by the very supposition of his being so, fitted to say to his neighbour, "Know the Lord" ? Is he not, moreover, called upon to do so by the voice of his acknowledged Ruler, and urged by the most powerful and most touching motives which can be conceived ? Let our readers say whether this is actually done ; or whether, on the contrary, professors generally do not live in the midst of an ungodly world with a most marvellous tranquillity and

inaction. As we go to the house of God, we wind our way through masses of the ignorant and undone, for whom we feel little, and do less; and when we return, it is for any purpose rather than to sally forth as soldiers of the cross, to fight the battles of the Lord. How little longing is there in our churches for ampler successes in the work of conversion; how little grief that its progress is still so slow; how much satisfaction if we remain in peace, and, from generation to generation, continue to be a respectable body of about equal size, or with a slow and scarcely perceptible increase!

All this is grievously inconsistent with our system. The very life of it is the spirit of enterprise and aggression; and, if this should become extinct, or even languid, we might almost as well become at once established and incorporated churches. Had the beautiful frame of our society but been fully animated by its celestial spirit, the state of things would have been very different now; and it will speedily become so whenever that spirit shall be duly cultivated by us.

Nothing would tend more effectually to remove that apparent want of union among Congregational churches which has so long, but with some injustice, been matter of grave accusation against them. It is neither practicable nor desirable that any such union should prevail among us, as could satisfy persons accustomed to the authoritative proceedings of an ecclesiastical hierarchy; but a union of co-operation is both desirable and practicable, to a much greater extent than is at present discernible. Whatever may be the success of direct efforts to form a Congregational union, no doubt can be entertained but that such a union would speedily arise, naturally, necessarily, without effort, and without objection, if every society were but to throw out its energies for the cultivation of the yet unreclaimed and fruitless waste.

4. We should have been more useful if we had been more *exemplary*. Without impugning the sincerity of our piety, or denying the existence of highly exemplary individuals, it must be allowed that our character as professors generally has not been duly distinct from that of the world around us. To say nothing of occasional (but too frequent) instances of immorality, to say nothing even of habitual faults far short of immorality, there is between the world and the Congregational churches (in common, we admit, but with no pleasure,

with the bulk of other communities), far too small a difference of level. The tone of gaiety, frivolity, or worldliness, which prevails among those regarded by us as destitute of religion, is not met on our parts by any proportionate force of spirituality, gravity, and purity. Hence the force of our profession itself is materially diminished, and almost annihilated. By the fact of our select association we intimate both our conviction that a change of character is necessary, and our hope that we have experienced it. Were our temper and conduct such as to impress this truth on the minds of the irreligious around us, incalculable good might result from such a state of things. Our profession was intended for this end, by assimilating us to a candle placed on a candlestick, or a city set on a hill, so that the one cannot be hid, and the other may not be so. But if, while we profess to be so materially diverse from others that, for the purpose of religious association, we are constrained to separate ourselves from them, we are yet so much like them that little or no difference is perceptible, we do mischief rather than good; we falsify the lesson which our profession is adapted to inculcate, and turn our profession itself into inconsistency and ridicule.

VI. It was our purpose to conclude our view of the Congregational System, by inquiring *how it ought to be carried into operation*; but our small remaining space precludes us from enlarging on this topic, and the length of our preceding remarks renders it the less necessary. We will comprise in one sentence all that we wish for ourselves, or would inculcate upon others. The Congregational System should be acted upon with an *observance of its ends*, with a *knowledge of its mechanism*, to the *utmost of its capabilities*, and in *conformity with its principles*. Apart from this it never can be expected to work well; with this it will not only work well, but, through God's blessing, it will work wonders. Let none of us be dissatisfied that we are denied the rich endowments, the splendid edifices, the mitred stalls, the princely dignities, the courtly smiles, of the national hierarchy: they are but the gaudy trappings which hide, or rather which betray, her shame, the heavy incumbrances which impede her action, and threaten her suffocation. For all spiritual ends, and we ought to have no other, we are best as we are. The principles which form the basis of our union, and the impulse of our action, are in strict accordance with the constitution of

our nature, and with all the methods by which energetic action has been excited, or great results have been achieved, in any field of human exertion. They have the sanction of our Maker and our Lord, whose authority may well hallow them in our eyes, and whose blessing will assuredly crown what his wisdom has ordained. Their energy has been triumphantly proved, once amidst the early feebleness of Christianity, and the terrific array of pagan hostility; again in the no less sharp and bloody conflict with papal tyranny; a third time amidst the slumbers of a church professedly reformed, but which the approach of the latter day seems scarcely to awake from her repose; and the revival of the last sixty years, with the greater revival which, we trust in God, may be said to be incipient now, is but a prelude to the efforts and the victories of the coming age. While ancient thrones are tottering, and venerable despotisms are dreading the agonies of death, religious establishments too are mouldering to decay and bending to their fall. The young and vigorous piety which, with unfeigned delight, we discover in some of them, is generating and embodying the principles of the Congregational System in their very midst, and most happily preparing for the day when religion herself, in all her freshness, shall come forth from the gorgeous palaces which have too much resembled her prison and her grave. Voluntary association of congenial character, which, in one word, is the Congregational System, is the only thing which now has vigour. It is at this moment ruling kings, reforming legislatures, commanding the world. And it is also to renovate the world. To it is confided the grand conflict with whatever remains of anti-christian power, whether Protestant, Papal, or infidel. Let our hearts glow with the anticipation of so splendid and magnificent, so humbling yet cheering, a destiny. O what should not Congregational societies be! What should not every member of them be! Most certainly, far different from what we are. When shall we become such? Shall we ever cherish a spirit worthy of our principles? Shall we ever become the men who may be accounted worthy to convert the world? Or do our self-indulgent and cowardly hearts shrink from an elevation which might charm us, indeed, if it could be climbed without effort, but the labour of attaining which we are too sluggish to encounter?

ON DEMANDING FROM CANDIDATES FOR CHURCH
FELLOWSHIP A RELATION OF THEIR EXPERI-
ENCE AS INDISPENSABLE TO ADMISSION.

As Christian churches of the Congregational order exercise a discretionary power in the admission of persons to their communion, so it is manifest there must be some mode in which their judgment respecting candidates for this privilege is formed. In this point, however, there is no uniformity. The object in all cases being the same—namely, to acquire satisfactory evidence of the applicant's piety—the methods by which it is sought are considerably varied. In one instance, perhaps, the church are satisfied with careful inquiry, and decisive testimony; in another they request a communication from the candidate by letter, conveying to them some particulars of his history and views; in a third they expect him to attend in person, both to give an account of these things, and to answer such questions as may be proposed to him. It is not within the scope of this tract to notice the comparative advantages of these methods. But there is sometimes to be found an additional feature—namely, that the relation of a candidate's experience is made an absolute or indispensable condition of his acceptance. To this authoritative demand the writer feels an objection, and the serious attention of such readers as may be interested in the subject is requested to the grounds on which it rests. As it is principally, if not exclusively, the practice of summoning persons before the church to relate their own experience which is thus enforced, it is upon this practice that our observations will more directly bear.

I. Now let it be considered, in the first place, whether it is not an assumption of authority in the church of Christ, and as such altogether unwarrantable and anti-christian.

It is among the first principles of the New Testament that the sole authority in his church is vested in the Saviour himself; a principle, indeed, much obscured and departed from

by many professors of his name, but one which all Congregational churches prominently avow, as the justification of their separate character, and the very basis of their existence. We hold the Redeemer to be the head of the church; him only, him alone. Within it he has dominion, but none else: or, which is the same thing, no person, or body of persons, has any right to require anything of a religious nature as of their own pleasure or authority.

It may be shown, however, that this is actually done, when any church requires a candidate to relate his experience as an indispensable condition of fellowship.

For, first, this is to require something of our own pleasure, or invention; since Christ himself has not required it. If it could be shown that he has done so, the discussion would be at an end; for the writer, in common with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, would be at the utmost distance from resisting his authority. But this cannot be shown. It has, perhaps, been taken for granted by many, who could scarcely suppose that a practice which had no authority from Christ could have become so consolidated in his churches; but it is not the fact. For persons relating their experience as a condition of church-fellowship, there is not in the sacred Scriptures either precept or precedent; nor is there anything sufficiently like the shadow of either to require examination. Whatever, therefore, may be the other characteristics of this practice, it is unquestionably of human invention.

Nor can any sanction for it be derived from the general principles of the New Testament. Our divine Lord has undoubtedly authorized his churches to form a judgment respecting those who would associate with them; and from hence it may be argued that they are authorized to do whatever they may think necessary for this purpose, and, consequently, to require a relation of the candidate's experience. This argument, however, has two faults. It assumes as a fact what cannot be conceded—namely, that a relation of his experience before the church is necessary to a satisfactory judgment of a candidate, which we hold to be untrue. And it proceeds upon a principle which cannot be allowed—namely, that we are entitled to devise methods of our own for estimating the piety of others. Let the validity of this principle be tried by ascertaining where it would lead. It would undoubtedly justify the use of the mental torture which is

under consideration ; but it would equally justify the infliction of bodily torture too, and all the tender mercies of inquisitorial wickedness as practised by Popery itself, since of all those barbarities it would doubtless be alleged that they were thought necessary to obtain satisfaction of piety in the parties examined. We suppose this will be admitted to be going rather too far. The truth is that, while Christ has authorized us to judge of those who profess his name, he has equally prescribed the methods by which we are to judge. It is to be presumed that these methods are both wise and adequate ; but, whether they are so or not, the very fact of his having prescribed them shows that, if we adopt other means, they must be distinctly characterized as contrivances of our own.

Secondly, As the demand of a relation of the candidate's experience as a condition of church-fellowship is of human invention, so to make it indispensable is to call for it in a way which involves the claim and the attempted exercise of human authority. It is to say, You *shall* relate your experience or you shall not be united to us : and this is plainly an endeavour, without any regard to his willingness or sense of its propriety, to force upon him a human invention. The only reply that can be made to this may be thus stated : We do not wish to compel any persons to relate their experience unless they wish to become members with us, which on their part is quite voluntary ; but if they do, then we have a right to require it, as every free society has a right to make laws for its own management. This reply contains both a fallacy and an error. The fallacy lies in supposing that, because we do not attempt to compel persons to unite with us, we cannot be chargeable with aiming at authority over them. We only use (we say) the power we happen to possess over church privileges. But this is power over what others may be entitled to ; and we use it in such a manner as renders it necessary for them, in order to obtain what they are entitled to, not merely to act out their own sense of duty, nor even to fulfil the word and will of Christ, but to yield subjection to a new power, namely, that of the church, enforcing what Christ has never enjoined. The plain language of such a proceeding is, We have a right to be obeyed, as well as our Lord. In other words, it is a claim, and an attempted exercise, of human authority.

But this argument contains also an error. As a free society (it is said) a church has a right to make rules for its own management. Most assuredly, however, no church has any such right. The churches of Christ are, indeed, free, but they are also bound. As it respects men they are free; but bound as respects the Lord. While most justly and most resolutely claiming to be independent of human control, we are under law to Christ. There is an authority in our churches, though not that of man, an authority most adorable, sacred, and supreme; and to it they are, or ought to be, in most entire subjection, as utterly devoid of authority in themselves. It is true that the church acts with authority in some points; that is, precisely where the Lord Jesus Christ has declared what he will have to be done. In such cases we are neither ashamed to claim authority, nor afraid to exercise it; because it is manifestly not our own, but his. In his name we act, and under his direction; and we become, in fact, the mere instruments by which his authority is exerted, and his will is done. But there is no right principle on which the exercise of authority can be carried further. Where our Lord stops in his requirements we also should stop in ours, since, by virtue of our own will, we are not entitled to make any requirement at all.

Our Lord's authority in his church is both supreme and exclusive. He claims not merely some power, but all power; and forbids the assumption of it by any other hand. This was his language to his disciples: "Ye know that the princes of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; *but it shall not be so among you*" (Matt. xx. 25, 26). And as this claim of exclusive authority on his part is, on the one hand, undeniably just, so, on the other, it is unspeakably important. If any were allowed to men, when would it be agreed to what extent, and by whose hands, it should be exercised? The notion of ecclesiastical authority has brought into most fearful action the pride, the ambition, and the wickedness, of the human heart; and it has generated more mischiefs in the church and the world than Christianity itself has had efficacy to remedy. It is the fundamental principle of all that is anti-christian. It is the very heart of the man of sin. It creates innumerable capabilities of mischief, and awakens all the worst passions of our nature to take advantage of

them. It dictated all the abominations of Popery, and was appealed to in order to sanction them; and, if the principle itself be true, that sanction cannot be withheld. But a principle which sanctions wickedness cannot be true, nor can it be believed for a moment that the blessed Redeemer has opened such avenues of mischief. Did he not know what was in man well enough to prevent so misplaced a confidence? Had he not more regard to the peace of his flock than to let loose in it by his own hand such ravening wolves? Did he not make himself sole King, and, by saying "All ye are brethren," intend to annihilate for ever the contention for dominion? Did he not enjoin by his own authority everything which he has intimated his design to have enjoined by authority at all; and thus make provision for preventing at once the possibility of dispute, and the inclination to disobedience?

It cannot then be admitted for a moment, that any church of Christ has a right to make laws, even for itself, or to make anything binding upon any one of its members. And if it is asked, What are his churches to do in points which he has left undecided? the answer is easy. Make general regulations, but no binding rules. Have customs, but not laws. Agree upon methods to be usually followed, but leave any person who disapproves to the liberty of his own judgment. The circumstances call for nothing more. This is in fact the method in which (the writer believes) all other parts of the Congregational System are conducted; and he has only to plead that this single case should not be excepted. To make an absolute rule upon any point on which Christ has made none, is to exercise power without right; it is therefore oppression: it is to exercise power which belongs to another; it is therefore, also, usurpation. And what shall we say, when we reflect that those whom we oppress are our brethren, and that he whose authority we usurp is our Saviour and our Lord? Alas! Is it this, then, that we intend? The blessed bond which brings us together as partakers of the common salvation, do we mean to use it as an occasion for spiritual domination? Or the glorious and tender Friend whose love brought him down from heaven that he might redeem us from hell, and by whose dying pangs we live, do we mean to usurp his authority, to grasp at his crown? Is it to him that we cannot be content to leave an absolute dominion, and an

undivided throne? Forbid it, every right principle, and every holy feeling! O no! We meant not this. If we have approached such a fault, we cover ourselves with shame, and hasten to retrace our steps. On his head be all the glory.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all!

Every pious heart responds to this language. Only let these feelings guide our conduct, and we shall not err. We shall refuse to make anything binding in the church which Christ has not made so: that is to say, we shall never consent to make the relation of experience an absolute condition of church-fellowship.

II. It might be reckoned sufficient to have established this principle, since what cannot be done without wrong ought not, under any consideration, to be done at all: but, in the second place, let it be further considered whether such a rule would not bear very injuriously upon some particular cases.

There may arise, for example, cases of embarrassment in the candidates on their appearance before the church. Whatever may be the general comfort and liberty enjoyed on this occasion, it is quite possible that the transaction may be connected with feelings so agitated and distressing as to render a person unable to answer the simplest questions. Such cases have actually occurred, and in them the candidates manifestly do not relate their experience. Now suppose the rule in question to be applied to them. The relation of their experience is absolutely necessary to their admission; but they have not related their experience, and therefore cannot be admitted. Every pious, nay, every feeling, mind revolts at the idea. What! reject a candidate of acknowledged piety on account of bodily weakness, or nervous trepidation? Or because he is overcome with agitation, or silenced by fear, or harassed by the tempter? A candidate, too, who has submitted himself to the prescription of the church as far as possible: who has already done violence to his feelings in coming before them, and is prevented from speaking only by the uncontrollable influence of the circumstances into which they have brought him? In the first place to inflict upon him, of their own will and pleasure, no inconsiderable suffering by requiring his attendance, and then to aggravate it into torture by converting his terror into a crime, and thrusting him from the church as unworthy of its fellowship? It is

incredible that a thing so unchristian, and so inhuman, should ever be done. The writer is happy in believing that it never has been done. He knows, on the contrary, that it is the practice of the churches to deal with such candidates very tenderly, and to make proper allowance for their weakness. Were a law made that would lead to harshness towards them, he is persuaded it would be violated; and it would be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. But a law which, if it were made, ought to be broken, surely ought not to be made. A line of conduct which it would be wrong to pursue it must be wrong to resolve upon. If rules are made with any wisdom, it lies in their adaptation to be advantageously kept; and few things can be more mischievous or absurd, than to give a plan which cannot be followed the force and authority of an absolute rule. How can a church who mean to receive a candidate without a relation of his experience under circumstances of some particular kind, declare that they will never dispense with it at all?

Further: It is possible that some persons may apply for admission to whom it may not be agreeable to relate their experience in the presence of the church. Such persons may be summarily dealt with, and their suit be immediately denied; but it deserves to be considered whether it would be right to do so.

When an application for fellowship is made to a church, they are called upon to act in a most serious and interesting matter. They have either to grant, or to deny, the privileges of Christian communion. The enjoyment of these is, undoubtedly, to be regarded as a matter of the deepest interest to the applicant himself, who must be supposed also to be a brother in the Lord; so that the decision of the church will inevitably have a powerful bearing on the feelings of a fellow-disciple. The occasion requires, therefore, the most careful exercise of brotherly affection, and a jealous watchfulness lest they should grieve one whom the Redeemer hath loved.

And more than this. A church is thus called upon to dispose of privileges which are not their own, neither are they at their own disposal. By Christ himself were they created, and by him are they conferred upon a company of his disciples, to whom also he has confided their extension to others; not, however, to whom they please, but to whom he pleases; not according to rules framed by them, but according to

principles ordained by himself. It is by the authority of Christ that any person becomes entitled to them, and by an application to Christ that he is to acquire them. An application to any of his churches for this purpose is the same thing as an application to himself; it is the appointed and the only way of applying to him in this case, and it should be his answer that proceeds from their lips. The circumstances, therefore, plainly involve a serious responsibility. There is a wide difference between power and right. Power is in the hands of the church, and they can decide in what way they please; but, since their power is intrusted to them by Christ, to be used for executing his will, it surely behoves them to see that they use it according to this-rule. The admission or rejection of candidates, therefore, is a point which demands the utmost jealousy of ourselves. We may be influenced by a great variety of considerations, but the questions we have to ask all resolve themselves into one: Lord, what wilt THOU have us to do? Has this candidate done all that THOU requirest for admission into thy church? The result to which this principle leads is obvious. Our blessed Lord has not required a relation of experience as a condition of fellowship; neither, therefore, may we. Nor can we, without incurring the guilt of exceeding our instructions, and disowning our responsibility, as well as running the fearful hazard of doing what he would not sanction, and repelling those whom he would have received.

But perhaps it is asked, Why should a candidate object? Or at all events, why should he push his objection to so extreme a length, and refuse what the church wishes? Is it not an established and an ancient custom? Will he not appear presumptuous and self-important in opposing it, and in it the opinion of so many wise and good men? Is it not a very expedient and desirable thing; tending to his own good, and to the edification and delight of the church? Is it not his privilege to have such an opportunity of glorifying God, and his duty to embrace it?

To all this, and much more of the same kind, the simple answer is, Perhaps it may be so, but the candidate does not feel the weight of these considerations; and, as these matters are clearly within the province of private judgment, he begs permission to judge for himself. It may be the case, though he is not aware of it, that he is backward to his duty; but

are his brethren entitled to scourge him to it? He may even be strangely and unconsciously blind to his privilege; but what do his brethren mean by dragging him to it against his will? Though he does not see it, what the church propose to him may be for his good, and yet more for their gratification; but, in order to attain either of these objects satisfactorily, he must act voluntarily, and not be exhibited in chains. He may be so unhappy as to differ from past generations; but he is desirous to bear his misfortune by itself, and not to be further afflicted by receiving lashes from his brethren on account of it. And why should they deny him these very small indulgences?

It may be thought, however, that his refusal indicates something worse than this; an unwillingness to submit to examination; a contempt of the authority of the church; together with a disposition to be disobliging and self-willed, almost inconsistent with the sincerity of his piety, and quite destructive of his usefulness. These are serious charges; and, considering the slight foundation on which they rest, are by no means characteristic of the charity that hopeth all things. But let us meet them.

The refusal of a candidate to relate his experience before the church is supposed to discover an unwillingness to bear inquiry. We answer that the inference is groundless. If a man objects to be judged of by any of the methods which Christ has appointed, set him down as a conscious hypocrite; but by what authority are the devices of men to be exalted to the same level as tests of sincerity? Or, if this principle be admitted to justify one inquisitor, who wishes to torture his heart, how shall he defend himself against the next, who may have an equal propensity to torture the members of his body? The truth is, that a man gives all necessary evidence of his sincerity if he is willing to be tried by Christ's own rules; and this, for all that appears to the contrary, the objector may truly be.

His refusal may be construed, however, into contempt of the authority of the church. We have already said enough to show that the churches have no authority, and, therefore, it is impossible it should be despised. But suppose a church should make such a pretension, how would the case stand then? Their indignation, it appears, is roused, and their wrath fulminated against the culprit, as for a high crime and

misdemeanour; not, however, because he is not a Christian, nor because they do not think him so; not because he sets himself in opposition to the laws of Christ, or fails in any part of his will; but because he dares to call in question the authority of his fellow-disciples in the kingdom of their common Lord. What more, in principle, has the church of Rome ever done? What more did Nebuchadnezzar do, when he commanded all men to worship the golden image? Here, indeed, the idol is not of gold, but of clay; whether of clay or of gold, however, it is entitled to no respect, but ought equally to be despised and trampled in the dust. How long shall such pretensions linger among churches which ought for ever to be the nurseries of religious liberty, as they were once its refuge! Are they rather to be its grave?

But at all events (it may be added), if the church has no authority to be yielded to, its request ought to ensure compliance. The request of a church of Christ ought, undoubtedly, to be very respectfully received, and not refused without sufficient reason. There is an essential difference, however, between a request and a demand; the words cannot be both applicable to one and the same thing. If a church require the relation of experience as indispensable to fellowship, it is but artfulness to call it a request; a disguise quite unworthy of an honest cause. If they are sincere in calling it a request, then they no longer mean to demand it; and if they do not, there can be no objection to their saying that they do not, and renouncing the authoritative character of the proceeding altogether. In this case the controversy is at an end. But if, though artfully called a request, it is still in fact a demand, it is as a demand that the candidate justly regards it; and, never having been called upon to entertain a request, he cannot be chargeable with refusing one.

But suppose the demand were abandoned, and a request sincerely substituted for it; and suppose, also, that a candidate declines compliance. Is he therefore to be punished? or to be pronounced a man of bad dispositions and unworthy of fellowship? The idea is monstrous. Whether to comply with a request or not, is a matter undoubtedly to be referred to the sole decision of the person to whom it is made; compliance is a favour, but denial is no wrong, and can entitle no man to be angry. Moreover, sufficient reasons may be assigned for the specific denial in question. Were it only

that a candidate is distressingly affected by the thought of it, and feels wholly incompetent to the task, this ought to be admitted as satisfactory; because it is grievously unkind to urge any person to do for our pleasure what is greatly to his pain. Or if a candidate should allege his opinion that, in so important a matter as the admission of members into his church, the will of Christ must be supposed to be fully declared, and that it ought to be scrupulously adhered to, and nothing additional permitted even by way of request; this also would be a sufficient reason for his objection. He might be solitary, and even wrong, in his opinion; but, being of that opinion, it is right he should act in conformity with it, and he would be far more seriously wrong if he were to give up what he thought the will of his Lord. He might be sincerely, and even warmly, desirous to oblige the church, but his views of the Word of God would forbid the indulgence of his feelings. And in such cases as these what would the church have to complain of? Here is nothing unamiable, or unchristian. And is it against the conscientious and the trembling that their wrath should be levelled? What an extremity of vengeance, too, seems to be resolved upon! The candidate (says a church) is disobliging; he denies our request; his reasons, indeed, may be good, but still he is disobliging, and we will not receive him. Alas! 'tis a heavy punishment for so small a crime. If they had before them a hypocrite, or a profligate, they could do no more. Upon their voice depends the enjoyment of blessed privileges which the candidate holds most dear; yet they have no mercy. Might not a less severe punishment have sufficed for holding a good conscience, or being born with tremulous nerves?

But (it may be alleged) in this exercise of individual judgment there is a presumption which ought to be checked. This is by no means true. We maintain on the contrary that there is in it, when conscientious, an excellency and value which entitle it to be commended and cherished. It is in strict accordance with the nature of true religion, which is a matter lying exclusively between God and the soul, and in which every individual, however insignificant, is both entitled and required to come into immediate contact with his Maker, and to act under his sole authority. It is the very principle of uprightness; the germ of all that is excellent in character, and the pledge of all that is honour-

able in conduct. Give up this principle, and at once you destroy integrity, and sap the foundations of piety. Instead of religion being the service of God, it becomes a system of timeserving and the pleasing of men. This individual appeal to divine authority Christ has done everything to cherish; shall we do anything to undermine it? To secure our privileges we have acted upon it ourselves, and in the face of a world's frown; shall we endeavour to frown a man out of countenance who follows our example? God forbid: or, if we ever should do so, may every such individual be firm enough to treat our displeasure with the same neglect we have justly shown to that of others! It is, doubtless, very possible that a man may profess to be actuated by conscientious feelings when he is not; and whenever this can be ascertained, let him be dealt with as a hypocrite. It is possible, too, that a man may be led by his conscience to refuse what a church conscientiously feel themselves warranted by Christ to demand; and in this case let them maintain what they believe to be the will of their Lord, whatever be its consequences. But in every other instance the operation of conscience should be wholly unimpeded by us. It may appear to us to be both ignorant and foolish; to act where it need not, or to act amiss: but let no man interfere with it; it is for Christ to bind it, and Christ alone.

III. We have thus endeavoured to show that a rule demanding from candidates a relation of their experience as an indispensable condition of church-fellowship would bear very injuriously on particular cases, and that on this account it ought not to exist. We now add a third objection, namely, its tendency to prevent the increase of the church.

To what extent it may hitherto have operated in this direction we have no means of ascertaining, and opinions may vary. It is manifest, however, that the necessity of relating their experience is not at all adapted to bring persons forward, but, on the contrary, to check and discourage them. It is very well known, also, that by these circumstances some persons have been actually hindered for many years, and others altogether deterred. To turn, however, from the past to the present. Times have somewhat changed. The spirit of free inquiry has touched upon this practice; the number of persons who think it unauthorized and objectionable is on the increase, and equally so is their disposition to claim the liberty with which Christ has made them free. It is quite

too late for our churches to expect that the spirit of scriptural inquiry and Christian freedom can be quelled by assumptions of supremacy appropriate only to the dark ages. We ask, therefore, Do the Congregational churches wish for their own increase? Is prosperity dear to them? If it be, let this expedient for diminishing their numbers be abandoned. The methods which Christ prescribed, and the apostles practised, are sufficient to separate the church from the world; why should we, by adopting a greater and unnecessary strictness, divide brethren from each other? If the laws of Christ keep our churches from being large, we submit; let him indicate his own ways. But why should we turn our ingenuity to so unwelcome an end, and set up disagreeable objects at the entrance, as it were, to scare people from our doors? Why, of our own accord, make a demand which tends to overawe the humble, to offend the wise, and to make indignant the upright? A demand, therefore, which tends to exclude from the churches precisely those who would become the most valuable members—namely, persons of well-informed judgment, of modest carriage, and of sterling integrity?

Such are the sentiments which the writer has been led to entertain of the method under discussion; and, if they should appear to the reader to have any considerable weight, he may perhaps be ready to think that there must on the other hand be some powerful reasons in favour of a practice so strongly objectionable. He will find, however, that this is by no means the case. But let us fairly meet them, and ascertain their value.

It has been held necessary to demand a relation of experience before the church from candidates for church-fellowship, in order to obtain satisfactory evidence of their piety. In the necessity of the latter the writer of this tract most unequivocally agrees, nor can any man dread more than himself a diminution of the jealous care with which the admission of members is very properly watched. But this is nothing to the purpose.

For, supposing at present (which is by no means granted) that the practice is adapted to afford the satisfaction required, it cannot be maintained that it is indispensable to this end. Not to urge that, if it were so, Christ would surely have sanctioned it, there are plainly other methods by which the same examination may be instituted, and the same information acquired: as, for example, by letter, or by conversation,

either with the pastor, the deacons, or a deputation of the church. It matters not that these modes may be thought less eligible; so long as the information sought can be obtained by them, it cannot be said that any other method is indispensable. If it be so, it must be for one of these two reasons; either that the candidate cannot be depended on to speak the truth, or that the deputation cannot be relied upon to acquit themselves faithfully: if the former be the case, the candidate is unfit to be received at all; if the latter, the church contains no members capable of judging. And, whichever side of this dilemma is chosen, the appearance before the church becomes as useless as any other means. The fact is that, in this case, the particular circumstances in which the examination is made add nothing to the value of the result; it is the information itself which guides the decision, and the only material point is that it be acquired in a method affording satisfaction of its truth. The candidate's relation of his experience before the church, then, is not necessary to the evidence of his piety; so that the alleged reason for its being made necessary to his admission falls to the ground.

But we go further, and affirm that the method thus advocated does not afford any considerable measure of the satisfaction desired. In the great majority of instances nothing like a clear account of a work of grace is given by the candidates; and the information really obtained is for the most part elicited by leading questions, which suggest their own answer, while in some cases nothing at all is uttered, or worse than nothing. In the few instances in which there is given a narrative of considerable fulness, the pleasure is marred by a doubt whether, judging from the past, freedom of speech be not a too probable indication of unstable character. A practice which leads to no better result than this, can hardly be worth contending for on the ground of the satisfaction it yields respecting the candidates.

Nor, in truth, is it at all adapted to the object in view. A church of Christ wish a person to speak freely and clearly of the dealings of God with his soul—a point on which there is almost always a great degree of timidity and embarrassment in a young convert, and most especially when others are to sit in judgment upon him: yet for this purpose they appoint a set occasion, they bring him before a large company, and place him in circumstances above all things adapted to throw him into agitation, and seal up his tongue. They wish to

have an opportunity of examining him touching his conversion and his views—a proceeding that should always be conducted with tenderness, in order to avoid the exposure of his ignorance, and to diminish the pain of a possible disapproval: yet for this purpose also they bring him into public, where he is almost sure to be confused and afraid to utter a word, where the discovery of any defect becomes unspeakably more painful, and where rejection would go near to break his heart. It would be difficult to conceive a method worse adapted to carry on an effective scrutiny, or to gain satisfactory information.

And, in point of fact, little if any stress appears to be laid by the churches on the relation of the candidate's experience. Those who say little, or perhaps those who say nothing, are received, as well as those who say much, provided a decisive testimony is borne to their character. In such cases the conduct of a church laughs at its own rule, and would almost entitle others to laugh at it too. It is to say one moment, with the magnificent air of resolute authority, No person shall be received without relating his experience; and the next to receive a person who has related no experience at all: the whole artillery of the church being thus expended upon an object which is not gained, and its high authority baffled by weak nerves or an unwilling tongue. All that they attain in these instances is the appearance of the candidate in their presence, which, indeed, seems to afford the satisfaction required; since it is no way material whether he gives an account of his experience, or substitutes for it an unconquerable silence, or a few hysterical tremors. Why, therefore, should a church declare that to be indispensable which is clearly of little value, and with which they themselves are in the habit of continually dispensing? Or why dispense with it when candidates are wrought upon by mere bodily weakness, and refuse to do so when they have a rational and a Christian motive? That upon which reliance respecting them is principally placed is the testimony of those who know them. Upon this many members have been received without any account of their experience, though they have come before the church; and, if this part of the business, which certainly affords no information at all, were dispensed with too, the decisive satisfaction derived from testimony might still be obtained, and the methods of private investigation carried into more effective operation.

It is apprehended, however, in the next place, that, if candidates are allowed to escape from this attempt to relate their experience, the practice will fall into disuse. It is undoubtedly possible that in some degree this may be the case; but it is to be presumed that no persons will decline relating their experience who either think it ought to be done, or would feel pleasure in doing it: and, if it be so plainly right and so ravishingly delightful as has been alleged, this number surely will not be small. But let us admit the worst, and suppose that the custom of relating experiences should fall into disuse. What an appalling fact then comes out respecting the custom itself—namely, that it cannot exist but by force of bad principles. Only abandon the oppression of the brethren and the usurpation of Christ's authority, and it falls! After all that has been said of it as a manifest duty and an exquisite privilege, it differs so widely from all other privileges and duties, it carries so little conviction and awakens so little pleasure, that, if it were not enforced by the merciless hand of domineering brethren, it would be totally neglected, and even gladly escaped from as a burden too heavy to be borne! This is one of the severest things that can possibly be said of it; and, as it is the confession of its advocates, it entitles us to say, Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee. If this be its character, it is high time it was abandoned.

It may, indeed, involve the loss of some of the pleasures to which members of Congregational churches have been accustomed; a loss, however, which would not be felt equally by them all, and which might easily be overrated. And there are two considerations by which, in the most extreme cases, it may be greatly mitigated. The first is, that nothing can justly be esteemed a pleasure which is at variance with rectitude. Considerations of duty hold the first place, and should operate with the greatest force. My real happiness most certainly lies in being, and in doing, what is right; and, if the adoption of right principles leads me to the sacrifice of any of my wishes, the sacrifice ought to yield me more pleasure than the indulgence. What gratification can be acceptable to me, if I know that I must act wrong to obtain it? The consciousness of rectitude is the first and best of pleasures; and, essential to the value, it ought to be essential to the existence, of every other. The second is that, if in this case some pleasures are resigned, others are acquired.

Is there no pleasure, for example, in an affectionate and jealous maintenance of the authority of our King? Is there no pleasure in relieving the brethren from a burden which many have found so grievous? Is there no pleasure in exhibiting to the world a genuine exemplification of the great principles of religious liberty, by showing them that we as much disdain to exercise tyranny over others as to submit to it ourselves? Is there no pleasure in facilitating the increase of our churches, when it can be done, too, not only without a departure from the will of Christ, but by an actual approximation to it? To a truly pious heart these cannot be small enjoyments, and they are strongly recommended by the consideration that they are pure from errors and from mischiefs. Shall we be less happy if we embrace them in exchange for our former delights, the very remembrance of which may well be embittered by the thought that they have been found amidst the sighs of the trembling, and wrung from reluctant hearts, that they have been procured by the oppression of a brother, and at the expense of a Saviour's honour?

If little force, however, can be allowed either to the plea of necessity or to that of pleasure, may not some hesitation be justified on the ground of utility? Will it be well to receive members into the church without any acquaintance at all, as strangers rather than as brethren?

The writer answers this question with the utmost frankness and delight, because he is convinced that right principles never clash with real usefulness. And his answer is, Certainly not. Nor will such a result follow. By affectionate request, a church may still, perhaps, induce many to gratify them by relating the dealings of God with their souls. In other cases the same details may be yet more amply communicated by letter, a mode to which, unless difficulty be created by its being made authoritative, no objection can be anticipated. Or, if ever such an unlooked-for case should arise, a deputation might be most efficiently employed to solicit the information desired. Everything that is delightful, or valuable, in the reception of a member would thus be obtained; and in a manner, too, combining the gratification of the church with the happiness of the candidates, and the honour of our common Lord.

“NOT THAT WE HAVE DOMINION OVER YOUR FAITH, BUT ARE HELPERS OF YOUR JOY” (2 Cor. i. 24).

THEOLOGICAL PIECES.



HUMAN NATURE—ITS RELIGIOUS ELEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND GUIDE.*

I.

HUMAN NATURE—ITS RELIGIOUS ELEMENT.

UNDOUBTEDLY, the most interesting phenomenon presented to the observer of the human race is its religion. It is here that we see the stirring of its deepest feelings, the movement of its mightiest powers, and the development of its highest destinies.

We speak thus of THE RELIGION OF THE RACE, without any distinction of its kinds, whether into the false and the true, or into the more or less erroneous and corrupt. However diversified, and however apparently contradictory even, in its manifestation and results, it is in all cases the working, not merely of one and the same nature, but of one and the same element of that nature, as it may be acted upon or be brought into action by diverse objects and influences. False and true worship are equally worship, and worship made what it is only by its correspondence with the objects by which it is awakened, and in which the falsehood and truth respectively may be said to reside.

In the preceding paragraph we have assumed a principle which it will be proper to bring somewhat more into the light. We have spoken of religion as one of the many workings of human nature, and as the working of a peculiar element in it. Now, we know that religion, broadly contemplated, requires to be regarded both as objective and subjective. There is, no doubt, an objective religion—that is to say, there are objects and ideas by which the religious emotions of mankind are called forth. And, as these objects

* This series of Papers appeared in the first three volumes of the *Monthly Christian Spectator*—the volumes for 1851, 1852, and 1853.

and ideas are of widely diversified character, so they naturally throw themselves into kindred groups, constituting so many different religions, or systems of religious conceptions, as the Zend, the Buddhist, the Mahometan, the Christian.

But there is also a subjective religion—a religion, that is to say, which consists in the sentiments, emotions, and purposes of man; or, in other words, in an excitement of the human mind corresponding with the objects presented to it, and exerting their influence upon it. It is in this sense that we now speak of religion, and in this sense only.

Religion thus subjectively regarded—the religion of the human race—presents to us an aspect of great and illimitable diversity, an aspect almost chaotic. The religious exercises of no two human minds are perfectly similar, so that there might, in one sense, be said to be as many religions as there are men; they may, however, be, without difficulty and not unnaturally, thrown into groups corresponding with the classification of the objects by which they are excited. Yet these groups are still numerous and various, and one instinctively feels a desire to see them reduced, if possible, not only to a smaller number, but to some common and simple element of which they may be taken to be only varied manifestations. It is in this view that we have ventured to speak of “the religious element of human nature.”

And we think we have not ventured too far. For, as religion, generally speaking, may be distinguished into the objective and the subjective, so subjective religion, it appears to us, may be distinguished into the concrete and the abstract. Very much of a man's religion, for example—all of it that is visible, and a great deal that is invisible—consists in acts of worship, deeds of piety or duty, and exercises of feeling; but, when we have mentioned these things, we are far from having spoken of *the whole* of his religion. There is yet something behind all this, or at the basis of it, which causes it to be what it is, which would be if these things were not, and which is when these things are not. These are all temporary and transient, but something permanent is within, and something which not only makes feelings and deeds to be what they are now, but guarantees a similarity as often as feelings and doings return. There is the man behind these actings of the man; a certain permanent and ruling state of sentiment and choice, which, while all the rest may

be regarded as religion in the concrete, we have used the liberty of calling religion in the abstract—or which, if it please our readers better, we will call the essence of religion.

From the existence of such a permanent state of sentiment and choice in the human mind in relation to religious objects, it is natural, and, indeed, obvious, to infer that a capacity for forming such a state belongs to the race. This is an original faculty of man, a primitive power of being religious, broadly distinguishing mankind from the brute creation, and most congruously associating itself with their rational endowments. This it is which is brought into play when religious sentiment and action are manifested in *any* modes, whether false or true; as truly in the varied forms of Pagan idolatry—whether in the Chaldaic adoration of the stars, or in prostration before an African fetish—as in the worship of the living God.

Farther than this, however, it is necessary to go. It is not enough to affirm that there is in man the capacity of forming that ruling state of sentiment and choice which we find to exist; there must be some primary sentiment or conception, on the basis, and under the influence, of which it is actually formed. And after this primary sentiment or conception we inquire. Our question is, What sentiment or conception has place so universally or profoundly in man's heart as to supply the impulse to religious development? In other words, What is the religious element in human nature?

Mr. Morell, after Schleiermacher, has answered this question by placing "the peculiar essence of religion" in man's "sense of dependence."* We cannot say that this representation is satisfactory to us. Without doubt, indeed, a sense of dependence must be deemed natural to the human race, and inseparable from the condition of dependence they so manifestly and palpably occupy; but it requires to be shown how this is, or can be, the germ of religious life. The argument adduced is that the sense of dependence *may* give origin to the "sense of deity," or to the conception of God. Even if this were admitted, however, all that could follow would be that the sense of dependence *might* be *one* of the germs of the religious life, not that it could be exclusively such; since it is not shown to be impossible that the conception of God may be derived from other sources also. Nor would this be

* Morell's *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 76.

the only objection. The sense of dependence, we are instructed, *may*—not *must*—give origin to a sense of deity. The difference seems to us to be essential. If all that can be asserted is that the sense of dependence *may* give origin to a sense of deity, then it remains true that it *may not* do so; and a sentiment of uncertain operation cannot, we think, be fitly regarded as the source of a universal and constant development. But we do not know that the principle is to be admitted. How is the sense of dependence to give origin to the sense of deity? By, we are told, the following process. “By means of it we can reach the sphere of infinity; now the moment our consciousness attains that elevation in which our finite self becomes nothing in the presence of infinity, eternity, and omnipotence, the accompanying state of emotion is one which involves an absolute object; and *such an emotion must be equivalent to a sense of deity.*” Clearly, this is reasoning in a circle. We are first to place ourselves “in the presence of infinity, eternity, and omnipotence” (which we cannot do otherwise than as we form conceptions of them), and then “the accompanying state of emotion” will be one which implies the existence of the infinite, the eternal, and the omnipotent—that is, of God. Of course it will, but this is only saying that we must conceive of God in the first instance, and then derive our conception of him out of the emotion which the conception of him has produced.

We are, we confess, far from being convinced that the sense of dependence can give origin to the sense of deity. Mr. Morell admits that, in order to do so, the sense of dependence must become “absolute;” and we do not see how it is to become absolute, but “in the presence of” the absolute, or the divine, already conceived. To this theory of religion, however, we have many other objections than that it is “not proven.” It seems to us altogether inadequate to account for the universal characteristics of the religious life. Very unsatisfactory to us is the following statement:—

“What we mean is this: that the sense of dependence *accompanying* all our mental operations gives them the peculiar hue of piety. Thinking alone cannot be religious; but thinking, accompanied by a sense of dependence on the infinite reason, is *religious thought*.* Activity alone cannot be religious; but activity carried on under a

* The italics in this extract are Mr. Morell's.

sense of absolute dependence upon infinite power, is *religious action*. In a word, it is this peculiar mode of feeling pervading all our powers, faculties, and inward phenomena, which gives them a religious character.”*

This appears to us to be a very superficial and unreal view of the religious development of humanity, even in its lowest and most degraded forms, and a totally inadequate account of its higher and more exalted aspects. We think, also, that the representation is superficial under the guise of being profound. “The peculiar essence of religion,” we are to believe, is the “sense of dependence,” and this because the “sense of dependence” gives origin to the “sense of deity.” It is, then, after all, the sense of deity, and not the sense of dependence, which is the peculiar essence of religion, the sense of dependence serving no other purpose in this theory than to supply a source from whence the sense of deity may be derived. And we see not why Mr. Morell, and ourselves as inquirers after the same element, may not be contented to rest at this point, and to say that the religious element in man is the sense of deity; or, in other words, that the conception of God is the origin and basis of all those excitements and developments of human nature which are called religious. It is their relation to this great and dominant conception which gives to all such developments their peculiar character as religious; it is their common relation to this conception which gives to religious developments of various and contrasted aspects their character of fundamental unity; and it is the wonderful variety of forms into which this primary conception may be modified which accounts for the wide diversity of religious manifestation. Now this conception of God, or, as Mr. Morell phrases it, this “sense of deity,” we know to have in man’s heart universally a profound place, and a more or less commanding and inextinguishable influence.

The desire of pushing inquiry further than this (and further, perhaps, than it *can* be pushed) has led many philosophical writers to speculate on the question, *how* the idea of God enters into the mind of man. So we have just seen Schleiermacher, and after him Morell, altogether, as we judge, without success. A writer of a very dissimilar stamp† has taken a different view of the question, and one on which we mean now to offer a few remarks.

* Morell, pp. 77, 78. † M’Cosh on the Moral Government of God.

We have no intention at present to take any general notice of the interesting and important volume to which we refer, beyond expressing our warm concurrence in the eulogies it has received from the critical press. We notice only the first section of the Introduction, which the author devotes entirely to examining "the sources of our idea of God." Entering somewhat at large into this subject, he enumerates the following :—

"*First*—There is the design exhibited in the separate material works of God.

"*Secondly*—There are the relations which the physical world bears to man, which we call the providential arrangements of the divine government.

"*Thirdly*—There is the human soul, with its consciousness, its intelligence, and its benign feelings.

"*Fourthly*—There are the moral qualities of man.

"Now such seem to be the four natural sources from which the human mind derives its idea of the Divine Being. . . . Each class of objects furnishes its quota of evidence. The physical works of God give indications of power and skill. The providence of God exhibits a governing and controlling energy. Our spiritual nature lifts us up to the conception of a living, a personal, and spiritual God. . . . These three classes of objects, as bringing before us nature, animate and inanimate, establish the benevolence, as well as the wisdom, of God. . . . Still, when it has reached to this point, and combined these three classes of phenomena, the human mind is not satisfied, for it feels that there must be much in the character of God on which these objects cast little or no light. . . . The mind feels as if it must have left some element out of calculation; nor will it rest satisfied till, by the aid of the moral law in the heart (being the fourth object), it rises to the contemplation of a God who loves virtue and hates vice" (pp. 2-12).

We have a general feeling of dissatisfaction with this representation on several grounds, which we will proceed to specify.

In the first place, we think the whole inquiry misdirected; that is, directed to an inappropriate and impossible object. Dr. McCosh professes to open to us the sources from which our idea of God *is actually* derived. He assumes, then, hypothetically, the case of a man in whom the idea of God does not yet exist, in order to trace him in the actual derivation of it from the sources he enumerates. Such a case, however, is not possible, either in fact or in imagination. Not in fact, because all men, from the progenitor of the race to the latest of his posterity, have received, and will receive, the idea of God in a different method, namely, by direct instruction—

that is, by being in some way or other told of it. Not in imagination, because the man who strives to imagine it is disqualified for the attempt by himself having received from tradition the idea in question. The first man received the idea of God, no doubt, from some direct manifestation of God himself, and all other men have received it one from another. An inquiry, therefore, into the way in which men actually do acquire the idea of God we regard as altogether futile. The result of it, as in this case, can be nothing more than a demonstration that, if we had not already such a conception, there are phenomena around and within us which would have justified, and might have suggested, it.

In the second place, the process indicated is far too protracted and laborious to be satisfactorily taken as that by which the idea of God is generally arrived at, even if some such process were admitted to be requisite. Any one of our readers who will take the trouble to re-peruse the passage we have quoted, and to go through, in as nearly a practical manner as he may, the respective arguments indicated in it—and still more, any one who will read the arguments themselves as expounded in the section from which we have taken it—will find, we think, that the conducting of them involves a process of ratiocination far more extended and complex than can be supposed to have taken place in the minds of mankind at large. In truth, to say nothing of the incapacity of a very large portion of our race at the maturest period of their lives for such an operation, the idea of God manifestly takes its proper place, and exerts its full influence, in the minds of the young—even of children—long before anything like such a process can be supposed to be possible.

In the third place, we do not think the argumentation employed by any means satisfactory in itself. In various parts it is, in our judgment, inconclusive. For example, the author relies on "nature, animate and inanimate," to establish the benevolence of God. He culls a few examples undoubtedly sufficiently beautiful; yet we are conscious while we read them that they are not samples, but that there is a wide world of physical evil which he is pleased for his purpose to ignore, but which, broadly and fairly viewed, makes the inferring of God's benevolence from the works of nature a matter of no little difficulty. Again, he says that it is our own "spiritual nature that lifts us up to the conception of a

living, a personal, and a spiritual God ;” a conception with which we are to connect previously formed ideas of power and skill as indicated by the works of nature : it strikes us, however, that the indications of power and skill in the works of nature contribute their quota to the idea of God, only on the supposition that there is a previous conception of a personal being with whom these attributes may be identified. And, to take a third instance, the author relies on man’s natural conscience to prove the holiness of God, forgetting that man’s conscience has become, to a vast extent, so defiled and blinded as to associate his own deepest pollutions with his conceptions of deity.

In the last place, it appears to us that Dr. M’Cosh substantially gives up his own scheme in a passage which we will now extract. After giving his view of the human conscience, he says :—

“Now the conscience is a ready and powerful means of suggesting the idea of God to the mind. We believe that it is by it, rather than by any careful observation of nature, material or spiritual, that mankind have their thoughts directed to God. It is not so much by what he has around him as by what he feels within, that man is led to believe in a ruler of the world” (p. 8).

Why, as comparing the four alleged sources of evidence among themselves, we think so too ; and this reduces the practical operation of the other three to a very small amount, even if any influence at all be exerted by them.

This, however, after all, is not our real view of the matter. Conscience is itself, according to our judgment, indebted for all its real power to instruction. What man would be if uninstructed there have been, happily, but very small means of knowing ; but what has been deducible from a few melancholy facts has tended little to elevate our idea of what may be expected from his untaught powers. Conscience is, no doubt, a primitive faculty of the human mind—a susceptibility of excitement by moral conceptions, or by conceptions of right and wrong ; and, such conceptions being given, it acts, but it waits for the communication of them—that is, for instruction. In like manner there is in man a primitive faculty of religion, as well as of morals—that is, a susceptibility of excitement by the conception of God ; but it waits for that conception to be communicated by instruction. Tell a child about God, and the conception at once finds a

place within him, and is thenceforth as a part of his very nature. His susceptibility to the influence of this idea is his capacity for religion; and his conception of God—or, in Mr. Morell's language, his "sense of deity"—is the fundamental sentiment, or conception, which constitutes the origin and basis of his religious life in whatever form it may be developed.

We cannot tell whether it may seem unsatisfactory to our readers that we have thus detached the conception of God in the human mind from the sources to which it has ordinarily been referred, and ascribed it to a different one; yet this we may say in conclusion, that our scheme certainly harmonizes with the methods of divine providence. As God did not throw the first man into the world untaught, so neither was it any part of his plan that any one of the descendants of the first man should come into existence apart from the process of instruction. The parental relation, which benignantly provides for the physical wants of the new generation, provides no less benignantly for their intellectual and religious wants. Every parent communicates to his children his own ideas of God, as he does of other things; and thus from a living source is the great conception perpetuated in the world. We know of none besides that is really in action, and we can conceive of none that would be so prompt, so facile, and so effectual.

II.

HUMAN NATURE—ITS RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

In our former paper we inquired after the primitive power to which it would seem that all the religious developments of human nature must be referred; and we came to the conclusion that the religious element in human nature is one and simple—namely, a susceptibility of emotion from the idea of God. From the unity and simplicity of this primary power, or capacity, of religion in the human race, we now revert to the diversity of its developments; a fact which meets us on every hand, and which is unquestionably worthy of more than a passing notice.

And, first of all, it may be worth while to endeavour to form some correct estimate of the fact itself, by noticing briefly its more prominent aspects.

The modes of religious development among mankind are immensely numerous. No justice is done to them by enumerating their principal forms—such as Paganism, Mahometanism, Christianity; since each principal form is minutely divided, and its name does but stand at the head of a long list of subordinate varieties. Of Paganism, for example, the kinds are all but endless; and even the Paganism of a single country, as of India, for instance, breaks itself up into almost innumerable sects. It is the same with the Moslem and the Christian developments, in which varying shades of doctrine and of worship are of incessant recurrence. Even the members of the same sect arrange themselves by minuter peculiarities into still smaller groups, so that it may almost be said there are as many forms of religious development as there are individuals of mankind.

The religious developments of the human race are of extreme diversity. A large number of them, indeed, it would be easy to gather together into kindred assemblages, and, by some general affinities, to class under comprehensive terms; but, when everything should have been done in this direction which it might be possible to do, it would be found that the groups themselves would be divided one from another by strongly marked and irreconcilable differences. In no satisfactory sense would it be possible to call the whole, Religion. Idolatry, in its various modes, stands out in broad and palpable opposition to all forms of intellectual theism; while the philosophic theism of both ancient and modern times, more familiarly known as the religion of nature, is at a far and hopeless remove from the remedial system unfolded in the Bible. The differences are essential, both in the primary ideas entertained, and in the results which are practically wrought out in the character and conduct of mankind.

Yet all these are religious developments of human nature; that is, they arise from the excitement of the religious faculty, or of the susceptibility of emotion under the idea of God, which characterizes the human being. They spring, then, with all their diversity, from one and the same source. The fact is surely a singular and a striking one. Somewhat of unity, or, at least, of common resemblance, might in the first instance, with much plausibility, have been expected in the developments of a power so simple; and the inquiry cannot be wholly without interest or instruction—By what law is

it, or by virtue of what influences, that those who possess in their nature a common sensibility to the idea of deity are, in the practical operations of this sensibility, wide as the poles asunder? This, in a word, is the question which we now ask, and which we propose to answer.

In looking for the causes of this diversity, we direct our attention in the first instance to the great and exclusive object of religious regard—to God himself. Here, however, we find no corresponding variableness, of which the ever-shifting religious developments of the human race may be considered as the counterpart. God is one and unchangeable, the same always, the same to all. The last phrase we have used, however, is in one view liable to modification, and, indeed, requires it. The practical question is not so much what God is in himself, as what he is in our conceptions. He is *to us* what we think him to be; really this, and no more. Attributes of God which are to us unknown, disbelieved, or unappreciated, are to us as though they did not exist; since it is only through our knowledge and appreciation of them that they can exercise any influence upon us; and, on the contrary, attributes which do not belong to God will, if we think they do, have upon us the effect of realities. Hence, practically speaking, the fact that all men have not the same ideas of God lays the foundation for asserting that, in one sense, God is not the same to all. One and unchangeable in himself, the individuals of mankind more or less widely misunderstand and misconceive him, breaking into fragments, or palpably distorting, his glorious form, as that of the sun is shivered among the ripples of the ocean. Yet it is what men think of God that moves them; and hence it may be said that there are practically many gods—that is to say, many objects of religious regard, and sources of religious feeling—almost as many gods as there are men, since almost every man conceives of the deity after his own fashion. And, if many gods, many modes of religious development, since God is the fundamental conception from which all religious development springs. Such as the being worshipped is, such of necessity is the religion which his worship constitutes; whether the degraded, the ferocious, the impure, the imaginative, the superstitious, or the holy. Here, therefore, is the proximate cause of the endless diversity of the religious developments of mankind. Every man “walketh in the name of his god.”

We cannot rest, however, at the point at which we have thus arrived. It is not enough to say that there is an actual diversity in the conceptions which men form of the Deity sufficient to account for the diverse religious development of the race, it is needful to inquire whence this diversity may have arisen. It might seem that the idea of God is one in the conception of which a wide diversity ought not to be expected; so fundamental is it to any adequate development of our nature, and so much of simplicity and unity must be held to characterize the source from which it is derived. Yet the fact is as we have stated it, and we are constrained to proceed in our investigation of the cause.

Two classes of causes, of a widely different nature, may be assigned for this fact, according to the idea entertained of the sources from which the conception of God is derived.

According to some writers, the idea of God is simply an inference of the human mind from the works of nature; and it is ever varying, because the mind of man is ever moving onward in a destined course of enlightenment and improvement. On this supposition, men's conceptions of the deity have been continually becoming more accurate and just; having commenced with the rudest forms, and, with an innocent and infantine playfulness, run through the mazes of ancient mythology, they have, by the efforts of philosophy, become partly disentangled from the workings of imagination and the influences of superstition, and are on their way, by "an endless career of improvement," to something approaching the truth. All ages, and all nations, are to be regarded as having contributed to this result, which is, indeed, a part of the great "drama of mental development." Such is the system advocated in a recent work of considerable pretension, and of great learning, which now lies before us.*

"When," says Mr. Mackay, "the human understanding was first roused to contemplate the problem of its destination, it must have been instantly impressed with a sense of its helplessness and incapacity to furnish from its own resources a satisfactory solution. The problem must have been abandoned in despair, if it had not been cleared up by the intervention of Heaven. Those consolatory suggestions of ever-present nature which convey even to the savage a rough answer to the great difficulty, together with the most necessary elements of religious truth, were hailed, on their first announcement, with an

* Mackay's Progress of the Intellect.

avidity proportioned to the want of them, and deferentially received and adhered to as divine intimations. The growth of philosophy was checked by the premature establishment of religions. These had grown out of a kind of imperfect and unconscious philosophy, and, clothed in the poetic language of an early age, had been reduced to a permanent system of dogmas and *mythi*, calculated for a time to assure and satisfy the doubts and aspirations of mankind. But religion, divorced from philosophy, became obsolete and inefficient" (p. 36).

On reading this extract, we are sure that our readers must be struck, in common with ourselves, with the wonderful clearness of the knowledge which the writer possesses of the earliest intellectual operations of mankind. He speaks of the moment when man "was first roused to contemplate the problem of his destination" almost as though it were one of his own consciousness, and tells us of the "avidity" with which "the consolatory suggestions of ever-present nature" were received as though he had been a personal witness of the joy. We cannot but recollect, however, that this is a representation for which Mr. Mackay has no authentic foundation. It is one, on the contrary, which is totally at variance with the only document in existence having any pretensions to give us information, and for which he must have drawn exclusively on the vividness of his own imagination. It is, in truth, a mere fancy-piece, and is as grossly out of keeping with the workings of human nature as now open to observation, as it is contradictory to the testimony of the Bible.

It is, indeed, altogether incredible that the primary position of mankind can have been such as Mr. Mackay has pleased himself with imagining. The human being, according to him, was brought into the world, and left in it, in such a manner that an indefinite period might elapse before his understanding should be "first aroused to contemplate the problem of his destination;" and that, when this all-important excitement did take place, he should find no guidance but from "ever-present nature." From the "rough answer," and "the consolatory suggestions," of this his first and only adviser, man was to grope his way to clearer and more satisfactory views by the aid exclusively of his own thoughts, that is, of philosophy, whose progress has been from time to time obstructed by "the premature establishment of religions," and is only now, after having been for many ages "nursed in scepticism," conducting us to "a certainty and a faith."

Now, even admitting the "certainty and the faith" to which philosophy is alleged to have finally conducted us (of the value of which, however, we do not believe that much can be said), we think that the picture thus drawn has no verisimilitude; it is nothing like truth; it is an impossibility. The "drama of human development" may, indeed, be designated a tragedy of the most melancholy kind, if it has consumed nearly six thousand years, and consigned much more than a hundred generations of men to their eternal home, before any one of them has been able to know for a certainty how to solve the problem of his destination. This surely required to be known by the first man on the first day of his existence, and to be transmissible from this pure fountain through all generations of his posterity.

Mr. Mackay would have us suppose that religion, as an actual development of human nature, originated from an impulse *within* the human breast; for this we take to be his meaning, when he speaks of "the human understanding being first aroused to consider the problem of its destination." This, however, is, we conceive, a total fallacy. The susceptibility to religious excitement is within the human breast, but not, we think, the impulse by which it is to be awakened. Man is capable of emotion from the idea of God, but the idea of God requires to be communicated to him. There is, at least, no proof whatever, nor possibility of proof, that, if it were not communicated, it would ever be possessed. That no man ever did, or could, seek after it from a spontaneous impulse is plain, not only from the scriptural statement that, by divine communication, it formed from the first a portion of human knowledge, but from this consideration also, that, in order to be intelligently sought, it must to some extent be previously known. There is no reason to believe that the idea of God has, in the experience of any one of our race, been a discovery. Its source is instruction. God first gave it to man, and men give it to one another. It originated in revelation, and it is perpetuated by tradition.

It is not, then, with religion as it is with the sciences and the arts, in which "the progress of the intellect" may be truly traced, and "the drama of human development" may be played out. These have rude beginnings, and make gradual and laborious advances towards maturity, by a course of improvement which may with justice be said to be "end-

less." But religious truth has a different origin, and follows a different law. It commences in the clearness and perfection of a divine revelation, which may, indeed, be amplified, but cannot be improved. If it suffers change, it suffers also deterioration. Hence, to borrow the words of a recent writer,—

“In the whole history of religion the earliest are always the purest days, and, in its progress, every system of religion has undergone obscurity and decline. Take Christianity—take Catholicism, which still outnumbers all other communions, as its representative. Then compare Catholicism and the New Testament—you see the contrast? It is only too manifest. If you go to Persia, or to Hindostan, you observe the same fact. Compare the religion of Isaiah with the religion of Gamaliel. Compare the religion of the Patriarchs with the religion of the Judges. Still obscurity. Men—such is their depravity, seem incapable of long preserving God’s truth in its purity. The light of the sun is overshadowed by the clouds of earth. God of old spoke once, yea, twice. Men heard and received the word. Ere long the word lost its purity, and with its purity it lost its power over their hearts.”*

It cannot, then, we think, with any justice, or with any semblance of justice, be maintained that the ever-varying, and often contradictory, notions of men respecting the Deity are merely the shifting scenes in the drama of human development, the progress of ignorance towards wisdom. A directly opposite view must be taken. Man was in the first instance put into possession of the true idea of God, and this by God himself. Our race commenced its history amidst the clear light of heaven; and our inquiry must consequently be after the sources of the darkness and obscurity which have been generated in its progress.

The question we now ask is, How should not the idea of God have retained its primary simplicity and truth? The answer to this question is, that the idea of God is not a portion of mere truth, or an element of science simply, but that it is a truth of moral bearing, and thus of an influence more or less welcome or unwelcome to man’s heart. Had it been a matter of science merely, the intellect of man might have retained it unharmed; but, as a truth having relation to human passions and conduct, it has become liable to modification from the condition of the breast in which it was lodged. In a word, the depraved heart of man has corrupted the primary idea of God. “The light shined in darkness,” and

* British Quarterly Review, 1850, p. 475.

the darkness gave it no welcome, but obscured and polluted it in a thousand ways. Such is, doubtless, the principal origin of the inadequate and degrading conceptions of God which are so abundant throughout the Pagan world. Men "changed the truth of God into a lie;" and, "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. i. 21-23). And the same cause still operates in the modification of the idea of God, even as it is to be derived from Holy Scripture. We, who have the Bible with its flood of light, and who acknowledge its authority, are far from having practically the same deity. It is not that there are so many difficulties for the intellect, but there are great difficulties for the heart. The blended benevolence and justice, mercy and truth, which are the attributes of God as revealed to us in the Bible, approve themselves to men respectively according to the state of their moral affections, and gain access to the mind in the same proportion. Hence, to a great extent, the multitudinous differences among the professors of Christianity. When we scan, even in a cursory manner, the various and often contrasted schemes of doctrine which pass current under this comprehensive name—from the exclusively paternal system advocated by some, through the equitable moral government maintained by others, to the absolute sovereignty contended for by a third class—it seems impossible not to conclude that these differences have their roots, not in the declarations of the Bible itself, but in the state of heart with which it is approached. Hence to a considerable extent it is true, not only that men's notions of God differ from one another, but that men's notions of God are of their own fabricating. Making due allowance for the diversity of the means of knowledge, it may be said that every man fashions his deity after his own heart; and scarcely more so the idolator who shapes his god with an axe out of the trunk of a tree, than the theologian who professedly draws out his scheme of divinity from the Bible. Hence, again, the diversities of religious development among mankind. Man's religion may be said to be a mirror in which you may behold a reflection

of his inmost sentiments. His worship is but himself made outward and visible; and the religion of the race, consequently, presents as many varieties as have been assumed by the hearts, whether corrupt or sanctified, of the individuals who have composed it.

While the corruption of man's heart may be regarded generally as the source of all corruptions in the idea of God, the special forms which it has assumed in the various stages and aspects of human society have become more or less powerful by means of social influences. Mankind are creatures of imitation and of sympathy; and small is the exercise, though great is our capacity, of independent judgment. Hence the nationality of religious views, and the remarkable definiteness with which the national characteristics, whether philosophical, martial, or otherwise, have been impressed on the deities before which the peoples of the earth have bowed themselves.

There is yet another cause, however, operating to multiply the diversities of religious development among mankind. It is the idiosyncrasy, or constitutional individual peculiarity, universally characteristic of the race. That no two human beings are precisely alike in temper and disposition is beyond doubt; and a question will scarcely be raised as to whether these differences are wholly referable to circumstances and habits, or are not in some degree original and constitutional. Those who have had most to do with children from their birth are, we believe, most fully impressed with a conviction that they are not all born alike, but that they possess strong congenital differences, mysteriously corresponding to, if not connected with, conditions of the physical frame. That the broad and established characteristics of the subsequent life have their roots in these original endowments can hardly be questioned; nor can we be wrong, we think, in tracing to this source some of the influences which modify religious belief. Hence, in part at least, the respective aptitudes to intellectual theism and palpable idolatry in ancient times, as well as to the views which distinguished the several schools of philosophy. Hence the varieties in the religious development of modern times, which may, in part, be traced to the speculative, the imaginative, and the æsthetic elements constitutionally prevalent. Hence, in many instances, the readier acceptance of a particular class of doctrines, as

commended by a special congruity with a predominant natural sentiment. Idiosyncrasy has thus, doubtless, contributed to the formation of those groups into which the common reception of religious doctrines has thrown religious persons, but it carries its influence much farther than this. Its tendency is to break up masses, even small masses, into the minutest fragments, and to individualize the religious development of mankind. It is, in part, owing to this cause that there is no absolute uniformity of religious opinion, even within the smallest denominations; but that, together with a general agreement sufficient for ecclesiastical purposes, there are shades of difference characterizing one and another, probably to the very last member of the body. In this tendency to generate minute and individual distinctions, idiosyncrasy differs from the other causes which operate in the same direction. A corrupt state of the affections characterizes the whole of our race, while social influences may spread widely, and embrace large assemblages of men; but constitutional aptitudes belong to men individually, and distinguish each member of the race, not less truly in religious, perhaps, than in secular matters, from all his fellows.

We cannot more appropriately close this paper than by drawing the inference for which our remarks may seem to have supplied more than sufficient premises. Such being the actual diversity of religious development among mankind, and such being its causes, how much—how absolutely—in this all-important matter, does human nature need a guide! What, indeed, but hopeless and undone can be its condition without one?

III.

HUMAN NATURE—ITS RELIGIOUS GUIDE; REASON.

That in religious matters human nature *wants a guide*, we are not now about to prove, but to take for granted. It has been sufficiently established, we think, by the survey of the multiform religious development of our race, and of its causes, taken in the preceding paper. We now proceed to inquire in whose guidance it may trust.

It certainly has not been the misfortune of mankind to

have fallen into perplexity without the proffer of a helping hand. Guides many have volunteered their services, and have, indeed, so warmly pressed the acceptance of them that selection has been embarrassed by the multiplicity, and the necessary refusals have become almost more difficult than the choice. We may simplify this matter, however, a little. On the one hand we may place revelation, as standing altogether by itself, while all other aids may be ranged under the general denomination of reason, or philosophy. The question before us will consequently be, Which is man's proper guide in religious matters—reason, or revelation?

It is, of course, well known to our readers that the claims of reason to this prerogative have been strongly urged.

According to Mr. Morell, for example, the human faculties are fully equal to the discovery of religious truth. There is a power belonging to man—in his terminology, “the intuitional consciousness”—by means of which we have a direct perception of truth, of all truth; and it is owing merely to accident that we are not “absolutely perfect”—that our immediate perceptions, which are so clear, are not also infallible.

“Were our intuitional consciousness absolutely perfect,” says this writer, “then, indeed, its results would be infallible. If we imagine our minds to be perfectly harmonized, morally, intellectually, religiously, with all truth—if we can imagine them, without any discord of the interior being, to stand in the midst of a universe on which God has impressed his own divine ideas, and to receive the truth as it presents itself to the consciousness just as the retina receives the images of external things—then, indeed, we should comprehend all things as they are, and the mere manifestation would be its own evidence of their reality. A mind so harmonized with nature and with God would perceive at one glance the processes and ends of all things.”*

As to the admitted disturbance of “the harmony of our nature” “by passion, by prejudice, and by a thousand other influences,” and the errors thence resulting, “the logical faculty,” we are told, “comes to our aid.” “In the defect of gazing upon truth as it is by virtue of the interior harmony of our whole being with God, we seek a substitute by applying the aids of analysis, of formal reasoning, of verification, of the entire logical reconstruction of our whole

* Philosophy of Religion, p. 58.

knowledge.”* And this is all the apparatus we have for the discovery of religious truth: the intuitional consciousness, corrected in its fallacies by the logical consciousness.

Mr. Newman’s idea, though somewhat differently expressed, seems to be substantially the same.

“Religion,” says he, “was created by the inward instincts of the soul; it had afterwards to be pruned and chastened by the sceptical understanding. For its perfection the co-operation of these two parts of man is essential.”†

And, of course, according to this writer, nothing more is essential to the “perfection” of religion than the co-operation of these two parts of man—“the instincts of the soul” and “the sceptical understanding.”

Mr. Mackay’s system is similar. According to him, “most of the necessary elements of religious truth” are derivable from “the suggestions of ever-present nature;” requiring, indeed, the plastic efforts of philosophy, but nothing more, since “philosophy, though nursed in scepticism, has eventually won both a certainty and a faith.”‡

Thus, then, it is the common sentiment of these writers (and they are fair samples of the class to which they belong) that the guide—the only and adequate guide—of man to religious truth is to be found within his own breast. We cannot give our assent to this view, and we shall submit our reasons in the few following remarks.

1. There is, we think, a not unimportant fallacy in the use of the principal terms. Mr. Mackay, for example, assures us that “philosophy” “has eventually won both a certainty and a faith;” by which we suppose is meant that “philosophy” has arrived at some fixed notions of religion, and notions which it regards with confidence. And he thus personifies philosophy as though it were some distinct entity in the promotion of man’s welfare, when, in truth, it is but one mode of man’s action.

A similar fallacy lurks under the terms “intuitional consciousness” and “logical consciousness” employed by Mr. Morell, and the terms “instinct” and “understanding” employed by Mr. Newman. The word reason is often used in a like mode of personification. The fallacy which we are

* *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 60. † *Phases of Faith*, p. 232.

‡ *Progress of the Intellect*, pp. 36, 37.

thus pointing out is, as we have said, not unimportant. It has the effect of representing man in his ignorance and wanderings as under the direction of some imaginary guide, called variously reason, intuition, or philosophy; whereas reason and intuition are nothing but man's own faculties, and philosophy nothing but one mode of their employment. They are all of them but different forms of man himself; and to say that he is under *their* guidance, is only to announce in other words that he is under his own—that is, under none at all, since it is he himself who wants a guide. To say that these are sufficient for his help is virtually to affirm that he is in no need of assistance.

2. The argument which maintains the sufficiency of reason as a religious guide is in its structure imperfect, and is consequently invalid. There is, in truth, no solid foundation for it, inasmuch as a primary revelation is presupposed. Reason is, in point of fact, not placed in office, but acts under the guidance of an element of truth divinely imparted. Mr. Morell admits in express terms the existence of a primitive revelation, but he endeavours to identify this with “the intellectual and moral constitution of the soul itself.”* We readily concede what he contends for when he says, “We must suppose that, if the Creator willed to communicate truth to his creature, he gave him a mind previously capable of feeling it, and of sympathizing in it;” but we cannot agree with him in regarding an aptness to sympathize with truth revealed as constituting the revelation itself. His statement is as follows:—

“He [God] gave him truth from heaven—admitted; but how? By imparting to him a reason and a conscience, by creating him in sympathy with nature, with beauty, with virtue; by making him in his own image, and then breathing into him the breath of life. . . . All our primary knowledge is divine, comes from God, and is received by direct communication from his hands. Truly so, we reply: our knowledge is divine, but it is so because humanity itself is divine. It comes from God; truly so, because *we* came forth from God. It flows to us from heaven; truly so, because man receives all his inspiration, all his mental life, direct from heaven. . . . Analyze this primitive revelation, and it merges into an *à priori* principle, the great, the living, the eternal truth, that humanity itself is divine, that this very primitive revelation consists in man's partaking of the mind and moral image of the Deity. . . . In fine, there is no idea that we

* Four Lectures, p. 143.

are more anxious to draw forth, to illustrate, to impress upon the whole spirit of our age, than this—the essential divinity of human nature.”*

By the time they are come to the end of this extract, our readers will probably feel themselves out of breath. As for the writer, he appears to us like a man who, by a too eager straining after something before him, has thrown himself forwards headlong. What a marvellous notion he has stumbled upon at last—“the essential divinity of human nature.” We have several times repeated this phrase to ourselves, and with ever-increasing wonder. “The essential divinity of human nature”! And such a discovery! “There is no idea which” the writer “is more anxious to draw forth, to illustrate, and to impress upon the whole spirit of our age.” Mr. Morell must forgive us this badinage; but really we know not how otherwise to treat this singular specimen of the profound. All he means is that God made man in his own image; a truth certainly not *universally* unknown before this very formal and solemn announcement of it. We have only to add that this truth is nothing to his purpose. That man’s faculty of knowing came from God is not the same thing as that his knowledge itself came from God. God created man susceptible to truth, but he must, we think, have subsequently imparted the truth to which man’s susceptible nature should respond. At least, if he did not there was no primitive revelation. To say, as Mr. Morell does, that the primitive revelation was “inward and subjective,” is merely to use a philosophical jargon. There is no such thing as a subjective revelation. Revelation is necessarily from without. We have already shown our reasons for believing that even the idea of God would never have been arrived at by man, but must have been imparted;† and, if this were the whole of imparted truth (which it is not), it would invalidate the argument for the sufficiency of reason as a guide. The work has already been taken out of her hands.

3. The proposition that reason is a sufficient guide in religious matters is not sustained by experience.

It is one of the peculiarities—we might say of the felicities—of this argument, that the test of experience may be applied to it. To a very great extent, reason has been the guide in religious matters which mankind have practically

* Four Lectures, pp. 136-138. † Page 311.

followed. And what has been the result? The deep ignorance, and the endless, hopeless, confusion which we depicted in our preceding paper. If reason is a sufficient guide, how has it come to pass that our race has so universally and so widely strayed? It is under the very influence of this directing power, and its assumed adequacy to the discovery of truth, that all the systems have arisen which appear in the chaotic religious development of mankind. It is not in the nature of things that all these should be true, and, in fact, no one supposes them to be so. They are multiform aspects of error. But they are all of them productions of the human mind, and they are incompatible with the supposition that reason is its sufficient guide. It is, on the contrary, plain, as plain as innumerable facts can make it, that reason has either no ability to discern the truth, or that it has such ability only in rare and exceptional instances; a case in which, if it be for the sake of argument supposed (for it cannot be proved), it is utterly unfit for a common and universal guide.

4. To the affirmation that reason is the proper religious guide of man, we reply that reason is not adequate to the office. It requires an acquaintance with "the deep things of God" which reason can by no means command. The capacity of the human faculties for the discovery of religious truth is obviously and greatly overrated by those who assume their adequacy to the guidance of mankind.

Mr. Mackay tells us, indeed, that philosophy "has eventually won both a certainty and a faith;" that is to say, philosophers have at length constructed a system of religious notions which they are quite sure is true. But, even admitting for the moment this assertion, the philosophic faith is far from being the product of the unaided faculties of man. Even philosophy is under large, though reluctantly acknowledged, obligations to inspiration, and its creed is nothing better than a disfigured and mutilated Bible. To this it may be added, that philosophy has been a long while about its work. It is only "eventually," and after being for many ages "nursed in scepticism," that it has attained either "a faith" or "a certainty." To what precise date Mr. Mackay would affix this felicitous issue of its protracted efforts we are not informed, but it would probably be somewhere in the nineteenth century. Now we say this is too

late, far too late, to sustain the pretension of philosophy to be an adequate religious guide. Mankind has been wanting direction for nearly six thousand years, but their alleged Directress has only now succeeded in wiping away the film from her eyes, and in capacitating herself for the task. All preceding generations of men, consequently, have either had no sufficient guide, or have had another. This is surely fatal to the pretensions of philosophy. To say that man wants a religious guide is to say that all men want it. They have wanted it from the beginning, and they should have had it from the beginning; and that which was not prepared to come into action from the beginning cannot be accepted as in any way qualified for the office.

Not to insist further on these considerations, however, we distinctly deny the assertion itself. Philosophy, we are assured, has at length "won a certainty and a faith." What, then, we ask, is its faith? And who is to be regarded as the authorized expounder of it? When we listen to the voices which we have heard in the halls of learning, from Aberdeen to Geneva, and from Halle to Newhaven, we still find a confusion of tongues like that of Babel. There is less of unity now than there was in the days of Aristotle and Plato. The speculations of the ancient schools supply the hard questions of the modern; and, if there is now exercised an acuter system of dialectics, or a profounder intellectual analysis, the only result is to multiply refinements and distinctions a hundredfold. "A faith"? No, verily. Philosophy has shown much greater power to destroy than to construct, and, if it had not been for the invincible common sense of men, it would have thrown the affairs of this world into as hopeless an uncertainty as that with which it has beclouded those of the world to come.

How very little can be done by philosophy in its highest cultivation, and with its most skilful appliances, towards constructing a "faith," or arriving at "certainty" in religious matters, must be painfully evident to every serious reader of Mr. Newman's volume on the Soul. Constantly turning away from the more degraded developments of human nature, and taking advantage of the highest intellectual and moral culture, all the results he arrives at are shadowy and unreal. Even on the great question of immortality, he leaves "the faithful soul" in utter uncertainty.

All that this select and favoured specimen of a philosophical believer can arrive at, is to say, "I shall live for ever if God see it best for me." Well does this writer speak of our religious instincts as corrected by the "*sceptical* understanding"! According to Mr. Mackay, also, philosophy has been "nursed in scepticism," and in scepticism it would seem that it is doomed to die.

It may be, indeed, that individual philosophers have reached some conclusions on religious matters on which they repose with more or less of certainty, and we are quite willing to suppose that Mr. Mackay himself may be of this number; but this, we beg to say, by no means warrants the same assertion for philosophy. We are sure this gentleman is far too modest to set himself up for an oracle; while, unquestionably, the rest of the world is far too shrewd to admit such a pretension, even if he were to advance it. He knows very well, indeed, that, whatever his "faith" may be, and whatever his "certainty," there are other philosophers, and men of at least equal celebrity, who would directly contradict, and elaborately refute, him.

In truth, on the very showing of our philosophers themselves, philosophy never can have either "a faith" or "a certainty" to the end of the world. For they lay it down with one consent that the law of human destiny is a law of progress, and this is no less "the law of God's moral universe" (to use Mr. Newman's phraseology)* than of man's intellectual course. In like manner, Mr. Morell informs us that his system "affirms the constant development of moral ideas along the pathway of human history."† And this law of progress he specifically applies to religion. "Every age," says he, "has had its conceptions of God, and of man."‡ And, after the same fashion, Mr. Mackay regards all the forms of religious fantasy which have appeared among men as portions of "the grand drama of human development."

Now, if this is really the law of religious opinion developed by the human mind, then it clearly follows that philosophy cannot have won either "a faith" or "a certainty," but that, on the contrary, religious opinion must be ever varying, even in its most essential and fundamental elements, and can never be long together the same. At the commencement of

* Phases of Faith, p. 223. † Four Lectures, p. 148. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

our race it would have a certain form; but, century after century, and perhaps much oftener, it would change, until it had assumed its present shape; nor can it be even now at rest, since the law of progress still operates. Centuries hence religious opinion will be widely different from what it is now; even to the end of the world it will be varying, and the process of change will be then arrested, not so much because men will then have discovered the truth, as because time is not allowed for the further development of the human faculties.

Such is, we believe, an unexaggerated interpretation of the theory of human progress in its application to religious opinion; and we ask the propounders of it how *they* can consistently affirm the adequacy of human reason as a religious guide. This perpetual gliding on to new forms of opinion implies, of course, the successive abandonment of all (except the last), and this because they have been discovered to be false; and how can a faculty be fitted to be our guide in relation to the all-important affairs of another world, which can do no better than amuse us with successive fallacies until this world, in which alone its guidance was wanted, shall come to an end?

To us no proposition seems plainer than this, that truth itself is one and unchangeable. Yet we find a philosophical writer of so much pretension as Mr. Morell, laying it down that "truth itself is also in progress."* This startling affirmation is arrived at by a species of dialectic legerdemain, or by the use of a conjuring box containing the words "objective" and "subjective;" and by the skilful use of which illusions not a few have been too successfully practised in philosophy, both upon readers and writers. His proposition fully stated is that "truth *viewed subjectively* is in progress." But now, what is "truth viewed subjectively"? Why, "truth viewed subjectively" is truth viewed as it is in man, or what man thinks to be true. This is nothing else but opinion, which is, no doubt, in progress, or rather in a process of change; but it is not necessarily truth, and is very frequently falsehood. Nor is this the kind of truth of which Mr. Morell has any right to speak. The truth which is in question is not subjective, but objective truth—not the form

* Four Lectures, p. 177.

of human opinion, but the truth of "things as they are"—which constitutes at once the only worthy object of research, and the only fit standard of comparison for the opinions of mankind. Truth thus understood is one and unchangeable; and with respect to it there can be no law of progress, except as to the degree in which it may be known. Such portions of it as become known are known for ever, and, like the elements of the mathematical sciences, are never to be abandoned or contradicted, whatever larger acquirements may be made. In religion it is of infinite and indispensable importance that truth in this sense should be known, and known from the first; and, since reason cannot discern it, she can have no pretension to be accepted as a guide.

This truth, however, Mr. Morell (entirely and strangely shifting his ground) elsewhere assures us the human faculties *are* capable of discovering, and in a very clear and unquestionable method—namely, by direct perception. Such is the office which he assigns to what he is pleased to call our "intuitional consciousness," which (he says) brings us directly into the presence of the moral and spiritual world, as our senses bring us directly into the presence of the material world. He admits, indeed, that, in consequence of our minds not being "perfectly harmonized, morally, intellectually, and religiously, with all truth," we do not see all things with an "infallible" certainty; but he regards our "logical consciousness" as a sufficient remedy for the disorders produced by "passion, by prejudice, and by a thousand other influences" which he leaves us to imagine.

Now we will not here enter into any controversy with Mr. Morell respecting his classification and nomenclature of the intellectual powers—with which, however, we are far from being satisfied—nor respecting the alleged adequacy of the "logical consciousness" to correct so large an amount of moral mischief as he allows to exist in the human being. What we wish to ask him is, how he came to annex no limitation to the word "ALL" in his description of the function of the "intuitional consciousness"? Were moral disorder absent, he assures us that "we should comprehend ALL THINGS as they are." When we inquire how this is to be, he tells us that "God has impressed his own divine ideas on the universe," and that they there "present themselves to our consciousness." Now, although this language is rather

poetical than philosophical, and may be suspected to have come to hand because terms more lucidly expressive of his idea were wanting, we will not quarrel with it. To a certain extent, no doubt, the attributes and character of God may be learned from his works; but does Mr. Morell mean to say that "*all things*" respecting God and his designs may be collected from the same source? If much that innocent man wanted to know was to be seen as if engraven on the earth and sky, could the covenant peculiarities of his primitive condition be found written there too? Did the introduction of sin make no difference? Was there any part of "the universe" in which our first parents could from the beginning see it announced that the penalty affixed to their transgression would be benignantly modified? Or, to come nearer to ourselves, on what part of the heaving sea, or the starry sky, are the "divine ideas" respecting the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ "impressed" for our instruction? Where is the solution of the problem, "How shall man be just with God?" Or where are engraven the "exceeding great and precious promises"? Assuredly there can be but one answer to these questions; and yet nowhere does this writer assign any limitation to the power of the "intuitional consciousness." By it we may know "*ALL things*"! Then, verily, may reason be our guide; but, and surely with his own consent, not till then.*

After all, however, that this writer affirms of the capacity of the intuitional consciousness, he is evidently afraid to trust it. Having laid it down as a general proposition, that "the final appeal for the truth which *philosophy* embodies must be the universal reason, or common consciousness of

* Mr. Newman goes a step farther than Mr. Morell, and assures us, not merely that we may discern the divine ideas impressed on the universe around us, but that, if we fully sympathize with God, we may see into God's mind. These are his words: "It seems to me a first principle that such a belief cannot arise out of anything but insight into God's mind, gained by a full sympathy of our spirit with God's spirit" (*On the Soul*, p. 233). The particular belief referred to is that of immortality, but the "first principle" is evidently of general application. It is to us, however, not so plain as first principles ought to be. That sympathy with God should fit us for the apprehension and appreciation of truth revealed we can understand; but that it should endow us with "insight into God's mind," is neither self-evident, nor capable, as we think, of either proof or explanation. No such effect is produced by sympathy between us and our fellow-creatures. At any rate, the notion can lead only to individual fanaticism. It can be of no use to the world.

mankind," he says, "exactly the same appeal to the universal consciousness, or common sense of humanity, holds good in relation to man's religious nature and destiny."* The meaning of this is, that, although every man is able by his intuitional consciousness to know all things, no one is at liberty to confide in his own judgment. There are, in fact, so many probabilities—nay, even certainties—of mistake besetting him, even with the aid of his logical consciousness also, that it is necessary for him to ask what other men, and even all other men, have thought, and are thinking, before he forms any belief of his own. Reason is to be his guide, only not his own reason: "the final criterion of truth is the universal reason of mankind."†

It cannot be denied, indeed, that, to a certain extent, the universal reason of mankind does constitute the final appeal for the certainty of some kinds of knowledge—of æsthetics, for example, or the doctrine of beauty—that being deemed truly beautiful which all men, or most men, think so. But this is the case only with respect to sciences which are mere developments of human nature, and which, consequently, have their standard of truth and perfection within the mind itself. With respect to the science of religion (so to speak) it is not so. This relates to the operation of powers external to us, and to matters which cannot be determined by any operations within us. With respect to these not only the individual may be in error, but the whole race may be so, even if the whole race were of the same opinion.

Let us suppose, however, that the postulate is granted, and that the universal reason is allowed to be the final criterion of religious truth: we ask, Of what use is this criterion? How are we to discern what the voice of humanity is? Such is the question which Mr. Morell has the candour to propose, and to answer. Let the reader ponder his answer.

"In order to apply this criterion many requisites are necessary. It demands, first of all, a mind entirely free from bias and prejudice.

"Again, the application of the principle we have maintained demands great historical research. We want to know the voice of humanity at large—say upon some points of moral, or intellectual [or religious] truth: then let us look back upon the past; let us see in what way mankind have viewed the subject during the ages that

* Four Lectures, pp. 168, 175. † *Ibid.*, p. 178.

are gone by; let us trace the whole progress of human opinion and feeling on the question, and in this way we may follow it up to the present day, and be able to estimate exactly the elevation to which the human consciousness upon that question has now reached. In all the great subjects of moral, of social, and of religious interest, history points out to us a vital development in mankind at large. The history of philosophy more especially brings this great fact home to our perception, so much so that by its light we may trace the intuitions of mankind brightening and expanding in their course, and recognize the effects of this expansion impressed upon all the events of human history—upon manners, upon institutions, upon social and religious life. If we would estimate, then, the voice of humanity aright, we must enter into these historical researches; we must track the expansion of men's ideas through the walks of literature, of science, of art, of philosophy, and in this way shall we be enabled, upon the great points of human interest, to see what is the degree of elevation in the series of developments to which the present age has brought us."*

And this is the way—according to Mr. Morell the only way—in which any man can arrive at religious truth! Is this respectable and benevolent gentleman in a dream? Does he not know that there is not one in a thousand millions of our race—that there is not a single individual of it—to whom such a process is possible; and that, if it is really necessary, the world is doomed to hopeless and everlasting ignorance? Verily, if it be by such a process alone that her aid can be received, reason is but a sorry guide to sorrowful and guilty wanderers through time, or anxious and bewildered travellers to eternity.

But if, by some miracle, the feat were accomplished, and "the voice of humanity" were heard on the all-important questions of peace with God and hope of heaven, what would it be? Although far from having accomplished such a circuit of investigation as Mr. Morell prescribes, we know enough to answer this inquiry. "The voice of humanity" is, we presume, the opinion of the majority of mankind. Now the majority—the great majority—of mankind are idolators, and "the voice of humanity" thus interpreted is—Bow down to stocks and stones. Or, if this be not satisfactory to our author, let him take another course. Let him amalgamate the various religious systems which prevail in the world—palpable idolatry, Buddhism, the system of Confucius, Mahometanism, the Pantheistic and other forms of philosophism,

* Four Lectures, pp. 181, 182.

Popery, and other modes of superstitious formalism, and, lastly, Biblical Christianity—and out of this compound let him elicit, if he can, “the voice of humanity.” If, again, this does not please him, what will he himself propose? If he say that the more enlightened part of mankind is to decide for the rest, we ask, by what authority? And who is to select them?

5. Our last argument on this subject shall be drawn from the fact that reason is liable to many corrupting influences, by which it is rendered altogether unworthy of confidence. This fact is distinctly admitted by Mr. Morell, who speaks strongly of the “prejudice, passion, and the thousand other influences” by which the human mind is disordered and disturbed. No one observant of human nature, indeed, whether as developed within his own heart or under his observation, can for a moment doubt this. Now, neither a blind guide nor a treacherous one can be trustworthy. No one to whom such a description as Mr. Morell has given of the “intuitional consciousness” could apply, would in practical life be intrusted with an ordinary arbitration; how much less with the determination of questions of infinite and eternal moment! Prejudice and passion fearfully blind the eyes, and are among the most destructive elements, as to our spiritual welfare, of which we can conceive.

We are told, indeed, that, in this dilemma, our logical faculty, “conscious of the defect,” comes to our aid.

“Logical reasoning,” says Mr. Morell, “is the result of human imperfection struggling after intellectual restoration. In the defect of gazing upon truth as it is by virtue of the interior harmony of our whole being with God, we seek a substitute by applying the aids of analysis, of formal reasoning, of verification—of the entire logical reconstruction of our whole knowledge.”*

This, however, is small consolation. Logic is a poor remedy for a corrupt heart. Such a malady will surely be found to want a more powerful medicament. The evil is not intellectual, but moral, and must have a moral remedy. Motives, not syllogisms, must be its cure. Besides, what reason is there to believe that the logical faculty is a whit more honest than the intuitional? Will not the prejudice and passion which disorder the one disturb also the other?

* Philosophy of Religion, p. 60.

What, in a word, can be more delusive than to talk of these several faculties as though they were separate entities, while, in fact, they but give origin to diversified modes of action within one and the same being, and are all alike subject to the malign influences which have corrupted him?

The truth is that reason, instead of being qualified to guide mankind in the all-important affairs of religion, herself wants a guide. Much that needs to be seen is wholly beyond the scope of her vision; to much that is not so she is rendered blind by her passions and prejudices, and she is too dishonest to be relied upon for a proper use of what she knows.

It is now necessary that we should bring this extended article to a close. We commenced it with asking, Which is man's adequate religious guide—reason, or revelation? We have thus far shown grounds for our belief that reason cannot be trusted; we shall hereafter inquire whether revelation may.

IV.

HUMAN NATURE—ITS RELIGIOUS GUIDE; REVELATION.

In the preceding paper we endeavoured to show that Reason could exhibit no satisfactory pretensions to become the guide of man in religious affairs; we now take up the inquiry whether Revelation may safely be accepted as such, and may be relied upon for the adequate fulfilment of an all-important function to which its often-boasted competitor is so totally incompetent.

In the outset of this inquiry, it will be necessary for us to make it clearly understood what revelation is; and more especially to show that it is not either of two things which some men of high philosophical pretensions have affirmed it to be.

In the first place, then, revelation is not, as Mr. Morell asserts, "a mode of intelligence." This idea is put forth in the *Philosophy of Religion* in the following terms:—

"The idea of a revelation always implies a process by which knowledge, in some form or other, is communicated to an intelligent being. For a revelation at all to exist, there must be an intelligent being, on the one hand, adapted to receive it, and there must be, on the other hand, a process by which this same intelligent being becomes cognizant of certain facts or ideas: suppress either of these conditions and no revelation can exist. The preaching of an angel would be no reve-

lation to an idiot; a Bible in Chinese would offer none to a European. In the former case there is no intelligence capable of receiving the ideas conveyed; in the latter case the process of conveyance renders the whole thing practically a nonentity, by allowing no idea whatever to reach the mind. We may say, then, in few words, that a revelation always indicates *a mode of intelligence.*"*

We confess ourselves to have been surprised when we first read this passage, and we have read it many times since with surprise rather increased than diminished. A doubt may, perhaps, in the first instance, rest upon the interpretation of it in consequence of the indefiniteness of some of the terms employed, as when the author says that "a revelation always *indicates* a mode of intelligence;" but his language afterwards becomes perfectly definite. In the next paragraph he says that "revelation *signifies* a mode of intelligence;" and he devotes the rest of the chapter entirely to an inquiry whether the mode of intelligence in which (according to him) revelation essentially consists is the intuitional or the logical. We are satisfied, therefore, that we do Mr. Morell no injustice when we regard him as laying it down that revelation is a mode of intelligence.

Now we think this a total misconception of the matter. Its fallacy, indeed, seems to us to be upon the surface. If revelation be a mode of intelligence, or, which is the same thing, a mode of understanding, then to reveal is to understand. To reveal, however, is not to understand; it is to lay open, to disclose; and, consequently, revelation is a disclosure, a laying open—a mode, not of understanding, but of communicating—not of receiving knowledge, but of imparting it.

It may seem strange that such a writer as Mr. Morell should have fallen into so transparent a fallacy; but the appearance of argument by which he endeavours to support his conclusion shows with sufficient clearness the method by which he was betrayed into it. He sets out with a statement that "revelation implies a process by which knowledge is communicated." This is very nearly the truth, and would be exactly so if the word *is* were substituted for *implies*. But he goes on to say that "for a revelation at all to exist, there must be, on the one hand, an intelligent being to receive it; and there must be, on the other hand, a process by

* Philosophy of Religion, pp. 123, 124.

which this same intelligent being becomes cognizant of certain facts or ideas: suppress either of these conditions and no revelation can exist." So, then, he identifies—we should rather say; he confounds—revelation with its conditions, and then proceeds to treat them as revelation, entirely overlooking the process itself. Certainly, there can be no instruction of any kind—in geometry, for example—without an intelligent being and an intelligible method of communication, but it clearly does not follow that either or both of them can be regarded as constituting instruction in geometry. Generally speaking, indeed, nothing is more manifest than the difference between processes and the conditions necessary to them—a broad distinction which our author has wholly and unaccountably overlooked. Extricating ourselves from this fallacy, we are content to take the first sentence of Mr. Morell's definition with the slight modification we have suggested, and to say that "revelation is a process by which knowledge is communicated."

Revelation, however, is not the ordinary mode in which God has communicated knowledge to mankind. And here we have, in the second place, to repudiate a notion of a different kind, set out with sufficient distinctness in the two short extracts which follow.

"When the human mind was first roused to contemplate the problem of its destination, it must have been instantly impressed with a sense of its helplessness and incapacity to furnish from its own resources a satisfactory solution. The problem must have been abandoned in despair, if it had not been cleared up by the intervention of Heaven. The consolatory suggestions of ever-present Nature, which convey even to the savage a rough answer to the great difficulty, together with the most necessary elements of religious truth, are hailed on their first announcement with an avidity proportioned to the want of them, and deferentially received and adhered to as divine intimations. . . . The same unerring uniformity which alone made experience possible, was also the first teacher of the invisible things of God. It is this

'Elder scripture, writ by God's own hand,
Scripture authentic, uncorrupt by man,'

which is set before every one without note or comment, and which even Holy Writ points out as the most unquestionable authority by which, both in heaven and earth, the will of God is interpreted to mankind."*

We, of course, are not going to maintain that the systems of

* Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, pp. 36-40.

nature and providence exhibit no indications of the divine character, and afford no elements of instruction in the divine will; but we cannot regard these as authoritative intimations, or, as other writers of the same class freely call them, revelations. All that nature and providence teach they teach, not directly, but indirectly; by suggesting topics for reflection, and stimulating the human mind to draw its own inferences from the facts presented to it. Thus God makes nature teach, and constitutes his works a lesson-book of wisdom, or, if you please, speaking poetically, an "elder scripture." But revelation is a different thing. It is a mode of communicating with men, not indirectly, but directly; not natural, but supernatural; not suggesting matter for reflection and inference, but imparting expressly the mind of God. Such, at least in our judgment, is revelation, if it is anything for which it is worth while either to contend in theological argument, or to retain the word in its religious sense in our language.

Now, supposing a revelation thus understood to exist, it is obviously adapted to meet in the amplest manner all the religious necessities of man. The great questions which involve his destiny, and agitate his being to its profoundest depths, relate to the course which he may expect his Maker to pursue as a moral governor and judge, both in the present and the future world; questions on which, as he can derive no satisfaction either from his own imaginings or those of other men, so he becomes fully informed when God himself speaks, and declares his own purposes. In this case man wants no more. All obscurity is dissipated, and every doubt is dispersed.

It might be supposed that the question whether or not such a revelation has been made would be mainly, if not exclusively, a question of fact; and that little, or rather nothing, would remain to do but to examine the evidence by which the pretensions of any document to such a character might be supported. Yet there are writers of no mean order, and aspiring to be guides of public sentiment, who take a different course, and attempt an *à priori* argument against a revelation. Let us test the value of it.

No one, we believe, admitting the existence of God has ventured to question the possibility of a revelation, which would be too flagrantly to limit the Almighty; but we find

express reasoning against its probability. Thus, enumerating "various insuperable obstacles" to such a supposition, Mr. Newman writes as follows:—

"It is an unpalatable opinion that God would go out of his way to give us anything so undesirable as an authoritative oracle would be, which would paralyze our moral powers, exactly as an infallible church does, in the very proportion in which we succeeded in eliciting responses from it."*

One cannot but marvel at the state of mind with which alone an argument of this sort can have any weight. Surely the question whether there is, or is not, a revelation of God's will, is far too grave to be converted into a mere matter of plausibilities. Plausibility is the most shadowy and shifting of all the forms of human opinion; what is plausible to one person is far from being so to another; and many things are notoriously true which are not plausible to anybody. To discredit all that may be deemed "unpalatable" would put even Mr. Newman himself almost out of the world he lives in.

But why, let us ask him, is the opinion that God would give "an authoritative oracle" "unpalatable"? Because, we are told, it is "undesirable." "Undesirable"? To us the very contrary is manifest. There are questions involving our highest interests—questions of our relation to God and his dealings with us—to which we have no answer unless he speaks, and to which it is of the last importance that we should have incontrovertible answers; and yet, according to Mr. Newman, it is "undesirable" that they should be authoritatively spoken! And why "undesirable"? Because, he tells us, "it would paralyze our moral powers." Indeed? This is certainly the last effect we should have anticipated from it. On the contrary, we do not see how otherwise the moral powers are to be awakened. It would seem that, according to Mr. Newman, the moral powers of men act most promptly, most energetically, and most justly, either in ignorance or in doubt—either without any information, or without any certain information, of moral truth. For our part, we confess to the holding of a totally different philosophy. We think the appropriate stimulus of the moral powers is truth, and truth, when not with certainty attainable by our own thoughts, communicated to us on authority.

* Phases of Faith, p. 212.

Mr. Newman reminds us, however, that the assumption of infallibility by the Romish church is admitted to paralyze the moral powers, and he thinks that submission to this ecclesiastical assumption is a case parallel with the acceptance of a revelation from God. We reply that the cases are not parallel. The divine oracle comes to our help in a case in which we are either lost in ignorance, or bewildered in doubts, and it gives us information not attainable except by its utterances; the church finds us in possession of documents informing us of all things, and arrests our investigation of them by saying, "You must let me interpret them for you, and believe what I tell you is their meaning." To say nothing of the vast difference in the foundation of the two claims, their circumstances and objects respectively require for them a totally dissimilar operation.

Mr. Newman goes on to assign it as another "insuperable obstacle" to the acceptance of a revelation, that "there is no imaginable criterion by which we can establish that the wisdom of a teacher is absolute and illimitable. All that we can possibly discern," he adds, "is the relative fact that another is wiser than we" (p. 213). There might be force in this objection if the point we had to ascertain were the "absolute and illimitable" wisdom of our "teacher," a point clearly beyond our determination unless our own wisdom were "absolute and illimitable" too. But this is wholly to mis-state the question. An inspired teacher does not say to us, "I have absolute wisdom, therefore believe me;" but, "I am commissioned by God, therefore believe me." The former may be incapable of proof, but the latter surely is not so.

It seems to Mr. Newman that the "free thought" involved in examining the evidences that a teacher has come from God, must, to be consistent, be exercised also on the entire contents of his message. Thus he lays it down with a strong emphasis that "we cannot build up a system of authority on a basis of free criticism" (p. 213). To us the truth of this position is by no means axiomatic. It may be true that authority and free criticism cannot both be maintained within the same sphere and in relation to the same topics, but the rule can extend no further. In the sphere which is subject to human investigation let free criticism be paramount and exclusive; but beyond this region, where human thought can do nothing, why should it be deemed inconsistent, or be felt

unwelcome, to accept the aid of authority? To take an example from our author himself. In his work on the Soul he leaves a good man, after the utmost exertion of "free thought," quite uncertain of immortality. Where would be his inconsistency, if he were to permit a teacher whose divine commission had been established to give him positive assurances on so interesting a topic?

Mr. Newman lays down a startling proposition when he says (p. 206) that, "so long as an opinion is received on authority only, it works no inward process upon us." This is not, we think, a psychological fact. Every opinion works, we conceive, if it be "received," irrespectively of the ground on which it is received, whether investigation or authority. Its reception is the fact which places it among the active elements of our being. How else, indeed, are we to account for the practical, and often astounding, effects of manifestly superstitious beliefs, or even for Mr. Newman's own admission that "an opinion received on authority" "may be a most important stimulus to thought"? This, we take it, is an "inward process," and very near akin to many other processes, both of thought and feeling, which opinions received upon authority are known to have produced, and are still producing.

In the same page Mr. Newman strangely confounds teaching by authority with "forbidding to think." Teaching by authority would, indeed, be synonymous with forbidding to think, if it were resorted to in matters which the pupil's power of thinking is competent to master; but this writer seems wholly to overlook the fact that revelation presents itself as an authoritative oracle only in the region in which human thought is confessedly incompetent. According to him, *nothing* is to be taught us on authority, not even where, unless authority speaks, we cannot know anything at all. Certainly, this principle would keep us in the dark, not only as to the all-important matters treated of by revelation, but as to a large portion of our ordinary affairs. Our knowledge of geography, for example, is for the most part acquired on authority. Is Mr. Newman prepared to say that no man should believe in the existence of the Gulf of Mexico, or of the Himalaya Mountains, who has not *seen* them?

In order to give force to his argumentation, and as if conscious of its weakness, Mr. Newman uses a hard name, and

talks of a reverent regard to the Holy Scriptures as "bibliolatry," or Bible-worship; a state of mind which he is "disposed to call the greatest religious evil of England." We cannot say much for his sagacity in the selection of this term, but we will not deny the possible existence of the evil to which it points. There may be persons who cultivate a superstitious regard for the Bible, though few enough, we dare say, in comparison with those who treat it with a contemptuous neglect; and Mr. Newman may, if he finds gratification in it, or if he thinks it will be useful, call them Bible-worshippers; but this is no fault of the Bible itself. The Bible does not claim to be worshipped, nor is it honoured by superstitious regard. It professes to be one of several modes by which God speaks to man; and to recognize it as such, and to hearken to its teaching, is no more to worship it than Mr. Mackay worships green fields, and Mr. Newman free criticism—perhaps not so much.

Another objection entertained by this writer against admitting any "authoritative oracle" in relation to religious matters, is that it is contrary to "the law of God's moral universe." "The law of God's moral universe," proclaims this oracle without authority, "as known to us is that of progress" (p. 223). Mr. Newman seems disposed to make very much of this argument. There was a progress among the Pagans, "from old barbarism" to "moral monotheism." There was a progress in Palestine, from "the image-worship of Jacob's family" to "Stephen, the proto-martyr, and Paul, once his persecutor." "The party of progress was always right," and it is right now. Such is the proof, and the conclusion is that there is no permanence in religious opinion; that, by "the law of God's moral universe," every element of it is to be incessantly shifting, so that every generation is to have a different faith, and no one shall be able to conjecture what shall be the faith of the last.

Such a conclusion might safely be left to refute itself. It may be well to say, however, that the premises from which it is deduced are, with a semblance of truth, substantially false. "The law of the moral universe," or, to speak with somewhat greater sobriety, the law of the moral condition of mankind, is progress. In a certain sense this is true; but of this Mr. Newman knows nothing at all, unless he will take the Bible for his guide. He talks of "old barbarism" as

though he could prove that to have been the primary state of man, which he cannot; and he talks of "the image-worship of Jacob's family" as though that was the first occurrence in human history, which it was not. What made him so shy in this matter of the first three chapters of Genesis? Progress? Undoubtedly. Man was created in innocence and happiness, under an equitable probation man fell, and fallen man has been made the subject of a redeeming system. If these be not the facts, Mr. Newman, at all events, knows nothing about the matter.

In the development of the redeeming system also there has been progress; but it has been the progressive development of a system of fixed elements and unchangeable truths. The Gospel preached in the Garden of Eden was, with all its differences, the same Gospel that was preached at Pentecost, and is preached now. The announcement that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head contained all the mysteries of Calvary. Mr. Newman innocently tells us that Stephen and Paul had "to free the world from the law of Moses." Where did he learn that the law of Moses was ever binding on "the world," or was intended for it? Is it not progress enough for him that the law of Moses consisted of Messianic shadows, which vanished when the Christ at once fulfilled and terminated the dispensation which embodied them?

Undoubtedly, there has been progress, but it has been a progress of manifestation only. Religious ideas have been more and more clearly displayed, but there has been no change in the nature of the religious ideas imparted. And even this process is now at an end. Revelation, having been in progress for four thousand years, has now completed itself, and is at rest. This is the reason why, to the astonishment of Mr. Newman, "*up to a certain point all Christians approve of progress, but at this point they want to arrest it.*" They believe rather that it has arrested itself. The authoritative oracle has spoken for the last time; and nothing now remains but to learn, with what simplicity and humility we may, the true import of the celestial utterances with which we have been favoured. The progress to be expected now is not of discovery, but of appreciation and influence. The leaven has been cast into the meal, and it will leaven the whole lump.

There is nothing either dangerous or undesirable in thus having to take as an authority what was uttered two thousand years ago, provided only that it is the truth which has been spoken. It is the truth which we want to know, and when once known it is abiding. It has neither age nor youth, but, like its Author, is eternal. It is so with the sciences generally. In part they are shifting and uncertain, affected by the imperfections and advances of human discovery; but in part also they are fixed. Nobody thinks of establishing anew the axioms of geometry, or complains of having to commence the study of mathematics with Euclid's Elements. Why should there be a clamour for keeping in everlasting uncertainty the very elements of moral truth, and for assigning to every generation the task of constructing from its foundations their religious knowledge? If the truth has already been spoken, it is the dictate of common sense to recognize it. In every matter but religion men are anxious to avail themselves of antecedent discoveries, and to build upon foundations already laid. The sciences at large, however, afford a very imperfect illustration of the point before us. No importance attached to the possession of scientific truth at the commencement of our race, and comparatively little to the rate at which its discovery should advance; but, on account of the spiritual relations and destiny of man, it was of the utmost importance that he should know from the first *the truth* as to his duty and his hope. That to following ages what the first man saw obscurely should be more clearly made known, involves no difficulty; but that the method of divine government and mercy declared four thousand years after the fall should have differed in substance from that proclaimed in paradise, is utterly incredible and inconceivable.

And in conformity with this view of what was probable and desirable, the facts of the case, according to the only narrative we have of them—a narrative the credibility and authenticity of which we shall here assume—have been. With newly-created man, as a rational being solitary and alone upon the earth, God put himself into direct communication. This was revelation in its simplest and most obvious form. And subsequently, during the lapse of four thousand years, in modes greatly diversified, but for the most part less direct, did the Creator and Ruler maintain a systematic

communication with mankind, imparting his will in divers portions, and at length speaking to us most plainly by his Son. The records of these communications, in such measure as it has seemed good to divine wisdom to present them to us, we possess in the Holy Scriptures, which are “given by inspiration of God,” and contain an ample revelation of his mind to us, on all matters which relate to our religious duty and welfare. Besides the claim of the Holy Scriptures, there is no pretension to inspiration in the world which is worth a moment’s consideration.

Since these things are so, then is there hope for man; then has he a religious guide in whose instructions he may place an unlimited and unwavering confidence. It is with God that he has to do; and nothing can be more satisfactory to him than that God himself should speak, since none can so fully know his mind, and since there can be no equal guarantee against deception or mistake. Reason may be corrupt, and philosophy blind; but, with “the Word of God” in his hand, the else-bewildered traveller to immortality has “a light which shineth” with a sufficient clearness, even in the darkest places of his sojourn. Lift up thine head, therefore, O pilgrim; and fear not, either to look around thee, or to look before thee. The scene thou beholdest is no longer shrouded in darkness, or occupied with glimmering fantasies only less dreadful than darkness. Not without mystery, it is henceforth to thee without peril if thou wilt listen to thy heavenly Instructor, and wilt say to him with a child-like confidence, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.”

V.

REVELATION—ITS EVIDENCES; PROPHECY.

If it be indeed necessary that, in order to the satisfactory guidance of mankind in the affairs of religion, God, the great and exclusive object of religious affection, should declare his will, and, if it be a fact also that God has graciously met this necessity by a declaration of his will—points which, after the discussion we have given them, we shall not further argue—it becomes of the utmost importance to inquire what God has spoken; both in order to discriminate between the various pretensions which may exist, and to ascertain the trust-

worthy character of that which most satisfactorily presents itself to us under the aspect of a heavenly guide.

The ground and necessity for both these processes are unquestionable, and even obvious. Since communications from God are made to man by the instrumentality of men, they evidently mingle themselves with the whole multitude of communications which men make one to another, and some evidence is required to show that they are of a peculiar, and not of an ordinary, kind; and, since it is clearly possible that a divine origin may be claimed for communications which are by no means entitled to such a concession, a comparison of such claims one with another is necessitated, and means should be at hand by which the false may be distinguished from the true.

It is impossible to conceive that the Divine Being would have made communications to man on subjects of infinite moment, and requiring so high and exclusive a regard, without proper attendant evidences; nor can any fair process of inquiry, however searching, be complained of, which tends to the satisfactory elucidation and decision of the points we have indicated.

One part of this twofold inquiry is of easy solution, and may be briefly dismissed. If God has spoken to man in any mode, the fact is recorded in the Bible. Other claims to inspiration, indeed, have been set up, and some such, it is humiliating to say, yet are so; but none of them are of a character to deserve a serious consideration. Broad, palpable, and infinite, are the differences which distinguish the Holy Scriptures from every rival, whether of ancient or of modern days; and the only practical question which demands our consideration is, whether in the Bible is revealed to man the mind of God.

In considering what kind of proofs should be expected in authentication of a revelation from God, it is clearly not for us to make our choice; it is but fair that the selection of these should be left with the glorious Being who speaks to us. It will be for us afterwards to judge of their sufficiency.

Looking, then, at the various communications which it has pleased God to make to men as they are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, we find those who claim to be his messengers prominently distinguished by the power of foretelling events, or by the gift of prophecy. It was thus with Enoch,

whose prophecy, not recorded in the Old Testament, is preserved by Jude in the New; with Noah, whose preaching embodied the prediction of the deluge; with Moses, with Samuel, with David—but why should we proceed with this enumeration?

Let us rather say, in the second place, that those who claimed to be God's messengers in many cases authenticated their claim by the production of effects transcending the natural power of man, or by the working of miracles. So it was in a very striking manner with Moses, when God sent him into Egypt; with Elijah, and some others of the Hebrew prophets; and—to say nothing at the present moment of the greatest of all—with the apostles.

In the third place, divine communications to mankind have supplied an evidence of their origin in the nature of their contents. They have been too strikingly characterized by holiness, benignity, and wisdom, to permit an ascription of them to any other than a divine source.

And, in the fourth place, communications from God have authenticated themselves by their effects upon those to whom they have been addressed. Persons who have received them with due reverence and regard have been, in multitudes of cases, so wrought upon in a manner exclusively characteristic of God and of his power, that it has been impossible to doubt from whence the communications have come. Evidence of their divine origin is supplied by their manifestly divine results.

We have thus named four sources of evidence by which professed communications from God are authenticated by himself, and may, consequently, with entire fairness, be tested by us. Looking at these a second time, however, we observe that there exist among them considerable generic differences: the first two, prophecy and miracles, are sources of evidence extrinsic to the divine communication itself, while the third is an intrinsic quality of the message communicated, and the fourth—the power of that communication on the heart—is a matter of experience on the part of those to whom it is sent. These generic differences divide the evidences by which divine communications are attested into three classes—the external, the internal, and the experimental.

We shall find reason hereafter to regard the experimental

evidence of divine revelation as far more important for all practical purposes than either the external or the internal; nevertheless, we shall in the first instance direct our attention to these, which are unquestionably momentous and magnificent.

And, first, for prophecy.

We are aware that the word prophecy is used in two ways: that it means to teach, which was the office of the prophet; and to predict, which was an accident and a proof of it. It is enough for us to say that we now speak of prophecy exclusively in the latter of these senses.

That prophecy in this sense of it was an actual fact for more than two-thirds of this world's history, must needs be readily admitted by all who admit the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred records—topics on which we do not mean here to allow any question—since it is mixed up with them through their entire mass, from Genesis to Revelation. Mr. Newman, indeed, thinking, it would seem, to relieve himself by a single stroke, and a bold one, cuts off the entire Pentateuch by the gentle intimation that it cannot be “traced” higher than “the century of Hezekiah,”* and the courteous insinuation that all the prophecies in it which had been up to that time fulfilled were forgeries of Hezekiah's age. Upon this supposition Mr. Newman should have nothing to do with the Bible but to denounce it as the most wicked and impudent fraud ever palmed upon the world; yet he himself cannot but know well that, to whatever era the existence of the Pentateuch may be “traced,” its very early composition is beyond doubt, and that its prophetic portions are substantially embodied in it. It is obvious, also, that, if this insinuation were true, it would by no means dispose of the entire mass of Scripture prophecy.

As prophecy is a fact, so it is a fact which has its proper significance. To predict is not competent to man. To some small extent, indeed, it is given to man to anticipate with more or less of probability—a condition of things necessary to the prudence which he is called upon to exercise, and to the exertions which he is required to make; but the sphere of human anticipation is bounded within very narrow limits, and even within this sphere human sagacity is very often at

* Phases of Faith, p. 171.

fault. Only to God does futurity lie open, and only by him can its secrets be disclosed. If there be one of human kind who is found in any measure to be acquainted with them, it is not only just, but necessary, to infer that he has been in communication with the exclusive possessor of the knowledge he has gained, and that he has been put into possession of it for some practical purpose in divine and sovereign wisdom contemplated. If it should be said by him, "I bear a message from God, and he has informed me of this in order that you may be assured that he has sent me;" what ground should we have for denying the validity of the argument?

It is for this purpose that God is expressly represented by his prophetic messengers as employing the superhuman foresight with which he had endowed them. An example of this may be taken from the indignant remonstrances of Isaiah with the stiffnecked Israel of his day.

"Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen; let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. . . . Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that showeth; yea, there is none that declareth; yea, there is none that heareth your words" (Isaiah xli. 21-26).

To show that this is not a solitary instance, and to bring out more fully the force of the appeal, let our readers permit another citation from the same prophet.

"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. . . . Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together. Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me" (Isaiah xlv. 11, 21).

The argument thus employed by the ancient seer is direct and cogent; and that it is so is sufficiently demonstrated by the tactics of infidelity itself, since there is none of which the opponents of Christianity have shown more anxiety to rid themselves.

It must be admitted, however, that prophecy itself requires a test. To admit everything to be a prediction which pretends to be so, would open the door to impostures of every

description and degree. And, accordingly, when under the ancient dispensations God announced to Israel that he intended to maintain a gracious communication with them by prophets, he supplied them in the frankest manner with tests by which the validity of every pretension to prophecy might be tried.

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. . . . I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. xviii. 15–22).

In addition to this simple and obvious test, a second of equal simplicity is given in another part of the same book.

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul” (Deut. xiii. 1–3).

The prophetic system was thus carefully fenced round by its divine author; and illustrations of the practical application of both the tests here supplied are copiously found in Israelitish history. Under the profligate kings of that nation there grew up a school of false prophets, who, assuming the aspect and manners of the true, made it their business to flatter royalty, and to sanction apostacy. A remarkable instance of conflict between these two bodies of men is presented to us in the twenty-second chapter of the first book of Kings, where Ahab invites Jehoshaphat to go up with him to battle against Ramoth Gilead. We should like our readers to peruse the whole of this very instructive chapter, but we will endeavour to present the principal points in a few words. The prophets in attendance upon Ahab exclaimed with one voice, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead, and prosper; for the Lord

shall deliver it into the king's hand:" but Micaiah, sent for by Jehoshaphat, who seems to have been not without suspicion, announced a contrary issue, and concluded by declaring that God had put "a lying spirit" into the mouth of all the prophets of Ahab. We must give the brief remainder of the narration in the words of the sacred penman.

"But Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon, the governor of the city, and to Joash, the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you" (1 Kings xxii. 24-28).

Our readers know that this battle ended in the defeat and slaughter of one of the two kings.

A similar conflict took place in the reign of Zedekiah. Jeremiah, the prophet of woe, having foretold the success of Nebuchadnezzar's expedition against Jerusalem, Hananiah the prophet undertook to contradict him, and to predict that within two years the yoke of Babylon should be broken. The reply of Jeremiah was in the following terms:—

"Then said the prophet Jeremiah to Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month" (Jer. xxviii. 15-17).

Every attentive reader of the Old Testament knows how many passages of similar import to these are to be found in it. To whatever extent prophecy might have to do with remote and far distant objects, the author of the prophetic system always took care to confine some of its announcements within limits sufficiently narrow for the observation of every generation, and the verification of them appears to have become a practical habit on the part of the people at large. Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings xxi.) and the altar at Bethel (1 Kings xiii.) are cases in point, to which we hope our readers will refer; and there are many more which we would with pleasure specify, but that we are afraid of wearying their patience. We shall conclude this topic by merely

alluding to the statement of the sacred historian respecting Samuel: "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" (1 Sam. iii. 19, 20).

The tests thus made applicable by divine authority, and so easily applied in fact, to the Hebrew prophetic system, hold the same relation to the entire mass of Scripture prophecy as it is now in our hands. The Bible, as an aggregate message from God to man, contains a body of prophetic writings by which, in fact, the divine origin of the whole book is to be proved and ascertained, just as each separate messenger offered to his contemporaries a similar proof of his heavenly mission; and, just as the authority of each separate messenger was tested, first by the rectitude of his object, and next by the fulfilment of his words, so are the same tests to be applied by mankind in every age to the aggregate message. We shall proceed to subject the body of sacred prophecy to such a trial.

And, first, for the rectitude of its object. On this point the case is clear, and without obscurity. The doctrinal tendency and bearing of the prophetic Scriptures is in the highest degree satisfactory. There is in them no leaning to idolatry or superstition; on the contrary, they vindicate with pre-eminent power the supremacy of the only living and true God, and set forth as no other writings have done the glory of Jehovah. In addition to this, they all consistently and uniformly point to a glorious personage to come, or already come, the Messiah, Jesus. Nothing in the matter of prophecy, therefore, can justify even a momentary suspicion that it is not from God; on the other hand, every consideration drawn from this source tends to convince us most profoundly that in sacred prophecy God has spoken.

Our second inquiry is, whether enough of Scripture prophecy has been fulfilled to afford satisfactory evidence of this kind of its divine origin.

It is, of course, obvious that the whole of prophecy is not yet fulfilled, and that it cannot be so, since it stretches itself forward to the very end of the world: our inquiry after the fulfilment of prophecy, consequently, is limited to such part of it as may refer to time past or present; and by incidental circumstances it is confined within bounds still more narrow

—on the one hand, because the reference of many prophecies is not clearly ascertained, and, on the other, because our knowledge of history is too imperfect to enable us to trace the fulfilment of many in which the reference is clear. This limitation of our field of inquiry, however, has no injurious effect upon the argument, for the body of sacred prophecy possesses an entire unity. It is one, not many; and the proved divinity of one part establishes the divinity of the whole. Allowing for all deductions, enough, and more than enough, is left for our purpose, of prophecy that is clear beyond mistake in its intention, and sure beyond contradiction in its fulfilment.

The obscurities of the prophetic writings have been sometimes dwelt upon with an indiscriminating vehemence, as though all prophecy was obscure, every line written in hieroglyphics, and the key, when professedly given, not capable of application. We may confess, indeed, how much it is to be regretted that students of the Holy Scriptures have not come to a nearer agreement in the interpretation of prophetic symbols, and more especially of those leading intimations, by means of which it seems to have been the intention of the Spirit of prophecy itself that its obscure portion should, at least in the course of ages, become intelligible; but we are by no means called upon to admit that all prophecy is obscure, and that none has been with certainty fulfilled. The case is very far otherwise. Looked at as a whole, Scripture prophecy exhibits many portions expressed in the simplest possible language, directed with absolute plainness to specific persons and events, and demonstrably fulfilled to the very letter. A collection of such passages would constitute a volume; but, to make our meaning quite clear, let us be allowed to introduce a single example.

We open the book of Isaiah, and read from the commencement of the forty-fifth chapter the following verses:—

“Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loosen the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places; that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.”

The reference of this prediction, we presume, is plain enough, and its fulfilment unquestionable. And the same may be said with equal confidence of some of the principal symbolical prophecies; those of Daniel, for example, and his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in which the course and characteristics of the four great empires are shadowed out.

Now, it surely is not enough to rebut the evidence thus arising, to say that many portions of prophecy are still obscure and insoluble. There is no doubt of this as a fact; but it is a fact fully accounted for, by the nature of prophecy on the one hand, and by our want of information and sagacity on the other; while the immense amount of plain and fulfilled prophecy cannot be accounted for at all, but upon the supposition that it has come from heaven. And if it has come from heaven, then have the bearers of it received a communication from God, and their character as divine messengers is sufficiently authenticated.

A writer of the infidel school thinks to turn the edge of this argument, by asking, with a flippancy little characteristic of an inquirer after truth, the following question:—"As for the Old Testament, if all its prophecies about Babylon, and Tyre, and Edom, and Ishmael, and the four monarchies, were both true and supernatural, what would this prove? That God had been pleased to reveal something of coming history to certain eminent men of Hebrew antiquity. That is all."* "That is all"? Certainly, and that is everything. Mr. Newman here concedes the very principle we have been laying down, that a fulfilled prediction is a proof of a divine revelation having been granted to him who delivers it; and the possession of a divine revelation warrants its possessor to be received in his character as a messenger from God. What inference can be more just or necessary than this, that, when the divine mission of the messenger is established, the whole and every part of his message should be accepted as divine?

An unwelcome consciousness of the power of this argument may, perhaps not unjustly, be deemed to lie at the bottom of the bitterness with which infidel writers assail the double sense in which some parts of sacred prophecy have been

* Newman's Phases of Faith, p. 170.

generally understood. "No one," exclaims Mr. Newman, "dreams of a second sense *until the primary one proves false.*"* And a more recent writer† reiterates this imputation. This is sheer malignity. Every one who will look at any of the principal passages on which the theory of the double sense has been founded (as some in Isaiah, for example, which will immediately recur to recollection), will see that it has originated, not in their being false in either sense, but from their being true in both. And from the same fact has sprung the further theory, advocated by the late Dr. Arnold, and by Mr. Douglas, of Cavers, of the cumulative fulfilment of prophecy. Without asserting that there are no difficulties in this aspect of prophecy, and, still more, without pretending to remove all that have been either found or fancied, we will, before we conclude our paper, make upon it a few remarks.

In the first place, we may observe that, whatever obscurity may rest upon this question, it cannot take away the force of the argument from direct fulfilled predictions. What they do prove—namely, that the bearers of them had a mission from God—they prove irrefragably, whether some other parts of their message have one meaning or two.

But, in the second place, there are not wanting considerations which would make it far from surprising that there should be in some parts of the prophetic writings a complex import, or, if you please, a double sense. In Hebrew history every fact was double; it was itself, and it was a type of something else. Abraham was so; the Exodus was so; Canaan was so; the ritual was so; the monarchy was so; and what wonder, then, if prophecy should be so? The type and the antitype being in the mind's eye together, and the eye receiving in the moment of vision an extraordinary and divine illumination, why should it surprise us if words should be employed susceptible of application to both—to the former in a restricted, to the latter in a more expanded, sense? And what could be better suited to the character of prophetic announcement (which need not, at all events, be quite as plain as history), than that the prophet, or rather the Spirit of prophecy, should avail himself of this element in order to throw over the glorious prospect he discovered a

* Phases of Faith, p. 169. † Mr. Greg.

congenious and appropriate dimness? If the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, had a double sense, why might not also the language of the prophet?

We think it, however (and this is our concluding remark), both a vain and a presumptuous endeavour to aim at penetrating all the mysteries of the prophetic system. The ancient seers occupied a position too widely different from our own for us to be able to enter into their feelings, and threw their enraptured gaze over a region glowing with an illumination too extraordinary for us to be able to appreciate it. What could have been granted to them, incapable as they necessarily were of comprehending the infinite, but glimpses and snatches of the future and the distant—brilliant spots in the vast unrevealed—each vivid and distinct, but no one, perhaps, exhibiting its connexion with another, and no blended unity resulting from the whole? Is it in the study of such writings that we insist on the absence of mystery, and the total solution of difficulties? Such a demand is surely unreasonable. Let it be enough for us to know that, according to the common sense of mankind, and by the admission of the infidel himself, fulfilled predictions—of which the Bible is the only book in the world which contains any, and of which the Bible undeniably contains an extraordinary number—are proofs that the bearers of them have a revelation from God.

It has been usual to observe in prophecy considered as an evidence of divine revelation this peculiarity, that, by means of its gradual fulfilment, it comes into direct contact with the mind of every age; and to place it in this respect in contrast with miracles, which present their evidence to following times only through the medium of history. One would think it almost impossible that there should not be truth in this general view. It is natural to think that predictions, however obscure while the events they relate to are remote, would be recognized with some facility in their accomplishment, and that the possibility of such a recognition of them enters somewhat deeply into their value. What can be said upon this topic, however, when, in an age in which the discernment of fulfilling prophecy would be of extraordinary value, both to the church and to the world, the entire system of prophetic interpretation is in debate, and even its simplest elements are in a state of confusion

scarcely less than chaotic? At present there is no agreement as to which of the prophecies are fulfilled, and which are not, the Preterists and the Futurists between them keeping that matter in hopeless debate; while the interminable discussion of the question whether a day is to be taken for a day or for a year, arrests the practical interpretation of prophecy on the threshold. Prophecy is, consequently, rather an historical than a living evidence to us. In this, which we cannot but regard as an infelicity, we at once discern human fatuity, and acknowledge a divine providence. When men are to see prophecy in course of fulfilment, they will assuredly be enlightened concerning the testimony with which the event is to be compared. We suppose such a period will come; and a period of vast magnificence it will be, when God shall be seen marching to his ultimate triumphs in the very steps described "by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began;" but, in the meantime, the evidence which prophecy yields of a revelation from God remains unimpaired. The great fact that God has spoken stands out in convincing and indisputable proof; his messengers stand fully authenticated before us; and this at least is clear, that we may place a perfect and unwavering confidence in the instructions they impart to us.

It is possible, however, that we may overrate the value of a visibly fulfilling prophecy. It ought not to pass unobserved, that the prophetic indications of the greatest of all events, and of that which, above all, it would have been consolatory to the disciples to have clearly understood, were not recognized until it was past. We refer, of course, to the death of Christ. Yet this was so clearly predicted as to warrant the use of the following language by him after his resurrection: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and [thus] to have entered into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26.)

VI.

REVELATION—ITS EVIDENCES; MIRACLES.

In the preceding paper we took up the question, "What has God spoken?" and gave a general view of the evidence by which God himself has provided that his communications

to mankind may be discriminated and ascertained. We stated this evidence to consist of three kinds, the external, the internal, and the experimental; the external being again divisible into two parts, the one derivable from prophecy, and the other from miracles. To a brief consideration of the evidence supplied by prophecy the remainder of our last paper was devoted, and we now proceed to survey that which is afforded by miraculous action.

Upon this topic, which has given rise to so much controversy, and has been involved in so much perplexity, without, however, losing anything either of its importance or its power, we shall endeavour to speak prudently, but we shall speak without either fear or hesitation. The subject asks nothing but attentive and impartial consideration.

In the outset of our discussion it is proper to pay some attention to the fact, and to show how amply it stands before us, that God has employed miraculous action to attest his communications to mankind. The case of Moses naturally and immediately occurs to us as an example of this. When God had commissioned him to speak to the children of Israel, and to say to them, "Thus saith the Lord God of your fathers," the sacred narrative thus proceeds:—

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee. And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land" (Exodus iv. 1-9).

Not to do more than refer in passing to the miraculous

powers exercised with a similar view by Joshua, Samuel, Elijah, and others of the Hebrew prophets, let us proceed to observe that it was by similar evidence that the Messiah proposed to make good his own standing in the world. That he, in point of fact, wrought many miracles, was at once the affirmation of his friends and the confession of his enemies; and the purpose for which he did so is expressly stated by his own lips: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, BEAR WITNESS OF ME THAT THE FATHER HATH SENT ME. Believe me for the very works' sake" (John v. 36; xiv. 11).

And this design of his miracles is pointedly set forth in his treatment of John's disciples, when, at the suggestion of their master, they came to Jesus, and asked him, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Our Lord's response to this inquiry the evangelist gives us in the following terms:—

"And in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus, answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Luke vii. 21-23).

We might follow up this statement by referring to the miraculous powers exercised by the apostles and some of their contemporaries; but we have said enough, we think, to make the fact quite clear that God has been pleased to employ miracles in attestation of his communications to mankind.

Let us now try if we can make clear to ourselves and to our readers the nature of a miracle, or explain what a miracle is. Peril proverbially attends all attempts at definition, and much that is infelicitous has practically attended the attempts to define a miracle; but we cannot get on without a definition, and the patent mistakes of others may, perhaps, teach us caution, and lead us right.

The word miracle affords no clue to the idea which we want. It is formed from the Latin verb *miro*, to wonder, and has etymologically the simple signification of a wonderful thing; but many things may be wonderful which are not, in the sense in which the word is now commonly used, miracu-

lous. We shall do better if we select a fact of the miraculous class, and inquire into its constituent elements. Take, for example, Christ's raising to life the deceased youth whom a widowed mother was following to his grave out of the gate of Nain. This effect, doubtless, resulted from the exercise of divine power; but in this respect it did not differ from an immense multitude of other occurrences which also result from the exercise of divine power; and, consequently, viewed in this respect alone it was not miraculous. It resulted from an exercise of divine power in some way peculiar; it was a case in which divine power was exercised in a manner differing from its ordinary operation. What was this difference and peculiarity? Divine power in the physical world is ordinarily exercised in a way that is mediate or indirect—that is, by the operation of second causes, as food sustains life, or medicine cures disease; but here is an effect produced, not by the intervention of any second cause, but by an exercise of divine power direct and immediate. Our definition of a miracle, then, is that it is an effect resulting from an immediate exertion of divine power in the physical world. In a broader view a miracle may be regarded in two aspects, the one generic, and the other specific: in its generic aspect it is, in common with all natural phenomena, an effect produced by an exercise of divine power; in its specific aspect it is, unlike all other phenomena, an effect produced by divine power immediately exerted.

From this definition of a miracle we may pass to the consideration of the general subject. This it will be necessary to take up in a manner somewhat controversial, inasmuch as the miraculous attestation of divine revelation has been opposed, not only with great tenacity, but on very various grounds. It may be well to have these distinctly before us. The miraculous attestation of divine revelation is assaulted in the following methods :—

First, by denying the value of miraculous attestation.

Secondly, by denying the reality of the miracles recorded.

Thirdly, by denying the credibility of miracles universally.

Fourthly, by denying the probability of miracles.

Fifthly, by denying the possibility of miracles.

To put all these ideas into a single sentence, our opponents tell us that a miracle is impossible; or that, if it be not impossible, it is improbable; or that, if it be not improbable, no

report of it can be credible; or that, if a reported miracle might be credible, the miracles actually reported are false; or that, if the reported miracles were true, their attestation would be worthless. Thus we are challenged to battle at every point; but we will not decline the challenge.

In the first place we are told that a miracle is not possible.

We answer this assertion in two ways. First, by translating it into plainer terms, in which its falsehood becomes obvious. A miracle, it is alleged, is impossible—that is, an immediate exercise of divine power is impossible. But if so, then was creation impossible, for that was an immediate exercise of divine power; but creation clearly was not impossible, since it was actually effected. And, further, if an immediate exercise of divine power is not possible, no exercise of divine power at all is possible, because the first exercise of divine power must of necessity have been immediate; and if there cannot be a first there cannot be a second, or any subsequent, exercise of it—a conclusion, we suppose, quite inadmissible.

We further answer the assertion now before us by proposing a question, and asking why this, which is evidently not true in fact, should be supposed? The only reply we get to this question is, that the universe is acted on by physical powers, which are governed by fixed and immutable laws. These alleged laws are dignified with a grand appellation—the laws of nature—and they are conceived to operate, not merely independently of the Creator, but in such a manner as to exclude his interposition. But this view of things is altogether fallacious. The active powers of the physical world are nothing apart from God; they are strictly forms of His activity, only thrown one step further back by the insertion of an intermediate physical cause. And, as his power is the energy, so his will is really the law, or rule, of its action. When, indeed, we look at the universe, not as from a standpoint in the divine nature, from which its realities present themselves to us, but from the standpoint occupied by ourselves amidst its phenomena, then we see effects which tell us that there are energies at work, and regular effects which tell us that all are working according to rule; and hence we come to speak of nature having laws, and of those laws as though they were not only powers, but beings. No fallacy can be more transparent than this to a

thoughtful mind, and none, certainly, ought to be more carefully guarded against, since the seed of atheism is in it. The entire operation of second causes, with all their vastness and diversity, is resolvable, and requires to be resolved, into the simple operation of a first cause, without which in its immediate exercise, continued as well as primary, it must in every department instantly cease. Were God, the living spring, to withdraw from the created universe, all the wheels of this magnificent machinery would come to a stand. So far, consequently, from an immediate exercise of divine power being impossible, such an exertion of it is incessant; and the question whether it shall be employed to produce an ordinary or an extraordinary effect—a regular or an irregular result—is one that lies wholly, as a question of expediency, within the Divine mind.

We are now told, in the second place, that, granting the possibility of a miracle, it is in the highest degree improbable.

This allegation cannot, of course, be taken absolutely; because, if so, it would infer the high improbability of creation itself, which was an immediate exercise of divine power, and the first and greatest of miracles. Should any one choose to extend the argument so far, the fact of creation having taken place would, at least, prove it to be worthless.

We suppose, however, that it is intended to assume creation as a fact, together with the regular operation of physical energies in it; and then to say that, since God has been pleased to govern the universe by fixed laws, it is in the highest degree improbable that he will depart from them. To a limited extent there need be no difficulty in admitting the general principle thus laid down. Undoubtedly, the Author of the universe framed it with infinite skill, and must be supposed to be bent on honouring—that is, on maintaining—the ordinances he has instituted. This principle, however, must be admitted in a limited sense only; it cannot be held to be absolute. With whatever skill the Great Artificer may have constructed the physical mechanism, and however strongly his glory may seem to require that his wisdom should be honoured by its careful maintenance, it is clearly within the range of probability—it cannot be shown to be improbable—that some occasion may arise on which, for a valuable end otherwise unattainable, a modification of its action may be still more wise. And who shall judge of such

a contingency? Is it for *us* to judge? This is a mere argument from human ignorance and presumption. The determination of such an issue clearly lies, not with human or any other created intelligence, but with the supreme and sovereign Ruler. To take this out of his hands, and to make ourselves definitive judges of the probability of miraculous interposition, is as impertinent as it is unphilosophical.

Miracles being neither impossible nor improbable, it is next contended that, if they occur, they cannot be proved, either by sense or by testimony, so that their occurrence is useless.

We commence our remarks on this allegation by observing, that it would be really an extreme infelicity in the constitution of things, if such exercises of divine power as belong to the category of miracles could be wrought but not ascertained; more especially when the benignant and all-important purposes for which they may be conceived to be wrought are taken into consideration. For God to have produced such a state of things as this would have been to shut himself out from his own works, and to preclude himself from communication with his rational creatures, under circumstances of, perhaps, inconceivable and eternal moment. It is difficult to suppose that he should have subjected himself to such a restriction as this, or have forged so ignoble a fetter for his own arm. Indeed, were the constitution of the universe really such, this itself might be regarded as a defect which it were worthy of a miraculous intervention to remedy.

But why, let us ask, should it be impossible to arrive at the knowledge of a miracle? Every miracle is a fact, and a fact claiming credence only so far as it is, like other facts, brought within the sphere of our knowledge, either directly or indirectly, by observation or by testimony. These sources of information being trustworthy in all other cases, why are they not so in the case of a miracle? Because, we are told, they are in this case contrary to experience; and consequently the evidence which serves to prove a miracle must be held to be deceptive.

Now we have a great respect for experience, and have no inclination to say anything in the present argument by which the value of this proverbially effectual teacher may be depreciated; but this is setting her to unfair work. Experience is, doubtless, one of the sources of our knowledge, but it is not

the only source of it ; immediate observation by our senses is another, and testimony borne to us by others is a third. If there is any force in the argument we are now examining, it lies in exalting one of these sources of knowledge at the expense of the other two, and in assigning to experience the prerogative of overriding sense and testimony. This is demonstrably wrong, however. The evidence of experience is, in truth, the evidence of sense and testimony accumulated, and nothing more, since it is clearly not in the power of experience to supply any original or independent evidence of her own. She is absolutely limited to the work of a compiler ; and merely reduces to a code of practical wisdom either what has happened to ourselves, or what we are told has happened to others. She is consequently the inferior, rather than the superior, and, if superiority may be claimed by either party, it is certainly sense and testimony that are entitled to it, since they furnish the primary authentication on which experience herself reposes her confidence. Not, however, that an absolute authority is to be claimed, either for the senses or for testimony alone, or for both in combination ; since occasions of fallacy are always incident to these, in avoiding which experience renders valuable aid : but neither, in her turn, is she to be absolute. It is not to be a positive bar to belief of an observed or a reported fact, that it is contrary to all that has been known to happen before.

A further reason why experience cannot be made a supreme judge over sense and testimony may be derived from the very limited range of its action. The evidence of sense and testimony is presented to us from the earliest development of our rational powers, before experience has any existence, and long before it has acquired such a copiousness as to qualify it to decide on the trustworthiness of either. Nor, indeed, can the experience of any one man, however ample, be admitted to possess such a competency, since no individual possesses all the experience of the race, and what is contrary to the experience of one man may not be contrary to the experience of another. To decide whether a reported fact is contrary to human experience at large—the true test, if experience can supply any—would require that the whole of human experience should be concentrated in the individual, which is an impossibility. For any man to refuse the evidence of his senses because it is contrary to his experience is merely to limit his knowledge by his ignorance.

If, indeed, nothing contrary to experience were held entitled to belief, it is far from miracles alone which would be expunged from human knowledge. In that case, of things without precedent, things that happen for the first time, a large proportion would be set down as incredible, for many of them are assuredly contrary to experience. Upon this supposition how strange must have been the position of the first man! How could he have believed the first sunset, or the first sunrise? Or how could the drowning population of the old world have believed in the deluge which was carrying them away? Or how could any one have believed in the first earthquake? or in the first volcanic eruption? But we cease this questioning, which we fear our readers may grow weary of as unnecessary. It is too plain that, as all which we now believe was once new, and was believed without the aid of experience, so a large part of it was contrary to experience, and was believed in contradiction to her voice; and that, by continually believing in a similar manner more such new things, we are continually adding to the treasures of wisdom with which she enriches us.

It is, in truth, a primary and indestructible principle of our nature to give immediate credence, both to the evidence of sense, and to the evidence of testimony. We find ourselves, indeed, occasionally misled by both, and we are constrained to resort to methods for correcting the errors to which both are liable; but such means are ready to our hands, and are far different from an absolute subjection of our faith to our experience. In fact, miracles are as capable of proof as any other occurrences.

Well, be it so, says an objector: but the miracles actually recorded cannot be proved, for they never took place. The records of them are either false or fabulous.

We cannot here go fully into the extensive subject which this allegation opens to us, or do any justice to the mass and variety of evidence by which the truth and fidelity of the scriptural narratives are demonstrated. Nor can we undertake to advert, even in a cursory manner, to all the miracles recorded in the sacred writings. We shall confine ourselves to a few remarks on the Christian miracles, or those by which the Messiah signalized his residence on earth, and gave proof of his mission from heaven.

Taking the evangelical narratives as we find them, and

looking at the allegation that the miracles recorded therein were frauds—that is, that the occurrences represented as miraculous were not really so, but merely tricks practised upon unwary observers—we make this general observation, that if the miracles of Christ were frauds, they were the most marvellous and incredible of frauds.

Frauds, as a class of human transactions, have a generic character by which they may be distinguished from the other transactions of life, and for which every sagacious investigator makes a careful search. All frauds have an object in some way gratifying to the inventor or executor of them. All frauds exhibit, when fully examined, marks of contrivance and artifice. All successful frauds are indebted to felicitous circumstances and coincidences for their issue. To set that down as a fraud which has not these characteristics is unjust. Let us try by these tests the miracles of Christ.

All frauds, we say, have an object in some way gratifying to the inventor or executor of them. It is not in human nature to take so much trouble, unless with a view to procure by it some pleasing or beneficial results. Now, with respect to our Lord Jesus Christ, he tells us frankly what the end he contemplated by his miracles was—namely, to prove that his Father had sent him; not only a spiritual object, identical with no worldly gratification, but an object in order to attain which his miracles must of necessity be genuine. Tricks of legerdemain could have no tendency but to defeat it. What other object did he seek which feigned miracles might seem adapted to secure for him? Was he ambitious? Did he covet wealth? Did he court human applause? Nothing of the kind. All that could possibly be gained by a course of clever and successful artifice he disregarded, and flung away. Why, then, should he be suspected of fraud?

All frauds, we have said, exhibit, when fully examined, aspects of contrivance. They would otherwise have no adaptation to their end. Having no reality, a semblance of reality must be given them. The simple and straightforward consists only with the honest. In this respect what was the character of Christ's miracles? Are there any indications of elaborate preparation? Was there watchfulness of time and circumstance? Were there any curious precautions, or signs of timidity and suspicion? Was there any attempt at concealment? Was there any study of display? Was there any

fishing for applause? Again nothing of the kind. The miracles of Jesus were wrought on the most natural occasions, with the greatest possible modesty, without the slightest preparation, with the utmost conceivable openness, and in all varieties of circumstances, from the domestic privacy of the sick chamber to the presence of thronging multitudes. Never did an artful man bear himself so modestly, or a juggler lay himself so open to exposure. Never was a knave at the same time such a fool, or so utterly wanting in the indispensable tactics of his profession.

All successful frauds, we have further to observe, are indebted to felicitous circumstances and coincidences for their issue. Being adapted to their end, not by reality, but by appearance only, it is not in their nature to succeed by their own force, but only as aided by a fortunate concurrence of tributary causes; and this it is for the most part, in subsequent periods at least, not difficult to trace, as in the rise of Mahometanism, for example. But what in this relation was the aspect of the Christian enterprise? Were earthly powers in its favour? Were Jewish prejudices in its favour? Was Pagan philosophy in its favour? Or were Pagan morals? Did it pander to the luxury and vices of mankind? Did it present stimulants or rewards to ambition? A third time nothing of the kind. On the contrary, everything was adverse to the success of Christianity: the venerable antiquity and unquestionable divinity of Judaism, and the inveterate prejudice of the Jew; the lofty pride of Pagan wisdom, and the utter profligacy of Pagan morals; the feeble and defenceless condition of its advocates, and the crushing magnitude of its foes. Yet Christianity succeeded; and, if a fraud, assuredly in circumstances in which no other fraud ever succeeded in the world. But it cannot be. If Christianity triumphed, its triumph must have come from heaven; a testimony and an honour which no fraud can be supposed for a moment to have enjoyed.

Regarding the achievements of Christianity as a problem to be solved, indeed, the supposition of its having been a systematic fraud places the greatest of all difficulties in the way of its solution; it is far more easy if we proceed on the supposition of its genuineness and truth. It is passing wonderful on the latter hypothesis; on the former it is utterly inexplicable.

The genuineness and reality of the Christian miracles being admitted, however, we are finally told that the evidence so derived is of no worth. Miraculous attestation need not be contended about, for, if it be obtained, it is valueless. So writers of grave name now allege.*

On this allegation we may observe, in passing, that, if it had occurred to former writers of the infidel school, it might have saved them a great deal of trouble. They would scarcely have taken so much pains to impugn a species of evidence which, if it were conceded, was of no weight. To which it may be added, that the studied depreciation of the evidence of miracles may fairly be taken as a confession that the miracles themselves cannot be got rid of.

Miraculous attestation, we are told, is of no value. We ask, Why? Because, says the writer already referred to, God appears sufficiently, and best, in what is regular. Our remarks upon this are two. First, that what may be either the sufficient, or the best, indications of God's presence in the world, is not a question for Mr. Mackay, or for any one but God himself, to determine. Secondly, that to indicate God's presence in the world is far from being the intention of miracles, as this writer supposes. This is entirely misconceiving the thing to be proved by them. The object of a miracle is to prove that God has given a commission to the party by whom the miracle is wrought; an object which, it is clear, could not be effected by the regular processes of the natural world.

Mr. Newman is equally beside the mark when he asks, with an air of triumph, Of what doctrine can a miracle be to me an evidence?† Miracles were never intended to supply evidence of doctrines. Their sole intention is to prove a fact; and that fact is simply this, that the person by whom the miracle is wrought has received a commission from God. It was for this purpose specifically that miracles were employed by Christ, as appears decisively from a passage which we have already quoted: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." And the method of proof is by no means recondite. The work effected is wrought by an immediate exertion of divine power, but, as

* See Mackay's Progress of the Intellect.

† Phases of Faith.

this is beyond human control, the effectuation of works by it implies divine permission and warrant; and this warrant would not be given but for a purpose by God approved. When, therefore, a person says, I have a mission from God, and works a miracle—or, in other words, wields divine power—in proof of his assertion, his argument has certainly a direct bearing and a decisive value.

Such, indeed, has been the admitted force of miracles in all ages. So it was with the Israelites, when they saw the miracles of Moses. So it was with the Jews when they saw the miracles of Jesus. “Rabbi,” said Nicodemus, “we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” And after one of his magnificent works, the feeding of five thousand men with a few loaves and fishes, the evangelist adds—“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”*

VII.

REVELATION—ITS EVIDENCES; MIRACLES (*continued*).

Our last paper we devoted to the argument derivable from miracles in proof of a divine interposition in the affairs of men, and an endeavour to sustain it against the various modes in which it has been assaulted. It was quite a common-sense business, we concluded, and we hope our readers came to the same conclusion, when Christ said to the Jews, “The works that I do bear witness that the Father hath sent me;” and when the people responded, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

Inasmuch, however, as not everything wonderful or inexplicable is necessarily miraculous, the profession of having wrought an attesting miracle itself requires to be subjected to a test. “You say that you have a mission from God, and that you have wrought a miracle to prove it: but can I be sure of this? What is it that you have done, or appear to have done? Have you used no artifice? Have you availed yourself of no fortuitous coincidences? Are you taking no advantage of mere appearances?” It is doubtless

* John iii. 2, and vi. 14.

proper, and in the last degree necessary, that every professed miracle should be thus subjected by those to whom it immediately appeals to a searching examination, and to the application of what may be called a physical test. These are mere modes of putting the question, Is it really a miracle? and of distinguishing a pretence from a fact, an honest man from a juggler.

We need scarcely say how triumphantly the scriptural, and more especially the Christian, miracles sustain the most severe application of the test now described. Grant us the truth of the narrations, and the validity of the miracles is unquestionable; they were frankly admitted to be such at the time they were wrought, both by friends and foes (and the latter no fools) of him that wrought them. So obvious, indeed, is the really miraculous character of the facts narrated, that the main efforts of infidels to get rid of the miracles have expended themselves in assaults on the credibility of the history.

But is this all? And is this the only test to which miraculous pretensions should be subjected? At the first moment, perhaps, one might be tempted to answer this question in the affirmative, and to ask, What more can be necessary than to convince you that a miracle has been really wrought? A little reflection, however, may induce us to hesitate. A reader of the Bible finds in it two series of professed and apparent miracles. In Egypt the magicians wrought wonders, as well as Moses; and the disciples of the Pharisees cast out devils, as well as Jesus.

To this, we are aware, it may be rejoined promptly, "But were the doings of the Egyptian Magi and the Jewish exorcists more than *apparent* miracles? And may they not be confidently set down as artful imitations and clever impostures?" Perhaps they may be so; but, if the reader pleases, we will not arrive at this conclusion in a moment, but will enter a little into the consideration of a subject certainly not without both its importance and its difficulty.

Undoubtedly, the shortest and the easiest way of dealing with the question now before us—and the wisest, if it be a safe and satisfactory one—is to assume that the apparent miracles we have referred to were apparent only, and not really miraculous. And this course is further recommended by the eminently clear and simple position in which it would

leave the argument from miracles to a divine mission; while, if it be allowed that miracles have been wrought by those who had no divine mission, that argument may seem to be involved in great, if not in almost hopeless, perplexity.

We must be excused, however, from allowing any force to the latter of these considerations; not because we do not wish to see the arguments in favour of Christianity placed in the clearest and strongest light, but because we have an insuperable aversion to see them placed in a false and fictitious light. We wish to see them placed exactly where God has placed them; and if, in this position, there be found attendant difficulty, we would rather inquire after the mode in which God himself has provided for its relief, than by a plausible, but fallacious, assumption, appear cleverly to evade the difficulty itself.

Thus, setting aside the latter of the considerations which have been adduced, we can as little allow ourselves to be concluded by the former. We have already admitted that short and easy methods are much to be preferred, if they be safe ones; but safety is an indispensable requisite, however long and difficult the process by which it may be arrived at. And we confess at once our doubts whether the assumption that the wonders wrought by the Egyptian magicians and the Jewish exorcists were mere artifice and jugglery *is safe*—that is to say, whether it is consistent with a due and honest regard to the sacred narrative.

It is, of course, from the sacred narrative alone that we derive any information upon these matters, and our only method is to take with implicit confidence the facts as they are there stated.

First, then, with respect to the wonders wrought by the magicians in Egypt. Thus reads the narrative:—

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.”*

* Exodus vii. 8-12.

Nothing can be plainer, we think, upon the face of this statement, than that Aaron and the magicians did the same thing. These are the words: "Aaron cast down his rod, and it became a serpent;" and "the magicians cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." The only apparent reason for supposing that there was any difference between the two cases, is that we are told "the magicians did so with their enchantments." This statement, however, affects merely the circumstances of the process, and the assertion remains that they "did so." With what justice to the sacred narrative can this be understood to mean, they *appeared* to do so? As to the assertion that they "did so *with* their enchantments," this amounts to nothing more than a statement of the well-known fact that the Egyptians used enchantments, and it by no means carries the idea that they did so *by* their enchantments. But, even if we were not to make this distinction, but, on the contrary, were to allow that the magicians turned their rods into serpents by their enchantments, the case would not be altered, for the effect is one which mere enchantments could have no natural adaptation to produce; and, if they really did produce it, it must have been by the infusion of a supernatural power into this instrumentality.

In addition to this it may be observed, that Aaron did not proceed as though he thought the magicians had performed a mere trick. On such a supposition, his course would have been to have exposed the jugglery, and to have shown that the rods of the magicians were not in fact turned into serpents. Instead of this, he treated the affair as a reality, the superiority of his procedure being shown by his rod swallowing up their rods. The force of this conclusion evidently lay in the serpent into which Aaron's rod had been turned swallowing up the serpents into which the magicians' rods had been turned: if the case had been that Aaron's rod-serpent had merely caused the disappearance of several deceptive shadows, or a few unchanged rods, a very different account ought, in simple truth, to have been given of the matter.

It is, further, strongly inconsistent with the idea that the turning of the rods into serpents by the magicians was a mere artifice, that God should have chosen this as one—the first and most prominent—of the really miraculous proofs

by which Moses was to demonstrate to Pharaoh his divine mission. "When Pharaoh shall say unto you, Show a miracle for you, thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." Why this, if it could be so perfectly simulated by enchantments as to be wholly inconclusive? The magicians, indeed, could also turn their rods into serpents; but then the superiority of Aaron could be shown by their rods being swallowed up by his.

Following the course of the narrative, we find that, when Aaron had turned the water of the river into blood, "the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments" (Exod. vii. 22); and also that, when Aaron had covered the land with frogs, "the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt" (Exod. viii. 7). In both these cases the assertion is repeated that they "*did so*," and, in the latter case, the superiority of Moses was shown by his causing the withdrawal of the frogs, which the magicians could not do. In the fourth plague the magicians were quite at fault. When Aaron "smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice," we are informed that "the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not;" on which they "said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 18, 19). What we are here told is, not that the magicians endeavoured to produce lice by their enchantments, but that, employing their usual enchantments, they "smote the dust of the earth," as Aaron had done, for this purpose. On failing in this attempt, their acknowledgment—"This is the finger of God"—is certainly remarkable. But what was its real import? There are two possible interpretations of it, between which we must make our choice. Either, on the one hand, we may take it as meaning that the magicians were now, for the first time, convinced that there was an interposition of divine power, they being conscious that they had been acting the part of jugglers throughout, and having believed until now that Moses and Aaron were equally jugglers with themselves; or, on the other hand, we may take it as meaning that they, having been conscious that a certain measure of supernatural power had been employed by them, were now convinced that it had found its limit, and that "the finger of God" restrained them from any further competition with Moses and Aaron,

or resistance to the object of their mission. In the way of the first of these interpretations, we must frankly say, the early part of the narrative places, in our judgment, insuperable objections.

We ought, perhaps, to notice here the hypothesis held by some writers, that the magicians wrought their wonders by demoniacal aid. This is set forth by Dr. Adam Clarke in his Commentary on Exodus vii. 10, in the following terms:—

“There can be no doubt that real serpents were produced by the magicians. On this subject there are two opinions: 1st, that the serpents were such as they, either by juggling or sleight of hand, had brought to the place, and secreted till the time of exhibition, as our common jugglers do in the public fairs, &c.; 2ndly, that the serpents were brought by the ministry of a familiar spirit, which, by the magic flames of their enchantments, they had evoked for the purpose. Both these opinions admit the serpents to be *real*, and no illusion of the sight, as some have supposed.

“The first opinion appears to me,” continues Dr. Clarke, “insufficient to account for the phenomena of the case referred to. If the magicians *threw down their rods and they became serpents* after they were thrown down, as the text expressly says, juggling, or *sleight of hand*, had nothing further to do in the business, as the rods were then out of their hands. If Aaron’s rod *swallowed up* their rods, their sleight of hand was no longer concerned. A man may by dexterity of hand so far impose upon his spectators as to *appear* to eat a rod; but for the rods lying on the ground to become serpents, and one of these to devour all the rest, so that it alone remained, required something more than juggling. How much more rational at once to allow that these magicians had familiar spirits, who could assume all shapes, change the appearance of the subjects on which they operated, or suddenly convey one thing away, and substitute another in its place? Nature has no such power, and art no such influence, as to produce the effects attributed here to the Egyptian magicians.”

We coincide entirely in the last sentence of this extract, and in the whole of its negative argumentation it will be seen that Dr. Clarke coincides with us; but we think the learned commentator has quite lost his way in ascribing the supernatural works of the magicians to “familiar spirits,” which, in another part of his note, he calls “departed spirits, or assistant demons.” We surely know too little of the powers and operations of the beings thus denominated, and what little we seem to know is far too cloudy and obscure, to feel ourselves warranted in ascribing to them any definite actions; while the actions described in the narrative before us evidently rise above the competency of any created being, except by permission of the Uncreated. There is,

indeed, a striking air of timidity about Dr. Clarke's definition of the powers of familiar spirits. According to him, they can do three things: first, they "can assume all shapes;" secondly, they can "change the appearances of the subjects on which they operate;" and, thirdly, they can "suddenly convey one thing away, and substitute another in its place." We submit, however, that this (to use his own words) "is insufficient to account for the phenomena of the case;" since neither any one, nor all together, of these operations could effect the transformation of the magicians' rods into serpents, which he admits to be expressly stated in the narrative, and to have been really done. The simplest and most rational hypothesis undoubtedly is, that God, whose power alone is able to produce the effect, permitted the magicians to employ his power; and we cannot doubt that, but for an anticipated difficulty to which we have already referred, and with which we shall deal more fully presently, this idea would have been generally adopted.

It is not upon this solitary instance, however, that the idea of the occasional employment of supernatural power by men not friends to God, or direct instruments of his dispensations, has to depend. The intimations given us in the evangelical history of the casting out of devils by the Jewish exorcists supply a second apparent case of it; so that we should not get rid of the question itself, even if the doings of the Egyptian magicians were wholly thrown overboard. Let us now give to these intimations a brief consideration.

Nothing on this matter is supplied to us in the form of direct statement, but much that is important arises in the way of indirect allusion. Thus, when our Lord was accused by the Pharisees of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, a portion of his reply consisted of an *argumentum ad hominem*, in these words: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges" (Matt. xii. 27). It seems to us clear that this language, as used by our Lord, implies the fact that the Jews *did* cast out devils; since, if the fact was not so, there was evidently no ground, either for the question he put, or for the argument he raised. Had the Jewish exorcisms been a mere pretence, Christ would never have asked the authors of the imposture by what power they were effected, or have drawn an implied

comparison between that power and that by which his own cures were wrought. In that case it had been quite competent to his malign and sharp-sighted hearers to reply—"We know our own exorcisms to be a juggle, and now you admit yours to be so too." There seems necessarily to lie at the basis of our Lord's question the twofold fact, that the Jews did cast out devils, and that they believed they did it by divine power; a belief which the use Christ made of it strongly confirms.

The view we have thus given is strengthened by another case, in which the Pharisees do not appear. It is thus narrated by one of the evangelists:—

"And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part."*

Absolutely necessary to any tolerable understanding of this passage, is the supposition that the man whom John and his brethren had encountered had not merely *attempted* to cast out devils, but had really done it, and wrought a miracle. In the first place, it is not likely that the disciples would in such a matter have suffered themselves to be deceived, or that they would have wished to associate with themselves one whom they could have any reason for suspecting to be an impostor. In the second place, if the disciples had been herein deceived, it might surely have been expected that their Lord and Master would have relieved them from their delusion; a process than which, in the circumstances, nothing can be conceived more natural or more obligatory. In the third place, Christ's argument for letting the man alone obviously proceeds on the admission that he *was* working miracles. If, on the contrary, he had assumed Christ's name for the purpose of carrying on an imposture, as the seven sons of Sceva did afterwards (Acts xix. 14 *seq.*), nothing could have been more likely than that he might do great mischief, or more necessary than that Christ should arrest his course.

The same thing thus appears under the New Testament as under the Old; and, unless both cases can be met by a satisfactory interpretation, no relief is obtained for the ques-

* Mark ix. 38-40.

tion involved in them. A general observation may be made, however, concerning the language in which the sacred writers are accustomed to speak of a pretended, or simulated, use of miraculous powers. The memory of our readers will readily recall the severe denunciations of the Old Testament;* and for the New, it may be sufficient to cite the description given of Simon Magus in the eighth chapter of the Acts, as “a certain man who used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.” Had the doings of the Egyptian magicians, or those of the Jewish exorcists, been of the same class, would they not have been spoken of in similar terms?

It seems by no means capable of proof, however, that there was not an element of genuine miracle combined even with the indubitable and numerous frauds which constituted the staple of Simon’s wonders in Samaria; those wonders by which he is in our version infelicitously said to have “bewitched”—or rather, to have confounded—the people, and to have induced them to say, “This man is the great power of God.” A similar observation may be made respecting the case of Elymas.† He is called, indeed, a “false prophet;” but this may, perhaps, be as naturally explained of his inculcating falsehood as of his prophesying falsely: and it is remarkable that the indignation of Paul was aroused against him, not for the practice of imposture, but for seeking “to turn away the deputy from the faith.”

It may be added, that, in their anticipations of the last days, the prophetic writers of the New Testament expressly include the manifestation of supernatural power. So the apostle speaks of “that Wicked One, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.”‡ So also John—“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world.”§ The same writer, in the Apocalypse, makes frequent mention of miracles. “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh

* Isa. xlvi. 9 *seq.*; Jer. xxvii. 9 *seq.*

† Acts xiii.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 9.

§ 1 John iv. 1.

fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.”* “They are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth to the kings of the earth, and to the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”† “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image.”‡ Without contending, or even supposing, that the whole of this mass of pernicious wonder-working was really supernatural, it is enough for our purpose to say that it would not seem either natural, or just, that the truly miraculous element should be wholly excluded from it.

To these remarks may be added, in conclusion, an argument of a different kind, but, we think, of considerable weight. We refer to the circumstance that, in the evangelical narratives, the inference to the divine mission of Christ is drawn, not so much from the mere fact of his working miracles, as from the kind of miracles he wrought. Thus Nicodemus addressed to him this acknowledgment:—“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do *these miracles which thou doest* except God be with him.”§ This language showed that Nicodemus would not have been ready to admit the pretensions of any one who had simply performed miracles, but that only before such miracles as had been wrought by Christ his incredulity disappeared.

It is undoubtedly true, that supernatural power is a treasure which lies wholly in the hand of God, and that no one can be conceived to employ it in any degree but by his permission—a permission which, one would think, must never be given but for good ends. Yet facts are stubborn things; and, since there do appear in fact to be two series of miraculous operations, the one directed to good and the other permitted for apparently evil purposes, it becomes a necessary and very important question whether there is any principle, or recognized mode, of the divine government into which such a state of things can be resolved.

* Rev. xiii. 13, 14.

‡ Rev. xix. 20.

† Rev. xvi. 14.

§ John iii. 2.

Our readers—our thoughtful and considerate readers—will, perhaps, recollect that by our preceding remarks we have done nothing more than identify miracles with prophecy, in relation to which there was found to exist a similar dispensation. And both prophecy and miracles are expressly comprehended in the passages of Scripture which at once explain the principle, and provide for the practical treatment, of it. Let us be permitted to quote the words again.

“And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”*

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.”†

The case is here precisely before us. First of all, both prophecy and miracle are to be subjected to what we have called a physical test—namely, an investigation of their reality; and, having stood this well, they are then to be subjected to a moral test, or an examination of their practical tendency. Briefly thus: a sign or a wonder may be given you, and it may be verified as genuine; but, if the worker of it say, Let us go after other gods, you shall pay no attention to him. Why? Does not his having wrought a miracle prove that God has sent him with authority to teach his will? No, not absolutely; his agreement with unchangeable truth and duty is a necessary connected evidence of his mission. But why, then, does God, who surely ought to declare to us his will in an intelligible manner, permit us to be so perplexed? The answer is a weighty and solemn one: “*The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.*”

It has been supposed that the passages now before us had reference only to the case of pretenders and impostors, and not to persons who could really foretell events or work

* Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

† Deut. xiii. 1-7.

miracles. The proper method—and a sufficient one—of detecting imposture, however, was the investigation of the facts, or the application of the physical test; while the declared probationary character of this dispensation of collateral supernatural agency seems to be necessarily demonstrative of its reality, inasmuch as a divine system of probation could not otherwise be established. That a knave might assume the garment of a prophet, or try to pass off for a miracle a clever trick, was very possible; but this would be only a case in which man was putting to the test the sagacity of his fellow. It could not be said of this case, "*The Lord your God proveth you,*" the Lord having nothing to do with it. To the occurrence of such a case, it seems necessary that the Lord should so far lend himself, as to allow, even to the evil-doer, a certain measure of supernatural power. Then—and not till then—the trial is made whether a party who has God's revealed word will abide by it, in the face of a proved and admitted miracle wrought to seduce him from it.

That God should permit a trial of this sort to occur to mankind is certainly remarkable, and it does a distinguished honour to truth. Yet not less than this is its due. Truth once known is of supreme and irrefragable obligation. Miracles may be mighty, but truth is before miracles, and above them; since *it is possible* that miracles may be adduced in support of falsehood.

It may be observed here, that, in all circumstances in which supernatural agency can be supposed, the moral test will be found capable of application. Not only to the Jews after they were in possession of the revelation which came by Moses was it applicable, but antecedently. It might have been applied even to the mission of Moses himself, and to the miracles by which he sought to make good his credentials. Nothing can be more natural, or more just, than to imagine the Hebrews replying to him in such terms as these:—"You assure us that the God of our fathers has sent you, and we cannot impugn the wonders you have wrought in support of your declaration: but now, what is your message?" And let us, for the sake of argument, suppose that his answer had been this: "The Lord God of your fathers hath appeared unto me; and thus saith the Lord, Mingle ye yourselves with the seed of the Egyptians, and abide ye for ever in the land of Egypt." What would have been—what ought to have

been—the result? The people ought to have risen as one man, and stoned him. What, although he had wrought miracles? Yes, certainly. Why? Because he had set himself against the truth previously known, that the seed of Moses should inherit Canaan, and endeavoured to seduce the people from trust in the promises of God.

The case is not essentially altered, however small a portion of truth we may suppose to be previously known. Let it be supposed, for instance, that, in the very earliest ages, a worker of miracles had inculcated the worship of idols, what must have been known of the true God would have sufficed to supply materials for the moral test to which his miracles should be subjected.

And, if we come forward into the world's later history, the case is substantially the same. What was conclusive as to the divine mission of Christ was, not the bare fact that he wrought miracles, but that he wrought miracles of a convincing kind. "Rabbi," said Nicodemus, "no man can do *these miracles* which thou doest except God be with him."

From the preceding observations there results the general conclusion, that man is made the judge of the fitness of miraculous interposition; that he is to take nothing as proved by mere miracles, but is to ask of what kind they are, in what spirit they are performed, and to what end they are conducive.

Here another topic of inquiry opens upon us; and we have to ask, What are the moral tests by which a miraculous interposition may be justified? We assign four: its wisdom, its rectitude, its adaptation, its adequacy. We shall say a few words on each of these.

1. A miraculous interposition is to be justified by its wisdom. The occasion should be worthy of it. This is a sentiment so natural that even the Pagans cherished it, as in the well-known line of Horace:—

"Nec Deus intersit nisi dignus vindice nodus."

The machinery of a miraculous interposition being unusual, and of the highest kind, it accords with our sense of propriety that it should be employed only on occasions of great weight, and of critical importance. It would be strange, unnatural, ridiculous, revolting, to witness the employment of it for an ordinary or a trivial purpose. In this light strongly stand

out the two great occasions on which God has had recourse to the employment of supernatural agency: namely, the deliverance of his oppressed people from the yoke of a proud and stubborn despotism by the hand of his distinguished servant Moses; and the still greater deliverance of the world from sin and death by the more glorious work of his Son, Jesus Christ. Many subordinate occasions, however, are not less satisfactory, and are, perhaps, still more instructive; among which we may mention the entire series of miraculous works by which the prophetic body maintained their prerogative under the theocracy, and the specific purposes of many of the single miracles, both in the Old Testament history and the New.

2. A miraculous interposition is to be justified by its rectitude. It is, of course, to be presumed that the divine mission in attestation of which it is adduced is designed to communicate some portion of the divine will previously unknown, so that something must be added by it to the stock of human knowledge; and, as the will of God must, in all its parts, be consistent with itself, so that which is newly announced must fully harmonize with all that has gone before. Thus it was necessary to the conclusive power of the miracles of Christ, that his doctrine should piece itself on, so to speak, to the Old Testament, and to a further, but truly harmonious, development of the system partially unfolded therein. What could miracles have done to prove him a messenger from heaven, who should have thrown shame upon the wisdom, or have undermined the authority, of the ancient and unquestionable Oracles of God?

3. A miraculous interposition is to be justified by its adaptation. There is a character in miracles, and they should be characteristic of the occasion on which, and of the purpose for which, they are wrought. Without such adaptation they lose part of the meaning with which they may be fraught, and very much of the force of the appeal they are adapted to make. The miracles of Moses, for example, how characteristic were they! The God of Israel was about to redeem his people with a high hand, and an outstretched arm; and all the miracles (the first only excepted) minister warnings of the awful and destructive power with which the haughtiest of the Pharaohs had to contend, and inflict, indeed, portions of that vengeance which was about so signally to fall on the

ruthless oppressors. On the other hand, how benign were the miracles of Christ! He came, "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" and all his works were wonders of compassion, miracles of healing. How strange it would be if this aspect of things were reversed: if Moses, in the presence of Pharaoh, were to cure the blind and to raise the dead, while Christ, in the streets of Jerusalem, should smite the firstborn with death, or turn the waters into blood! Such incongruities as these would go far towards rendering a miracle unintelligible, and, consequently, useless.

4. A miraculous interposition is to be justified by its adequacy. It may be said that one miracle contains the same proof as a thousand, and in a certain sense this is true; yet it has not pleased God to suspend important issues on single miracles. Even Moses was supplied with two for the conviction of the Israelites themselves—the changing of his rod into a serpent, and the leprosy of his hand when put into his bosom. "And it shall come to pass," said God, "that if they will not believe the voice of the former sign, they will believe the voice of the latter sign." In like manner, a series of wonders made their successive appeals to Pharaoh and his courtiers, but no collection of miracles was ever so numerous and so splendid as those which bore testimony to the Son of God, that the Father had sent him. These are manifest illustrations of the leading and all-pervading principle, that every miraculous interposition is to be great according to the greatness of the occasion of it; and that, on all occasions, the miracles wrought are to be sufficient in number, magnitude, and other circumstances, for the end proposed to be answered by them.

What, now, let us ask, will be the effect of applying the moral test, as thus developed, to the various professed, or apparent, cases of miraculous interposition in the world's history? On the one side we have the scriptural miracles, both of the Old and the New Testament, which stand out in the light thus thrown upon them in the most perfect truth, and the most admirable beauty. In no point do they fail of approving themselves to a considerate and unprejudiced mind, as being not merely miracles, but exactly what miracles in the circumstances ought to have been. The treasure of supernatural power has in these instances been employed, on the one hand, without parsimony, and, on the other, without

waste—at once husbanded, and lavished. On the other side we have the miracles—so to call them—of the Romish church, and more recently of the Irvingites, and (*mirabile dictu!*) of the Mormonites. We say nothing at present of the effect of subjecting these to the physical test, or of instituting an examination, where that is possible, into the facts alleged; but we ask, What is their aspect in the presence of the moral test? Alas! they turn pale, and die. What occasion has arisen for *them*? What has been added to truth revealed by *them*? What congruity has been apparent in *them*? Or what adequacy to an end has been exhibited by *them*? Nothing of the kind. Winking images, and other alleged wonders, even if they were realities, and not impostures, supply an answer to none of these questions, and can substantiate no claim to our regard.

It results, then, that there is a mode of estimating professed miraculous interposition independent of any attempt, at least in the first instance, to investigate the facts; in other words, that the moral test may be applied without the physical. To know whether an alleged miracle really has, or has not, taken place, although certainly desirable, is not necessary, before you inquire into its occasion, its congruity, its tendency, and its adequacy. This question may for a time be kept in abeyance, and the affirmative of it even may be hypothetically admitted, while you ask what is the object of the miracle, what its practical design, and what its adaptation and adequacy to its end. It is quite possible that, by seriously pursuing these inquiries, you may come to a satisfactory and perfect conviction, either that the alleged miracle is no miracle at all, or that it is a worthless and ensnaring one—one of those by which it may still please the Lord our God to “prove” us, and to see whether we love him with all our hearts. If the miracles, whether spurious or genuine, be identified with a system of spiritual domination and money-making priestcraft, such as Romanism, or with baseless pretensions to inspiration, such as Irvingism; or with flagrant immoralities and schemes of worldly aggrandizement, such as Mormonism; in all cases seducing us from the established verities of Holy Scripture, and undermining the glorious Gospel of the grace of God, we need not hesitate to pronounce them a temptation and a snare.

If, indeed, upon a careful and discriminating application of

the moral test, we find ourselves led to the conclusion, that what commends itself to us as a fit occasion for miraculous interposition has occurred, and that the miracles alleged are at once harmonious with the divine dispensations which have gone before them, and both adapted and adequate to usher in some further development of them, all this cannot warrant us in concluding absolutely that such an interposition has taken place. It becomes, then, further necessary to inquire into the facts, if they are open to our examination; or, if they are not so, to scrutinize the testimony on which they are presented to us. If the result of this is satisfactory, the *primâ facie* case will then be reduced to a certainty, and we shall behold the divine dispensation in the blended and harmonious lights of both the moral and physical tests.

The subjection of alleged miraculous interposition to a moral as well as a physical test, has the effect of widening to an incalculable extent the field of examination in which they are placed. The physical test can be applied, for the most part, but by comparatively few persons, whereas the moral may be applied by all to whom the case becomes known; and this not only in the age in which the alleged miracles are wrought, but in all subsequent ages of the world. Very few persons comparatively have been able to test physically the miracles of either Moses or Jesus; but whether the mission of Moses or the advent of the Messiah constituted fit occasions for miraculous interposition, and whether the modes in which it is recorded to have taken place were congruous, characteristic, and adequate, are questions which may be entertained in every age, and be decided for himself by every individual.

And the application of the moral test may be, and, in truth, often is, a much easier process than the application of the physical test. We do not mean to say that no miracles have been of a kind which made them obviously and undeniably such to all spectators and inquirers; but we mean to say—what, indeed, is sufficiently notorious—that not all miracles, whether genuine or spurious, have been such. As critics to this day dispute whether the daughter of Jairus was raised from death or from a swoon, so those who examined the case on the spot might, perhaps, have held different opinions. And of modern miracles (so called) it may not be easy for all persons to discriminate between a miraculous cure and a wonderful recovery by emotional power, or to detect the

skilful application of wax by which a body long dead has been made to appear as though it had escaped decay. But it is easy for persons of the plainest understanding to say—"If I grant this to be a miracle, what occasion has arisen for the working of it? What purpose is it to answer? What new teaching is it to accredit? And wherein is its adaptation to its end? If it be for no better purpose than to glorify and enrich a particular order of monks, or to prove that Rome is the true church; if it be for no better purpose than to authenticate a new Liturgy evidently made up of patches from the old, or to give currency to some new article of faith; if it be for no better purpose than to procure money for the temple at Nauvoo, or to coax people to the shores of the Great Salt Lake; then, I say, it is enough: whether your alleged miracles be false or true, they are alike unworthy of any regard."

It thus appears, on the whole, that a mode of divine dispensation which, at the first glance, appeared strange, and even perilous, turns out to be at once safe, useful, and necessary. So congruous is the system of supernatural agency with the constitution and sentiments of mankind, that God safely condescends to submit the expediency, the aptitude, and the adequacy, of its employment to man's own judgment; and thus puts into his hands an instrument for facilitating beyond measure the appreciation of every case in which its employment may be alleged. As an element in such a system, it was necessary that he should permit supernatural power to be employed, within certain limits, by evil men and for evil purposes; and there is at length discernible wisdom and benignity, as well as weight and solemnity, in the language which solves the mystery—"The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul."

VIII.

REVELATION—ITS INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

From the consideration of the external evidence of revelation—miracles and prophecy—we now advance to that of its internal evidence, or that which arises from the matter and aspect of revelation itself.

Fully aware are we of the magnitude and extent of the subject on which we are entering, and of the slender character of the view we can now take of it. The adequate treatment of it demands rather a volume than a paper, and so condensed and superficial a notice of it as is now possible to us cannot but convey a very imperfect impression of its force and importance; we will try, however, to give such a sketch of it as shall do it no willing injustice, and shall serve at once to stimulate and direct the further thoughtfulness of our readers.

We take up the Bible, then, as we would take up any other book, forgetting altogether, or putting out of our thoughts for the purpose of the present argument, that it either narrates miraculous transactions, or announces future events. We purposely shut our eyes to the exterior splendour which the accomplishment of its predictions and the execution of its miracles throw around it, in order that it may be to us in this respect nothing more than an ordinary literary production—a book of history, of poetry, and philosophy. We assume ourselves to be ignorant of its professed author, and we ask, Who wrote it? We shall endeavour to answer this question exclusively by a consideration of the contents of the book itself, which we shall offer freely, and examine candidly, in order to ascertain whether there is anything in it which may serve as a clue to its origin.

Not far do we proceed in the examination of the Bible before we perceive that it is a book, at all events, of many peculiarities, and very dissimilar to books in general; but that we may not be confused by the number of objects at once presenting themselves to us, it will be better to throw them into groups, and to arrange them under several heads.

I. First, then, some very obvious peculiarities of the Bible relate to its form and aspect. In its general structure it is not single, but multiform, and yet there is about it a strongly marked unity also.

1. There are many books, and yet but one subject. The Bible is now commonly put into our hands as *one* book; but this is owing merely to the directions given to the binder. It is, in point of fact, many books rather than one, and so many that their number is to be reckoned, not by tens, but by scores. Their actual number is sixty-six. The Bible, therefore, is not so much a volume as a library. So distinct are

the books of which it is composed, that, for the most part, you might rend them asunder, and scatter them on your book-shelves as so many independent works. Were you, however, in such a state to give them an attentive perusal, you would find in them so entire an identity of subject that you would soon be compelled to restore them to a common binding again, as being, though many, one. They all treat of the one great theme, the ways of God to man, more especially in the redemption of the world by his beloved Son; and they are as remarkable for avoiding everything which does not relate to it, as for gathering up everything that does so.

2. In the Bible are not only many books, but many kinds of books. The composition is far from being all of one class. There are books of history, national and individual; or history proper and biography. There are also books of poetry—the lyric, the epic, the dramatic. There are sage maxims of life and morals. There are splendid allegories, in the composition of which the writers were rapt into invisible worlds; and there are familiar letters, the authors of which breathe out confidentially their tenderest feelings. There are also didactic statements and philosophical arguments. All these various kinds of writing, however, have one and the same object, and are, more or less directly, tributary to the illustration of the one great subject to which the volume is devoted. If there is history, it is not a universal history, but is confined to nations more or less intimately connected with the antecedents of the Messiah; whether given in connected records of the sacred people, or in the books of Kings and Chronicles, or in detached scenes from profane history, as in the book of Esther. If there is biography, it is either in the line of Messiah's ancestry, as that of Abraham and David, or of himself. If there is poetry, the bard, in his varying moods, sings of the Redeemer to come. If there are utterances of proverbial wisdom, redemption is the theme of the sage. The vision of the seer exhibits in gorgeous pictures of the imagination only the same subject; while all the familiar letters breathe of it from the commencement to the close, and the profoundest argumentation is directed to its confirmation and vindication. As a whole, the illustration which the great subject derives from this mode of treating it is incomparably more ample and splendid than that which could have been conferred upon it in any other method.

3. In the Bible we find, not only many books, and many kinds of books, but many writers. Not less than about fifty persons employed themselves in the production of the materials which are here brought together. Very far indeed were they, therefore, from being the fruit of one man's mind and pen. There was a wide opening for diversity of sentiment and representation. Could it possibly happen that fifty men, in writing about the same subject, and that subject so grand and vast, should write the same thing? What diversities of constitution, of education, of habit, of character, of external influences, must be supposed in them, and these giving birth to corresponding diversities of opinion! Yet what seems impossible did happen. They did all write the same thing. They all saw the state of the world in the same light, and described its redemption in similar terms, and in a similar spirit. Whether Moses the lawgiver, or David the "sweet singer," or Solomon the philosopher and the sage, or Isaiah the seer, or Luke the historian, or Paul the Rabbinical student, all—strange to say!—from him that was "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt" to him that sat at Gamaliel's footstool, wrote "the same things."

4. In the Bible we observe, not only many books, many kinds of books, and many writers, but also a long course of years during which these writings were in process of composition. The Bible was not the production of a year, nor of an age. No less than sixteen hundred years passed away between the composition of the Pentateuch and that of the Apocalypse, and at various periods throughout this extended interval the sixty other books were produced. Nor have we to observe only the length of this period, but also the great changes which took place in the course of it. When the earliest books of the Bible were written the descendants of Jacob were yet bondmen in Egypt, and had not been numbered among the nations. Five hundred years witnessed the arrival of the Israelitish people at the zenith of their glory, under David and Solomon; about five hundred more saw their utmost depression in the lands of their captivity; another five hundred beheld the advent of the Messiah, and the presence in his own temple of "the desire of all nations;" and before one century more had passed captured Jerusalem was in ruins, and the temple blazing like a sepulchral pyre. During the occurrence of all these changes within the sepa-

rated people themselves, and amidst changes in the nations around them of the greatest magnitude which the world had ever seen, the composition of the Bible went tranquilly on. Legislators and kings, poets and sages, biographers and correspondents, much too widely separated in time to know anything of one another, and in circumstance to have any natural community of feeling, conspired to write this one book, and to illustrate in a beautiful harmony its magnificent theme. Is not all this wonderful? Is it not supernatural?

II. Some further peculiarities of the Bible are to be found in its tone and manner.

1. This is not artificial. The book, on the contrary, is characterized by an obvious and striking simplicity. Its histories are not elaborate statements, or highly-wrought pictures of society; but they have all the nature and ease of contemporaneous narrative. Its grandest statements of truth are neither ushered in, nor followed, by any notes of admiration. Its sublimest effusions of poetry are never overwrought, as if oppressed with the majesty even of the highest themes. Its descriptions of the most touching sorrows, or of the most criminal machinations, are connected with no appeals to the feelings. Its great system of redeeming mercy is brought out without any epithets of wonder. All is simplicity, not only unsurpassed, but unapproached. There is no use made of the *art* of composition, no study for effect. Each writer, indeed, contributed his quota to a whole of which he was ignorant, and he could not be artful. He must either execute in simplicity the part allotted to him, or he could do nothing. If there was any one exercising artistic skill, it could be only the divine Artist who was employing so many hands in the execution of his picture.

2. The tone and manner of the Bible is not speculative. In no respect is the Bible more peculiar than in this. The researches of the human mind are characterized by nothing more strongly than by unbridled inquisitiveness. Man, in his desire to know, desires to know everything; and, indeed, insists upon knowing everything, chafing against the impassable limitations of his knowledge, and fretting himself often into depression—sometimes into insanity. Man also desires to know for the sake of knowing, and for the pleasure of knowledge in itself rather than for its useful applications. Not so the writers of the Bible. They do not raise curious

questions, or strive to fathom profound depths. They make no approaches to the vast abyss of the unknowable; on the contrary, they write as if there were no such thing in existence. Having no object but to throw light on man's character and destiny for practical purposes, they speak of nothing but what is at once within the compass of his knowledge, and applicable to the direction of his life. They meddle with no difficulties, but abide unhesitatingly by a rule which human philosophy has always found too galling—"Secret things belong to God, but things which are revealed to us and to our children." All that man in relation to his spiritual welfare can be the better for knowing the Bible teaches him, not as philosophy, but as wisdom; his irrepresible but undefined longings after other knowledge it does not so much rebuke as ignore.

3. The tone and manner of the Bible is not argumentative. This, more or less, is the character of all human productions which have truth for their object. They commence with an assumed ignorance, and pursue a course of investigation. They institute inquiries, and conduct processes of reasoning to their results. They arrive at conclusions, which they confirm by proofs, and fortify against objections. The sacred writers pursue, for the most part, a strikingly different method. Their style, instead of being argumentative, is dogmatical. They do not inquire, but explain; they do not prove, but assert. They settle everything by authority—"Thus saith the Lord." They do not lead the reader into an argument, and reason as if in equal uncertainty with himself; but, as knowing all that he needs to learn, they tell him what it is, not waiting to dispute their *dictum* with him, but leaving him to act upon it. If there are a few exceptions to this observation, they only confirm the rule. Even when the sacred writers argue, it is with a brevity and authority which strikingly distinguish them.

4. The tone and manner of the Bible is not dubious. Its assertions are all positive. It speaks with no hesitation. It treats, indeed, of subjects of which to speak with hesitation might be deemed a virtue, if not a necessity—a becoming modesty, if not a confession of at least some measure of uncertainty. Mere men could not well have avoided this, but among the sacred writers there is nothing of the kind. None of their great principles are laid down with this

exordium—"It is probable;" or, "I think I am not mistaken." The most profound and anxious questions that have ever exercised, or racked, the human mind are before them; yet their tone is one, not only of deep conviction, but of unwavering confidence. It never falters. They pass through the midst of the most magnificent objects with a step of familiar recognition, and describe them with as much care and precision as though they presented the most ordinary phenomena. How, we ask, is all this? How, in this one book, can men, mere men, have written so unlike themselves?

III. Let us now advert to such peculiarities of the Bible as are to be found in its matter and contents. What we shall be struck with here is its verisimilitude, or likeness to truth. We are not speaking now of the absolute truth of the Bible, of which we do not assume our faculties to constitute us competent judges; but of the remarkable degree in which it is true to human nature and to known fact, to the laws of human thought, and the dictates of human consciousness.

1. Remark, for example, what it tells us of God; the great, mysterious Being whose existence all nature proclaims, and man's universal heart confesses, but of whose real nature and character there have been formed the most erroneous, diverse, and incompatible, conceptions. Upon this primary point how clear, and how true, is the Bible! Without any attempt at definition, or formal description, it presents to us God as a spirit infinite, self-existent, eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent; of perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. How such a conception of the Deity compares with the various notions which the human heart has generated of him—or rather those into which the human heart has itself degenerated—we need scarcely say; or point to the African worshipping his fetish, the Egyptian his river and its crocodiles, the Greek his sculptured marble, or the Persian the celestial orb. What we have more particularly to observe is, that in none of these conceptions of the Deity has the heart of man found rest. That there have been so many gods—the Hindoo has three and thirty millions of them—is a proof that no one has been found able to satisfy the human craving for divinity; while from all these, which are but distorted reflections of man himself to his own eyes, the more thought-

ful of our race have turned in disgust, and found a fearful refuge from the palpable chimeras of idolatry in the philosophical systems of pantheism or atheism. The scriptural conception of the Deity, on the other hand, is, as we have said, true to nature. Man's heart accepts it as corresponding with all the requirements of the divine, and pronounces it to be true. While the Bible, on the one hand, says, God is this, the human consciousness responds on the other, This is God. Man's heart seeks no farther. And having such a God, it is now for the first time content with ONE. The sage and the savage—those who “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,” and those who took refuge from their degrading follies in the deification of their own intellect—all, and equally, are satisfied that here their search after God has found its goal.

2. Remark what the Bible tells us of the world.

We have all heard something of the various speculations in which philosophers have indulged respecting its origin, of the supposed fortuitous concurrence of the atoms which compose it, of the eternity of matter, and such like; and we know how different a tale the Bible tells. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.” Inconceivable to created beings as the act of creation is, and must necessarily be, it is certain that, in the assertion of the creation of the universe by a being uncreated, the mind of man finds a repose which, in relation to the origin of things, it has never found elsewhere. The doctrine is at once bold and satisfactory. Perhaps the boldest aspect of it is the ascribing the creation of the world to *one* God, since the marvellous and astounding mixture of physical good and evil in it has always been a stumblingblock in the way of this conclusion, and has led mere philosophy itself to admit the probable existence of at least one divinity for the phenomena of each class; but even here man's heart sides with the Bible against philosophy, and has more rest in the belief of mysteries in the proceedings of one God, than in referring the world to the more mysterious production of two.

3. Remark what the Bible tells us of man.

One of the most striking features in the Scripture history in this respect is the tracing up of the human species to a single pair. The declaration that God "hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of all the earth," is, no doubt, very familiar to us; but, in affirming the original unity of human races and human languages, the earlier sacred writers took a course which, in later days, by the extraordinary development of diversity in both, has exposed them to eager charges of mis-statement. It is modern philosophers, however, who find themselves led into too hasty conclusions, and betrayed into mistakes. The farther scientific investigations are pursued, and the more patiently they are carried out, the nearer do they continually come to the scriptural view, and they thus show the Bible to be as true to historic fact as to human consciousness. Races and languages, with all their diversities, have already resolved themselves into so few groups that doubts of their primary unity easily disappear, while the ascertained causes of their diversity exactly correspond with the scriptural representation. Differences of race may be conceived of as resulting from the long-continued operation of natural causes; differences of language necessitate the supposition of a supernatural cause.

The moral condition of man has presented a still greater difficulty to investigation than his physical condition, and the acknowledged impossibility of accounting for it may be said to be the great opprobrium of philosophy. Why, with such moral powers and appeals, is man universally wicked—still, according to the Roman poet, approving the better and doing the worse? The question perplexed the ancients, and it equally perplexes the moderns. A distinguished continental philosopher is said to have confessed, that the irregular, or abnormal, action of man's moral powers deranged all his attempts to frame a systematic view of human nature. But what says the Bible of this mystery? "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions." Yes, it is true. Man is now but the wreck of a once nobler creature. He is a splendid piece of machinery with a derangement of the moving power; and investigators who are ignorant of this, or who will not take account of it, can form no true estimate of his condition. With this information, however, all is plain—so plain that there can be no doubt of the truth of the statement which solves the enigma.

4. Remark what the Bible tells us of the scope of human life and destiny.

Man's heart seizes upon this world as his allotted sphere, and goes forth among its various attractions, resolved to find somewhere among them an object for its worship and consecration. When he finds the search vain, crossed, disappointed, chagrined, and sometimes maddened, he seems to have no refuge but to curse the system of which he has been made an element, and the blind, if not cruel, despotism to which he has become a victim. No one can explain this to him but the Bible. He thought the world was given to him, and the vehement passions implanted in him, for the purpose to which he has applied them; but there he hears the voice of eternal wisdom—"My son, GIVE ME thine heart;" and he listens to the breathings of one who has learned the lesson—"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." This his heart feels to be the truth concerning the real happiness of man.

His revelling in the present is not less solemnly rebuked than his creature idolatry. To be happy to-day, and like to-day to make to-morrow, is man's practical philosophy. But the Bible opens to man a future and an endless existence, with an element of retribution attaching to it a solemn, and even a terrific, character. "God will bring every work into judgment." Nothing would man's heart more willingly consider false, and against no sentiment does it sometimes more fearfully contend; but life and judgment to come still take their place as truths, however neglected, in the conscience of mankind.

A similar remark may be made respecting the nature of future happiness and misery, as constituting the retributive element of the divine dispensation in the world to come. It is in the Bible alone, for example, that we find the conception of a spiritual and holy heaven. From the mythological imagination of the Greeks—the Elysian Fields—we go through the gross conception of the Koran-paradise and its hours—to the notion of the American Indian, his hunting-grounds and his dog—and in all we find but a reproduction in the future of the sensual pleasures of the present; while the Oriental philosophers, escaping from these, fly but to an opposite error in the idea of supreme felicity consisting of absorption into the deity. That a good man is still to have

an independent existence, and that his pleasures are not to be sensual; that he is to be holy, like God, and happy in the communion and service of God—these are statements of the Bible, and they are true to man's nature. Man's heart says, If there be a heaven, it is—it must be—this.

5. Remark what the Bible tells us of God's method of mercy to mankind.

Our readers know "the Gospel of the grace of God." It sets out with representing mankind universally as chargeable with a deeply-criminal rebellion against their Maker, and as liable to a condign infliction of retributive wrath. It exhibits a spontaneous interposition of mercy of a kind altogether extraordinary. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, constituted an all-sufficient expiatory sacrifice, available for every sinner on his acceptance of it; while out of this proceeding arise various and powerful motives leading men to repentance and reconciliation, to purity and devotedness. It is not our business here to enforce these statements, or to adduce any argument in support of them. What we have to say is, that, when they find their way to the conscience and the heart, they approve themselves to man as true. Long as he may strive against it, in proportion as he acquires a just knowledge of himself he feels that he is what the Bible has represented him to be; and the grace of the Gospel is so fitted to his case, the fulness of mercy so like a God, the reconciliation of grace and justice so glorious and so complete, the humbling and purifying tendency of the system so powerful, and the whole mass of motive at once so gentle and so grand, that the heart accepts it as true because of its own glory and adaptation. Nowhere else is a scheme which, like this, ventures to contemplate man in the real depth of his misery and guilt; which, like this, comprehends in its wide embrace all the difficulties of his position; which, like this, provides a complete remedy for his sorrows; which, like this, exhibits "a just God, and a Saviour." Can such a system be fallacious? And, if true, whence but from heaven?

A striking peculiarity of the evangelical system is to be found in the delineation of the Saviour. Even infidels have felt the singular loveliness of the character of Jesus Christ,

and have acknowledged the impossibility of accounting for such a portrait, especially as drawn by several hands, except by supposing the reality and divinity of the original. We may here, perhaps, be allowed to quote the well-known words of two distinguished men of this class, which may serve the purpose of our argument better than our own :—

“Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it; since it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history than that one should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”*

“Is it possible that the sacred person whose history it contains should be a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast, or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity, in his manner! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation?”†

So true to human nature, and its highest conceptions of moral beauty, is the character of Jesus Christ, as to extort from infidels themselves these instructive and significant acknowledgments.

6. Remark, finally, what the Bible tells us of man's obligations and duty.

Nothing in the Bible is more peculiar than its moral system. Without any attempt to define goodness, or entering at all into the controversy, begun so long ago and not terminated yet, respecting the nature of virtue, its precepts embody virtue in its noblest forms. Its tracing external actions back to the heart, and laying the foundation of right conduct in right principles; its making morality to consist essentially in love, and taking as the primary aspect of morals a supreme love to God; its placing at the basis of the most exalted virtues the unesteemed—the too lowly—grace of humility; its rejection of all conventional morality, and contempt of the most established worldly maxims; its requirement of not

* Rousseau. † Chubb.

merely an outward, but an inward self-government and purity of heart; its intolerance of human frailty, and its perpetual injunction of perfection—these, and other features which might be enumerated, place the preceptive portions of the Bible quite apart from any other moral code. The corrupt heart, no doubt, is alien from so much purity, and resents so much strictness; but both are approved by the uncorrupted conscience. Laxer systems of morals are more agreeable, but the conscience, if enlightened, rebukes the laxity which the heart revels in; and even a profligate will acknowledge that a practical Christian—one embodying in his life the precepts of Christianity—is “the highest style of man.”

If then—to comprehend in one observation all these particulars—the matter and substance of the Bible is thus true to human nature, and the laws of human thought and feeling; if its various contents at once meet man’s deepest necessities (a task which has never been attempted by any book besides), and embody his noblest imaginings; if what is told us only by the Bible, and could not have been known without it, is so congruous with the mind as to approve itself as true as soon as known, and to make a lodgment in it by which contrary views are permanently displaced; whence is the Bible itself, but from the Author of our nature? Why have other men not written as the sacred writers did, but because divine wisdom was not in them?

IV. In addition to the peculiarities of the Bible already noticed, we advert to those which appear in its aptitude and adaptation. The singular adaptation of the sacred volume to its purpose is as remarkable as any aspect in which it can be contemplated.

1. It is adapted to the human faculties generally—the understanding, the conscience, and the heart.

To the understanding it presents its copious and sublime materials with a majestic simplicity. All its writers “use great plainness of speech.” They neither commence with definitions, nor lay down axioms; they neither resort to refined distinctions, nor indulge themselves in abstract thought; they neither cultivate a philosophical style, nor employ scientific terms. They wrote for man, and they use, in its widest sense, man’s words, the language of common life. Their style contrasts strikingly with that employed by philosophical writers of every age, whether ancient or modern,

from the Greeks to the Germans. The Bible delivers to us a philosophy more sublime than any of them, in a dialect incomparably more intelligible.

To the conscience the Bible speaks in a manner which no other book has ever attempted. We do not know, indeed, that any other book has ever attempted to speak to the conscience at all, except to seduce it from its integrity, or to lull it to slumber. To enlighten and awaken it is an object which the Bible alone has embraced, and which, it has well understood how to accomplish. Its statements of duty are so clear as to be fully understood, and so consciously just as to be immediately appropriated. Its accusations penetrate the most secret recesses, and come with an irresistible force of conviction. Its reproofs and directions are given with an authority which the conscience owns without reserve, and before which, in its more awful aspects, it quails with terror. The thunder and the lightning are not more piercing, or more solemn, to the bodily organs, than the Bible is to this faculty of the mind.

And in what inimitable tones does the Bible speak to the heart! What passion is not appealed to? What motive is not employed? And every one of them with surpassing power. Speak we of fear? "Who knoweth the power of his anger," whose wrath "is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men"? Speak we of hope? What benefits can be so rich and glorious as those presented to us in the salvation of God? Speak we of love—the master motive of man's heart? What display of it can compare with the love of God to a guilty world in the redeeming work of his Son, Jesus Christ? Ah! man's heart was never besought after this manner, or moved by persuasives like these—except in the Bible. There are thrilling and touching scenes in human life; there are thrilling and touching scenes in the region of romance; but the Bible unutterably surpasses alike reality and fiction, as, indeed, it should do, if, as is alleged, it brings man himself into contact with the eternal and the divine.

2. The Bible is adapted to the faculties of man in their various degrees and forms of development. How much there is of it that may be understood by a child! The first lessons of an infant may be drawn from it. How nobly it occupies the expanded and vigorous intellect of the man! It may be

the partner of his severest studies. With how mellow a light it shines on the ripened judgment of the old, as if gently guiding the steps of age to a region of more brilliant illumination! Its truths did not lose their lustre amidst the lights of ancient philosophy—at Athens, at Corinth, and at Rome, “the foolishness of God” was “wiser than men;” and they can make themselves effectively visible amidst the greatest darkness of heathenism—the Bushman and the Greenlander have been guided to heaven by them. None are too wise to learn from it, and none too foolish to be taught by it.

3. The Bible is adapted to man in the various circumstances and conditions of life. It supplies ample materials for occupation to the student, and of contemplation to the sage; but it is also fitted to mingle with the active world. It was necessary it should be so, if it was to be a book for mankind; for the world is mainly active, and not contemplative. Man is almost always the busy, the anxious, the tried, the tempted; found amidst responsible duties, onerous cares, or touching griefs. To do him much good, the words that are spoken to him must be few and powerful; easily understood, and coming home to him in a moment. Such words the Bible speaks, and the Bible only. And it speaks them so as to suit all classes. To the peasant they are so plain that “he that runs may read,” and “the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” To the prince they open a source of royal wisdom, and they teach kings to do judgment. They can find room with a sturdy strength amidst the most crowded cares of business, and insinuate themselves with a winning gentleness into scenes of overwhelming sorrow. The Bible is emphatically the practical book for human life, and the one book for every condition.

4. The Bible, in fine, is adapted to man in every nation, and in every age. National characteristics are diverse, and impress themselves strongly upon national literature, so that, to a great extent, the productions of one country are not generally acceptable to those of another. The Bible had a national origin, and bears, undoubtedly, the impress of some national characteristics, yet it is pre-eminently a book for all nations. With matter which commands the attention of all, it has a form which is gratifying to all, and repulsive to none. Long wrapped up in the simple, primitive, and narrow, vocabulary of the Jew, its wisdom was at length transfused

into the rich and glorious language of Greece, the language of all history, poetry, and philosophy, except the biblical; the spoken language of the civilized world in that age, and the destined study of ages long to come. Its style is too largely mixed to be peculiar anywhere, and it has no nationality; less like the Swiss, who retains the characteristics of his country to the last, than the Anglo-Saxon, in whom the blood of so many races is mingled that he has the virtues of all without the singularities of any. It is descriptive, didactic, poetical, dramatic, allegorical, pathetic, philosophical; it is everything that man is, and man everywhere feels it his own.

And thus it belongs to every age. There are many things that ages alter. They witness changes of government, the rise and fall of dynasties, the advent of new masters and new principles of administration. They witness the advance of knowledge, and the revolutions of science; the extension of commerce, and the abandonment of its ancient channels; the development of practical genius, and the triumphs of art; and sometimes the total change of habits, customs, and manners: but man is the same, and, for the purposes of his highest welfare, the same book suits him. He never gets beyond the lessons of scriptural wisdom, and if he thinks he does, and throws them aside, he is sure to relapse into darkness. Aristotle and Seneca are old books, and this age does not heed them; but the sacred book never gets old. On the contrary, the Bible is always new, not only because every new comer into the world wants it for himself, but because it is always presenting new phases of truth, and new applications to the heart and life. To the end of the world it will be new, and it will be as fresh and earnest in its application to the conscience of the last sinner, and to the heart of the last sufferer, as it was to those of the first who perused it.

Such is the Bible. It is passing marvellous that all this can be said of one book, and of only one. It must be obvious whence such a book has come.

From the very ground we have occupied, however, objections to the divine origin of the Scriptures have been drawn, and objections which have been urged with much tenacity. The Bible has been condemned, for example, because its statements do not agree with facts, as in geology; because its doctrines are contrary to reason, as in the Trinity; and

because its morals are impure, as in some Old Testament narratives. Now, without attempting to go into this class of objections in detail (which is here neither opportune nor necessary), we may make on them, as a whole, two or three brief observations. In the first place, they are evidently made in a spirit of hostility, so that they are greatly exaggerated, and, to a great extent, unworthy of regard. In the second place, these objections are capable of being, in great part, removed by patient investigation and candid judgment; so that there remain only what may fairly be called difficulties, rather than objections. Thirdly, the existence of difficulties in the Bible ought to create no surprise if it be the book of God, since there are difficulties in all his works. This does but place the Bible on a level with the works of nature—the stones, the trees, the stars. Were it wholly free from difficulty, the presumption against its divine origin would certainly be more strong. Fourthly, the existence of difficulties in the Bible is the rather to be expected, because it is of the nature of moral evidence to be complicated with them as a test to the disposition of the inquirer. It seems to be a divine rule to supply evidence enough for the conviction of the candid, and to leave difficulties enough for the uncandid to stumble over. Fifthly, the difficulties in the Bible do not annihilate the positive evidence of its divine origin. This—all this—is still there; and, if our decision is to be arrived at by a comparison of the force of evidence on the one side and the weight of difficulties on the other, there can be no doubt of its character.

To us, indeed, asking who made the Bible is very much like asking who made the sun. To such a question—which, amidst his glorious rays, could scarcely be deemed less than impertinent—one might well content one's-self with answering, "Look, and see." Mark how his intense and burning beams fall on the eye with so extreme a gentleness as to be a source only of pleasure to that sensitive organ, and spread themselves over the face of nature like a transparent mantle, bringing out from their hidden treasures the beautiful hues with which they adorn her. Mark how the light of day guides man to his labour, and furnishes to him the medium by which he successfully pursues the minutest investigations, while the influence of the celestial orb warms the cold clods of the earth, and impregnates her kind bosom with a thousand

fruits. Who made the sun? Why, God, who made the earth and man upon it; he made the sun too, as is evident from its fitness for both.

Judge, then, by the same method, who made the Bible. Whence could a volume come, so fitted to man's mind, so suited to man's wants, so adapted to man universally, but from the Author of man's being? There are, indeed, difficulties in the Bible, as there are spots in the sun; but not all the spots that were ever seen in the sun have induced mankind to ascribe it to a different origin, or to forego the advantage of its illumination.

By evidence of the class which we have now adduced, and of which, as we set out with saying we should, we have given an extremely slight and imperfect sketch, there has been extorted from an infidel, to whom the external evidences were as naught, the following confession of the supernatural origin of the Bible. "I confess to you," says Mr. Chubb, "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible, are they compared with the Scripture! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and so sublime should be merely the work of man?" And if not of man, then of God. Reader, listen to it as the voice of God TO THEE.

IX.

REVELATION—ITS EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE.

Having in former papers considered the evidence of the divine origin of the Bible under two principal aspects, the external and the internal, we turn now to the experimental. Whence the Bible has come is a question on which further light may be thrown by tracing its effects, and asking what it has done. We look, therefore, into the heart upon which it operates, and observe what kind of influence it exerts there. "A tree is known by its fruits."

To introduce our subject we imagine a case—a very simple one, and one of sufficiently frequent occurrence to bring us at once to the "business and bosom" of our readers. We conceive, then, a person engaged in the study of the Bible,

and in the attentive consideration of Christianity as it is presented to him there. After a while he begins to find himself very serious, under a conviction that a magnificent view of human life and destiny is opened to him; and his seriousness becomes more deep as he realizes the practical bearing of the grand discoveries he makes. He sees how God, whose character is so holy and his government so just, is *his* Creator and his Judge; how an equitable, holy, and benevolent law binds *him* with an invisible chain of imperative obligation; how not his life only, but his heart also, which this wonderful book touches as with a sunbeam, and in which it discloses a whole world of evil hitherto unsuspected, has been full of a criminal and cherished disobedience; how divine wrath stands forth in terror, and a justly-deserved perdition stares him in the face, while yet mercy rejoices against judgment, and stretches out to him a delivering hand; how God's own Son, commissioned by the Father, stoops to redeem him by an act of obedience unto death, effecting an atonement for sin at once of expiatory value beyond price, and of persuasive power beyond expression. This, and much more of kindred truth, he sees, and—so we are imagining—he ponders. And as he ponders—what? A gaze of incredulity? A smile of contempt? A luscious sense of the romantic? No: none of these. But, on the contrary, a deep solemnity, a conscious shame, an admiring gratitude, a detachment from sin and from the world, and a surrender of his heart and life to that all-glorious Friend who loved him, and gave himself for him.

Let us now conceive ourselves to approach the person whom in imagination we have been observing, and, if he will allow us to disturb his meditations, to ask him a question. "Student of the Bible, what is your opinion of it? Do you think it comes from God?" "That is not exactly what I was thinking of," he replies; "but now you remind me of it, I have no difficulty in answering you. Does the Bible come *from God?* you ask. I should think it does, for it has led me *to God*. Indeed, its effect upon my mind has been at once so powerful and so peculiar, that I cannot doubt its divine origin."

The argument is short and simple, capable of much expansion, and requiring, perhaps, some vindication; but we have preferred presenting it to our readers in the first instance in its simplest form, that its true nature and scope may be the more distinctly seen.

And now we must proceed, in the first place, to detach it from some topics with which it is sometimes confounded.

We observe, then, that we raise no question as to the divine origin of those exercises of the mind which we have ascribed to the influence of the Bible. They may, or may not, be of divine origin: we think, and should be prepared to maintain, that they are so; but that is not in question now, and is, in truth, quite remote from our argument. We do not ask our imaginary student of the Bible, "Are *your feelings* from heaven?" but, "Is the book the study of which has produced them so?" These questions differ distinctly, and we think very materially, one from another.

On this point we cannot agree with Dr. Wardlaw in his generally excellent and valuable treatise on the Experimental Evidence.* After a detailed statement of what he properly terms "Christian Experience," he thus writes:—

"To himself it is unquestionable that there is a religious state distinguishing true Christians which can be accounted for by no ordinary causes; indeed, the inference appears to him inevitable, that a cause altogether above nature must be concerned in its origination. The inference sprang up within him almost with the first conscious experience of the phenomena themselves, and has been strengthened by much that he has since experienced. But will it bear a rigid examination? Are there not possible influences inherent in the powers of nature without and within the human being, whose operations are sufficient to account for them? Our conviction is that no natural causes can account for the Christian's experience, and that it contains its own demonstration of a supernatural source. This constitutes the direct evidence which experience furnishes [to the divine origin of Christianity]."[†]

We do not mean to insinuate the least doubt (for, indeed, we entertain none) that Christian experience is of divine origin: but, when we reflect on the endless varieties of experience among Christians so called; the extreme difficulty there would in many cases be in determining whether a man's experience is Christian experience or not; and the certainty that, in attempting to decide this question, mistakes on both sides must be incessantly made; we should be sorry to think that anything very important depended on ascertaining the divine origin of a person's experience in any given case. In

* Experimental Evidence a ground for assurance that Christianity is Divine. By Gilbert Wardlaw, M.A., subsequently D.D.

† Experimental Evidence, pp. 69, 70.

truth, however, we do not see the mode in which the divine origin of a man's experience, supposing it to be satisfactorily proved, affords any evidence of the divine origin of Christianity, inasmuch as it is quite conceivable that experience of any kind might be produced by divine power without the intervention of Christianity, or any other instrument. In order to show the divine origin of Christianity, we want to have before us an experience of which Christianity is the producing cause; a case which Dr. Wardlaw afterwards brings up (chap. 5), but which he allows himself to confound with the internal evidence (p. 140).

In thus defining properly the scope of our argument, it is a great advantage to get rid of the ever-shifting and indefinite exercises which may, more or less loosely, be brought within the meaning of the phrase "religious experience," and the hopeless perplexities to which all attempts to analyze them, and assign them to their respective sources, must give rise. Christianity itself, as a part of the divine administration, or as a mode of God's dealing with men, is quite another thing. Clear, well-defined, and always the same, the question whether this is of divine origin or not may be approached with far less apprehension.

This is not, however, our only advantage. Upon the ground taken by Dr. Wardlaw, the bearing of his experimental proof is confined to the Christian; but we do not see why this should be. Upon our ground the unbeliever himself may feel the weight of this argument; for, although he will not give sufficient attention to Christianity to realize the full force of its persuasive power, his mind may often be so far arrested by it as to feel a degree of awe and conviction which may well serve him for a demonstration that it has come from heaven.

We observe, further, that we raise no question as to the personal interest of the party in the blessings of redemption. We are aware that the passage in Rom. viii. 16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God," has been often regarded as relating to the inward witness to Christianity, as indeed it is by Dr. Wardlaw in the volume which we have noticed (p. 77); but we think this is altogether a mistake, and a very unfortunate one. We are neither calling in question the reality of the witness of the Spirit, nor depreciating the happiness of those who are

favoured with it. Would to God all the Lord's people enjoyed it much more abundantly! But we must define clearly the scope of our own argument. Whether I am really a Christian is one question; whether Christianity itself is from heaven is obviously another, and a very different question—a question which must be decided on totally different grounds, and the decision of which remains unaltered whatever answer may be given as to my personal state. It is, in our judgment, of great importance that these two topics, in themselves so distinct, should be kept separate and asunder, and so for ourselves we mean to keep them.

We must now have a word with Mr. Newman, in relation to that one page of his book* which is all, we believe, that he devotes to the subject of the experimental evidence. We extract the passage:—

“It is with hundreds or thousands a favourite idea that they have an inward witness of the truth of (*the historical and outward facts of*) Christianity. Perhaps the statement would bring its own refutation to them if they would express it clearly. Suppose a biographer of Sir Isaac Newton, after narrating his sublime discoveries, and ably stating some of his most remarkable doctrines, were to add that Sir Isaac was a great magician, and had been used to raise spirits by his arts, and finally was raised up to heaven one night while he was gazing at the moon, and that this event had been foretold by Merlin—it would surely be the height of absurdity to dilate on the truth of the Newtonian theory as the moral evidence of the miracles and prophecy. Yet this is what those do who adduce the excellency of the precepts, and the general spirituality of the doctrine, of the New Testament, as the ‘moral evidence’ of its miracles, and its fulfilling the Messianic prophecies. But for the ambiguity of the word *doctrine*, probably such confusion of thought would have been impossible. ‘Doctrines’ are either spiritual truths, or statements of external history. Of the former we may have an inward witness, that is their proper evidence; but the latter must depend upon adequate testimony and logical criticism.”

In reading this passage we had, and in transcribing it now we have, the gratification enjoyed by a man who sees another about to shoot at him, but manifestly missing his aim. It is one of the many instances in which Mr. Newman makes us thankful that “confusion of thought,” however often good people may fall into it, is not exclusively confined to the pious. In the passage before us are so many examples of this vice that we scarcely know where to begin our notice of them.

* Phases of Faith, p. 199.

In the first place, it is a strange misrepresentation of the advocates of Christianity, to say that they adduce its general excellence and spirituality as "moral evidence of its miracles, and its fulfilling the Messianic prophecies." If Mr. Newman has not been more careless and superficial in his investigations than it is almost possible to believe him to have been, he must know very well that the moral evidence of which he speaks is adduced, not as an argument that any wonderful works were miraculous, or that any prophetic words were accomplished, but as a collateral proof with them that Christianity as a dispensation had a divine origin, a purpose to which he does not deny its applicability. We are quite as content as himself to leave the miracles and the prophecies to "adequate testimony and logical criticism."

In the second place, it is an equally strange misrepresentation to describe any persons as saying, that "they have an inward witness to the truth of (*the historical and outward facts of*) Christianity." The mode in which Mr. Newman has printed this sentence, and which we have faithfully copied, shows that he knew he was here guilty of, at least, a very dubious interpolation. He insinuates by it that to claim "an inward witness to the truth of Christianity," is to claim "an inward witness to the truth of the historical and outward facts of Christianity"—which would doubtless be absurd. But he is wrong in his assumption. There are in Christianity, no doubt, external facts, such as the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, which are proper matters of tradition or historical record, and can be known to us only by that means; but there is also in Christianity an internal as well as an external structure, which Mr. Newman seems quite to overlook. Upon the basis of the external facts it has pleased God to establish a system of benign administration, a peculiar method of dealing with men as sinners. It is to this exclusively that the experimental evidence refers. When I feel myself influenced by the various persuasives involved in this system, I say that the manner in which it works upon me proves it to have come from heaven. If I am asked how I know the facts to have occurred upon which this merciful treatment is professedly based, I do not say I have an inward witness *to them*; I have already been informed of them, either by verbal communication or a historical record,

each appealing to me on its proper evidence. Without this antecedent knowledge the supposed mode of treatment never could be a reality to me, and the experimental evidence, or the inward witness, could have no existence. It is a poor artifice of controversy to confound things which so essentially differ.

In the third place, the illustration which Mr. Newman adduces is altogether wide of the mark which he intends to hit. His avowed object is to assail the inward witness, or the experimental evidence, but where does his Newtonian illustration carry us? To quite a different point. "This," says he, "is what those do who adduce the excellency of its moral precepts, and the general spirituality of the doctrine of the New Testament, as the 'moral evidence' of its origin." "Moral evidence," Mr. Newman? you began by talking of "the inward witness," from which you have wandered very far away. This is a sample, we suppose, of the close and conclusive argumentation of which infidelity so loudly boasts.

In the fourth place, Mr. Newman in the end concedes the whole point. He admits that of "doctrines," regarded as "spiritual truths," we may have an "inward witness." Now it is, as far as we can understand it, a spiritual truth that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Why, then, upon Mr. Newman's own showing, may not the influence of this doctrine on my heart yield me evidence of its divinity?

From these diversions we may now return to the course of our argument, and inquire more particularly into some of the leading characteristics of that experience which results from the operation of Christianity on the heart.

1. The leading grace of the Christian is humility. The attitude of Christianity is directly opposed to the pride of man's heart, a prevalent evil with which it comes into immediate and deadly conflict. In proportion as a man ponders its representations, and comes under the influence of them, his views of himself totally change. A new world of obligation opens on his view. He sees demands made upon him for an ardent and habitual love of God, and for the expression of this love in a life of obedience and dedication; and

he finds, not only that he has been totally deficient in these respects, but that he is chargeable with the extreme opposites. He finds actions condemned in which he had seen no evil, and actions which he had thought good traced back to principles void of virtue, or full of shame. He finds his conduct set in the strong lights of just obligation, of measureless bounty, of beseeching love; and he stands aghast at the blackness of its criminality. "Alas!" he cries, "I am a sinner, and a great one. It is vain for me to cry, 'Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?' He is my Maker, and my obligations to him are of unquestionable justice, whilst his innumerable and constant benefactions increase a thousand-fold the weight with which they bear upon me."

We are aware of the endless diversity of individual cases; but, speaking generally, in some such way as this the views of human duty and obligation presented to man by Christianity operate to introduce him into a new world of moral sentiments, to abase his pride, and to make him, in regard to his opinion of himself, a new creature. A hard task, it may well be said, and the accomplishment of it an honour to Christianity; for pride is the soul of sin, and humility the germ of virtue.

2. It belongs to Christianity, not only to carry home to the conscience the charge of enmity against God, but to produce the spirit of reconciliation. It had, indeed, been very possible for the charge to be so made as to increase, rather than to allay, the evil itself. If it had been made in a spirit of cold and stern justice, and still more if it had been made in a spirit of quick and warm resentment, the enmity of man's heart to God, already too strong, might have been only provoked to more vehement manifestations. But how different the case really is! With an awful distinctness is the charge made, indeed, and words of unutterable terror announce the wrath which is its due; but all these are auxiliaries to a system of marvellous mercy, by which God is beseeching his enemies to be reconciled to him. "God hath appeared in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is because God pities that he reproveth, and he reproveth sharply that his pity may be the more persuasive. In truth, it is not in his words of denunciation and wrath that his most penetrating rebukes are found. Sin nowhere appears so touchingly heinous as at

the cross of Christ, nor can the magnitude of its criminality be so adequately measured as by comparison with the sacrifice offered for its expiation. The conviction produced by such a method of appeal is at once profound and gentle, deep and subduing. In bringing home the charge of enmity it kindles the spirit of friendship. "Oh! how I am ashamed of myself," exclaims a man under the influence of these considerations, "to have been an enemy to a God so kind! Had he merely threatened me with vengeance I could have met it with resentment, and bidden him do his worst; but to be so strangely pitied at once confounds and disarms me."

This, again, is a sample, and we think a fair one, of the mode in which Christianity regains a rebel's heart for God, and—a task far more difficult than convincing of enmity—rekindles love. A scheme which can effect this has certainly about it a wisdom of adaptation, and a power of motive, altogether surprising and divine.

We may make here a passing remark on a very different view of the bearing of Christianity given by Mr. Newman.

"Its theory," says he, "was one of selfishness. That is, it inculcated that my first business must be to save my soul from future punishment, and to attain future happiness; and it bade me to chide myself when I thought of nothing but about doing present duty, and blessing God for present enjoyment. . . . It taught me to blame myself for unbelief because I was not sufficiently absorbed in the contemplation of my vast personal expectations."*

Mr. Newman clearly does not understand Christianity. It is true, indeed, that "to think of nothing but doing present duty, and blessing God for present enjoyment," is not an attitude in very close accordance with its dictates; but he must have read the Bible with very careless eyes not to have seen that the first business it inculcates is repentance—reconciliation to God. In so far as man's happiness and misery are proper and necessary objects of interest to him, it is right he should "seek first" that which is most important—the eternal before the temporal, the wellbeing of the soul before that of the body—and the Gospel fitly makes an appeal to man on that ground; but it is an utter slander on Christianity to say that "its theory is one of selfishness." It is

* Phases of Faith, p. 203.

rather one of singular generosity. It is love striving to gain love—God's heart opened to man, in order to win man's heart back to God.

3. A third characteristic influence of Christianity is to be found in its production of holiness. Christianity rescues man from the dominion of his iniquities. Not, indeed, by beginning with practical reforms, for which it cares little—it may be said nothing—apart from an internal change. As it commenced its enlightening process by detecting sin in the heart, so it commences its sanctifying process by implanting a principle of holiness there. It undermines the dominion of sin by destroying the love of sin; the throne falls because the basis on which it rested is removed. Nor is this all. The manner in which the rebel has been reconciled has given a zest and intensity to the feelings of friendship altogether new and peculiar. The love of God, and more especially the compassion of Christ, displayed towards him as an enemy, have laid him under obligations so extraordinary, and plead with him with an eloquence so overpowering, that his whole faculties are at once commanded and surrendered. "What have I to do any more with idols?" he exclaims: "I, who am restored to a full sympathy with the justice of my Maker's government? I, who have been raised from imminent perdition by the hand of condescending mercy, and ransomed by most precious blood? Can I rebel again? Ah! no. May I but hope that my poor but willing love and obedience may be accepted by him that has loved me as some small token of my gratitude, and this shall be my life's best joy."

The heart thus won, all is won; for the life follows the heart, or rather, as our Lord teaches us, comes out of it. The purity that is cultivated is purity within, even to the deepest recesses of the soul, and the strife that is maintained with sin is maintained in its fastnesses, in the secret places where its strength has lain. Hence the regulation of the life is at once certain and, although not absolutely, comparatively easy. All the mightiest and most commanding impulses, the great springs of action and the ruling power, are on the right side; and the Christian indeed denies himself ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. Whence is the system of motives that achieves such a victory?

4. Christianity effects the production of a character eminently suited to the position of its disciples in this world. It develops, not only the personal, but the social and the public, virtues.

One of the great troublers of human life is resentment; a sentiment often kindled by the infliction of an injury, fanned into intensity by wounded pride, and breaking out into discords, and even graver mischiefs, almost interminable. These fires are happily quenched—or, rather, the sparks before they break forth into a fire—by Christianity. The influences of this system quell the pride which is so apt to take offence, and soften the anger which is so quick to resent it. It teaches, and causes to be learnt, the hard lesson of forgiveness.

Another of the great troublers of human life is a reigning selfishness; the source of injustice in a thousand forms, and of unkindness in a thousand more. This evil Christianity, according to the measure of its influence, remedies. It thaws man's icy heart. For the first time the Christian disciple has learned to love his neighbour as himself; and he carries now engraven on his heart the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them."

Mr. Newman, indeed, tells us a somewhat different story. "My old creed," says he, "narrowed my affections. It taught me to bestow peculiar love on 'the people of God,'" he adds, it "ordered me to think harshly" of infidels, "possessed me with a general gloom concerning Mahometans and Pagans, and involved the whole course of history and prospects of futurity in a painful darkness, from which I am [by my new creed] relieved."*

This matter is treated by Mr. Newman with his usual unfairness and confusion of thought. The peculiar love which, under the influence of Christianity, Christians feel for one another, is neither more to be complained of than that which members of the same family cherish for one another, nor more inconsistent with universal benevolence. The rest is mere matter of opinion, and has no connexion at all with the culture of the affections. Whatever view may be taken, the world presents the same scope for the exercise of benevolence, and Christianity supplies the same impulse to it.

* Phases of Faith, p. 203.

Mr. Newman further makes us acquainted with the operation upon his mind of some other scriptural statements.

“It [the Bible] laid down that the time is short; the Lord is at hand; the things of this world pass away, and deserve not our affections, the only thing worth spending one’s energies on is the forwarding of men’s salvation. It bade me watch perpetually, not knowing whether my Lord would return at cockcrow or at midday. While I believed this, I acted an eccentric and unprofitable part. From it I was saved against my will, and forced into a course in which the doctrine, having been laid to sleep, awoke only now and then to reproach and harass me for my unfaithfulness to it. This doctrine it is which makes so many spiritual persons lend active or passive aid to uphold abuses, and perpetuate mischief, in every department of human life. Those who stick closest to the Scripture do not shrink from saying that it is not worth while trying to mend the world, and stigmatize as ‘political and worldly’ such as pursue an opposite course. Undoubtedly, if we expect our Master at cockcrow, we shall not study the permanent improvement of this transitory scene. To teach the certain speedy destruction of earthly things, as the New Testament does, is to cut the sinews of all earthly progress, to declare war against intellect and imagination, and against all industrial and social advancement. There was a time when I was distressed at being unable to avoid exultation in the worldly greatness of England. My heart would, in spite of me, swell with something of pride, when a Turk or Arab asked what was my country: I then used to confess to God this pride as a sin. I still see that that was a legitimate deduction from the Scripture. ‘The glory of this world passeth away,’ and I had professed to be ‘dead with Christ’ to it. The difference is this. I am now as ‘dead’ as then to all of it which my conscience discerns to be sinful; but I have not to torment myself in a (fundamentally ascetic) struggle against innocent and healthy impulses. I now, with deliberate approval, ‘love the world and the things of the world.’ I can feel patriotism, and take the deepest interest in the future prospects of nations, and no longer reproach myself.”

If we felt ourselves obliged to take this as a fair account of the influence of Christianity, we should certainly be very sorry. It is clear to us, however, that the writer misunderstood the New Testament, as he has, indeed, in this passage plainly misrepresented it; and his “eccentric” example supplies nothing but a warning against the adoption of superficial and fallacious views of the import of Holy Writ. There is surely neither injustice nor difficulty in transferring that which is said of the brief duration of the world to the shortness of our own residence in it. To *us* the world *is* rapidly passing away, and but for a very short period have we to do with it: we have, however, a part to act while we stay in it; and as, on the one hand, there can be no stronger impulses

of benevolence than those which are awakened and cherished in the breast of a Christian, so, on the other, he is never better prepared to carry them out than when he is most solemnly impressed with the conviction that the time is short, and the Lord is at hand. The most eminent Christians are, in truth, and have always been, the most beneficent and useful of mankind.

5. We advance, however, to the thought to which these observations naturally lead us—namely, that Christianity, with all its development of the active virtues, draws the heart towards heaven. When we consider the elements which Christianity brings into bearing on man's heart, we cannot wonder at this issue. Under its influence he has first become powerfully conscious of a capacity of happiness which this world can never fill, and been led to look solemnly forward to a future and endless state of being, in which, if he be without some adequate source of good, his destitution must be unutterably melancholy. Such a source of happiness, one of infinite glory, Christianity presents to him. It also deadens his heart to the world. The Christian's deadness to the world, however, consists, not in being wholly insensible to its attractions, but in being far less keenly alive to them than he once was. With the man of the world, indeed, he may say, "I still love the world and the things of the world;" but he can add, "I no longer love them with an idolatrous, or excessive, affection; they are now neither my portion, nor my snare. My *heart*—that is, my supreme affection—is in heaven." And this transforming influence is exerted by Christianity, not by means of rigorous prohibitions or austere restrictions, but by the generation of new affections of superior power. The Christian's heart does not detach itself from this world as from a delicious thing which it is not allowed to love, but because its best love is transferred to a region and an object unutterably more glorious. In the presence of the greater attraction the lesser instinctively droops. The heart in heaven still renders to earth its due, but no more than its due. We need scarcely say that the transformation thus effected in man by Christianity is immense, both in magnitude and elevation. What can have led debased and grovelling man *to* heaven but a system which came *from* heaven?

6. We observe, once more, that Christianity produces and

sustains an inner life, in a manner at once independent of, and superior to, all external influences. The example and influence of the world do not tend to make men Christians, or in any measure to enforce the appeals of the Gospel. In order to renovate man, Christianity takes him quite aside from his fellows, and makes him feel himself upon the verge of eternity, and in the presence of God. Out of the region of things unseen she brings all the objects by the contemplation of which her work is wrought. And after the same mode in which she inspires the new life, so she cherishes it. She conducts her votary to the secret place of meditation and of prayer; she leads him with reverent, but not fearful, steps into the holy of holies, and places him in oft-renewed—it may be said, in continual—communion with his God, his Saviour, and his heavenly home. Hence the perpetual quickening of his heart, and readiness for action. “I can do all things,” says he, “or bear all sufferings, through Christ who strengtheneth me.” He is “thoroughly furnished to every good word and work.” And, as he is thus independent of the help of the world, so is he superior to its opposition. He can walk in a path that is irregular, and opposite to that of the multitude. He can bear ridicule. He can break through the most venerable customs. He can endure hatred. He can count losses for Christ among his gains, and bind reproaches for Christ on his brow like a diadem. In all these things he is a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, through help almighty, but invisible; and he is faithful unto death. Who made him so? And whence has the system come which has supplied to him these inexhaustible and triumphant energies?

It cannot be necessary that we should carry these illustrations further, extended without limit as they might be. We now again put the argument in the form in which we first presented it, and ask the man who knows that we have told, albeit very imperfectly, the secrets of his heart, what he thinks of the origin of Christianity. Perhaps, our pious friend, the Bible is a forgery; perhaps a fraud, perhaps very largely mingled with mistakes: perhaps the Gospel is a human invention, and without any authority on which you can safely rely? “Oh!” replies Modestus: “can you ever think to persuade me that a system did not come from God, which has reconciled me to him, and made me like him;

which has brought me into blessed fellowship with him now, and prepared me for everlasting fellowship with him hereafter?"

To subject this argument to another test, however, let us suppose that we have before us a system the influences of which are of a totally opposite kind, and that we ask concerning this system the same question—namely, whence it comes. Conceive, then, a set of representations and appeals to be made, under the natural influence of which you are still farther estranged from God, your moral sensibilities are extinguished, and your worst passions inflamed; that you become more completely selfish, hardhearted, irascible, covetous, and unjust; that you revel, unrebuked by any internal monitor, in the sensual vices, and indulge in despotic and malignant habits till you are less like a man than a demon; and, after convincing yourself of the truth of all this, ponder the question, Whence did this system come? You could not hesitate a moment, however scanty or dubious might be your information concerning its origin, in ascribing it to some corrupt and evil source. Why, then, should he who experiences it hesitate to ascribe to some pure and blessed source, and to the only source pure and blessed enough to account for its existence, a system productive of so pure and blessed an influence as Christianity?

X.

REVELATION—ITS EVIDENCES; THEIR RELATIVE VALUE.

In this series of papers we have exhibited the evidences of the divine origin of the Bible in two classes; the one attaching itself to the Bible itself as containing a body of revealed truth, and the other becoming manifest as the Bible develops its influence on the character of those who receive it—or, in briefer language, the dogmatical and the experimental. The former of these two classes of evidence is divisible into two parts, one consisting of matters separable from the Bible itself, another appearing in the very nature and substance of it—or the external and the internal. And, finally, the external evidence of Christianity is of two kinds, the one resulting from miraculous operations and the other from prophetic announcements. For our present purpose we

throw these evidences into three groups, the External, the Internal, and the Experimental. Each kind of evidence has a positive value appropriate and peculiar to itself, as has been made to appear, we trust, in the slight view we have taken of them in succession; but it is possible also to look at them together, and to compare them among themselves. And thus a question arises of the following tenor: What is the value of each kind of evidence as compared with its fellows? Are they precisely equivalent, or has either of them a greater value than the others? It is to a few remarks on this question that we now desire to engage the reader's attention.

The question thus raised may be regarded from two points of view; from the first we may examine the adaptation of each kind of evidence to afford satisfaction to the mind of an inquirer, and from the second we may estimate the availability of each kind of evidence to inquirers at large.

1. To take up the second of these inquiries first, and to suppose for the moment that all the various kinds of evidence in favour of the divine origin of the Bible are in point of satisfying power equal, it is clear at a glance that in point of availability they greatly differ.

We here refer particularly to one circumstance—namely, to this, that some of the evidences of the divine origin of the Bible are presented to us, not in a direct, but in an indirect, manner. If miracles are performed in attestation of it, we do not see them; if prophetic annunciations are made, we do not hear them. These things took place in remote ages, and our only means of becoming acquainted with them is constituted by the records of them which have been preserved and handed down to us. There is, consequently, an additional and intermediate step to be taken, and we have not only to consider the logical power of the evidence they supply to us, but also to investigate the truthfulness of the medium through which it is presented.

As a system of revealed truth, Christianity and its dogmatical attestations are conveyed to us in a book; and at the very outset, before we can apply ourselves properly to the examination of either the external or the internal evidence, there are important questions to be handled relating to the genuineness and authenticity of the book itself. It is quite plain that, if the book be a forgery, and so unworthy

of credit as a whole, or corrupted with legendary tales, and so unfit to be trusted in important parts, or in any other way not entitled to confidence, the very foundation of Christianity, as an appeal to human judgment on external or internal evidence, is subverted, and the entire edifice must crumble into dust. Hence the great importance which, in the protracted and eager controversy to which Christianity has given rise, has always been attached to the character of the Bible. It is this which the adversaries of Christianity have with their utmost force assaulted, and which its friends have both strenuously and successfully defended. To enter into this part of the controversy, however, is possible only to a few. It requires a great deal of leisure for study, extensive reading, large stores of information, and great critical acumen. Many of the questions which arise are of difficult solution even by the most eminent scholars, while they afford great scope for the suggestion of plausible and perplexing objections. To do full justice by personal investigation to all the branches and details of this one subject would be the labour of a life, and to collect the volumes which have already been written on it would be to form a library of no inconsiderable magnitude. On this matter learned men themselves are obliged to take much upon trust, as ascertained by the labours of others; and mankind at large must of necessity take everything upon trust. It is not one in a thousand, nor one in a hundred thousand—it might, perhaps, be said, not one in a million—that can for himself settle the text of the Greek Testament, or establish the authenticity of one of its Epistles.

By these remarks we do not mean to intimate, either that the topics of investigation to which we are referring are peculiar to the Bible, or that the pursuit and conclusion of the investigation are, in the case of the Bible, attended with any peculiar difficulty. The fact is quite the reverse. The scriptural writings supply occasions for critical inquiry only in common with all other ancient books; and all such inquiries are to be determined in relation to the Bible with quite as little difficulty (to say the least) as attends them in reference to other similar treasures of antiquity. Neither, for the most part, is it with any real difficulty at all that such inquiries are either determined or pursued, beyond those arising from the large amount of time and study, of reading and

information, inevitably required by them. It is this which necessarily confines them, and the discussions they originate, within a very narrow circle; the immediate writers are few, and, if anything is known by the public of the controversies they carry on, it is but by the reading of their respective works, or, perhaps, only by summaries and reviews of them. It clearly does not follow from this state of things that the conclusions arrived at by critical inquiry are either liable to any particular uncertainty, or in any degree unworthy of confidence. As in criticism, so in every other science, the actual students and investigators are always few, the trustworthiness of the results arrived at lying really in this, that there are sure to be investigators enough to test one another, and to secure the detection of either accidental or wilful mistakes. So the battle of scriptural criticism has been far too sharply fought for erroneous statements, either for or against the Bible, to have remained without exposure. The mingled wheat and chaff has been so often and so severely subjected, by various and even by hostile hands, to the winnowing and sifting, that confidence may well be placed in that which has stood the test. Biblical critics, like all other scientific men, may be said to have laboured for the multitude, and to have established a large mass of most important fundamental truth with far more clearness and certainty than that with which the bulk of mankind could have ascertained it for themselves.

We say these things lest the remarks which we made in the first instance should be misunderstood. It will now be clear, we hope, that we do not mean that the fundamental questions relating to the genuineness and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures have in them any intrinsic difficulty or uncertainty; we notice merely the accidents which throw them out of the reach of mankind in general, and so create a circumstantial difficulty in the way of their pursuit by individuals. In this respect it is obvious that the experimental evidence of Christianity occupies a very different position from the dogmatical. It is supplied to every inquirer by the effect which the truths of the Gospel have produced on his own feelings and character. It is consequently not presented to him in a book, it is written in his heart. No questions of genuineness or authenticity attend the perusal of this "epistle of Christ." The fact is then palpably before

him, deep in his inmost consciousness, that the truths of the Gospel have made him happy, have made him holy, have given him present peace, and inspired him with glorious hope; and he answers at once the question, Whence did this Gospel come? by saying, It must have come from heaven. Now such a kind of proof has this advantage, that it is direct and positive. The argument is available on the instant, without study, without labour, without time; nay, with its force and conclusiveness unimpaired by any amount of occupation, by any narrowness of knowledge, by any absence of learning, or of culture. The most busy, the most illiterate, the most ignorant, of men can understand it with perfect clearness, and appreciate it in all its power.

We have thus far confined the reader's attention to the circumstance that the dogmatic evidences of Christianity are presented to us in a book, and that the strict appreciation of them requires an investigation of the book itself. But let us now suppose that this was not the case. Let us imagine ourselves to be living in the time of our Lord and his apostles, to see the "mighty works" by which Christ attested his mission from heaven, and to witness the fulfilment of his great prophecy in such part of it as related to that generation; how much of thought and time would the due appreciation of all this still involve! It would be but reasonable that that which assumed, and appeared, to be a miracle should be subjected to some fair examination, lest the beholder should become the victim, if not of intentional jugglery, yet of illusory semblances; such examination being a process, probably, in some cases of considerable difficulty, and in all cases demanding patient and careful observation. To wait for even the nearest fulfilment of prophecy would involve the expenditure of much more time, and the application of much more and closer attention. To have to ask and answer the questions—Was this seeming cure really miraculous? Was this apparent palsy simulated, or this apparent death more than a swoon? Did the prophecy uttered relate to this event? Was the language really prophetic? And has it been strictly fulfilled? To have to ask and answer these questions, we say, and many more such which must be entertained by every intelligent and thoughtful man before he could yield himself to the force of the evidence thus furnished, would be not only laborious and tedious, but hazardous also,

inasmuch as it might require more of general information, and more of discriminating power, than could be supposed to be possessed by every individual. Conceiving that every miracle should in the end be fully established, and every word of prophecy he demonstrably made good, it is yet evident that, as compared with these, the experimental evidence must have a great advantage in point of availability. One who could say, "The words of this man have enlightened my mind, have melted my heart, have pacified my conscience; and I am therefore sure that this is the Christ," had an argument much more ready for use, and a much shorter road to conviction, than another who had only to say, "I have seen him do wonderful things, and I must examine whether they are miracles indeed." The former might be said to be in the position of one upon whom a miracle had been wrought, and who had thus the conclusive evidence in his own person, with nothing to say but this, "If this man were not of God, he could not have done this deed."

To these two illustrations we may add a third, drawn from the perpetual freshness and living power of the experimental evidence. Conviction derived from the dogmatical evidence of Christianity, whether external or internal, implies a process of thought gone through, and a conclusion arrived at, at a given time, a process not only completed but terminated, and its termination constituting a point from which the mind passes to other things, satisfied, indeed, but not holding in recollection the steps of the process itself, or the grounds on which it was satisfactorily concluded. What is to be said is, "I once examined the subject and was satisfied, and therefore I am satisfied still." The experimental evidence is of a different kind. Arising from the influence exercised by evangelical truth on our own minds, and this influence being not only permanent but always new, the substantial matter of the argument is always present with us, and always in a living freshness and force. It is not for us to say, "I believe Christianity to be divine because I was renovated by it twenty years ago;" but, "I believe it to be divine because I am renovated by it to-day, my walk is made holy, my affections are lifted to heaven, the peace of God is breathed into my heart, this very hour; and therefore I am satisfied." That there is a great advantage in having an argument so ready for immediate use is too obvious to need insisting on. It is

like cash in hand as compared with a landed estate; it is proof on the instant, instead of having recourse to the library.

2. Having satisfied ourselves that the experimental evidence of Christianity has a great advantage over its fellows in point of availableness, let us now compare them one with another in point of satisfying power. We do not in this respect mean to depreciate either, or to throw a doubt on the valuable force which each contributes to the effect of the whole; it is yet possible, however, that their satisfying power may not be exactly equal.

For the sake of being better understood, we will now write a sentence in the name of an imaginary individual, whom each of our readers may, if he pleases, conceive to be himself. We take our imaginary individual to soliloquize as follows: "I am convinced that the Bible is of God by reason of these views: first, because it contains the record of undoubted miracles and fulfilled predictions; secondly, because the Bible itself, when I look closely into it, appears eminently worthy of God, and adapted to the condition of the world; and, thirdly, because it has wrought a marvellous and godlike change in my feelings and character. Has one of these reasons more weight with me than another? And, if so, which of them?"

We cannot conceive the answer to this question in any case to be doubtful; and we think an answer should be given in favour of the experimental evidence for some such reasons as these.

In the first place, the experimental evidence is the strongest. No proof is so cogent with us as that which is supplied by our own consciousness. The facts which lie within us are the materials of our most direct and certain knowledge, involving no intermediate process, whether of sense or testimony, and absolutely withdrawn from all sources of doubt or deception. Whatever may be doubtful, we are as sure of these as of our own existence, of which, indeed, they constitute a part. If these do not exist, to us and for us nothing exists; and hence we cherish a most positive certainty of whatever may be directly inferred from them. Thus our imaginary person may be supposed to say—"I believe that Jesus Christ performed many miracles, for a trustworthy record of it has come down to me; but I am sure that his

words have wrought a great change in me, a change which is, in one view of it, as great a miracle as any recorded of him. Now none but a heavenly power could have given such an earthly wretch as I was a heavenly mind."

One advantage, then, of the experimental evidence, as to its satisfying power, lies in the absolutely unquestionable truth to the individual of the fact out of which the argument arises, and the vividness with which it is presented to him.

Secondly, to this we may add that the experimental evidence supersedes, and terminates, all controversy. As it admits of no controversy respecting itself, so it supersedes all controversy on other grounds, because it virtually supersedes all other evidence. The experimental evidence becomes practically the sole evidence on which a believer reposes his confidence on the divine origin of the Bible; enough of itself, and rendering all others redundant. We may illustrate this remark by a reference to the case of the blind man healed by our Lord, of whose dispute with the Jews we have so interesting an account in the ninth chapter of John's Gospel. This must be too familiar to our readers to make it necessary for us to quote it at large; they will recollect how every objection brought by the Scribes was parried by a simple reference to the fact of his own recovery. "Give God the glory," said they: "we know that this man is a sinner." To which the poor man made this memorable and decisive reply: "Whether he be a sinner or no I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." So he that has experienced the renewing power of the Gospel can dispose of all objections, because he can dispense with all other evidence.

Thirdly, the force of the experimental evidence is greatly enhanced by the state of mind which is incidental to it. In the very production of this evidence—that is to say, in the exercise of the renovating power of the Gospel on the heart—a salutary process of great importance has been carried on. The subject of it finds himself a new man; so changed is he in his views and principles of conduct, in the tendency of his affections and the objects of his pursuit. It is not for the sake of supplying to him an evidence of the divine origin of the Bible that this change has been produced—it has, in truth, a totally different object, but when it has been produced it yields him such an evidence, the work being strik-

ingly characteristic of its author ; and this evidence, when it is presented, finds him in a state of mind apt to discern and appreciate it.

Having thus endeavoured to show the greater value of the experimental evidence as compared with its fellows, both in point of availableness and of satisfying power, it becomes necessary to take up an objection to which our whole argument is liable. It may be said that the experimental evidence of Christianity presupposes the belief of Christianity itself ; and that, consequently, it can be of no use in laying the foundation for faith, but only in supplying additional evidence to those who have already believed.

We admit the plausibility of this objection ; but, as we have, we think, stated it fairly, we shall endeavour to answer it frankly.

We will suppose ourselves, then, addressing with a view to his conversion a person unacquainted with Christianity. We say to him, "We have a message from God to you." "From God?" he replies : "how shall I know that?" Our answer is, "We could present to you many proofs : we could put into your hands a book of the genuineness, authenticity, and inspiration, of which we could fully satisfy you ; we could inform you of predictions verified by history, and of miracles attested by innumerable witnesses ; we could unfold the message to you in detail, and ask you whether such a message *can* come forth from any other than the Eternal ; but all this would take much time, and involve much trouble—more than would be convenient to either of us ; allow us to take a shorter road, and one which will in a few moments be quite as satisfactory. Having delivered our message, we will only say, Try it. What in it professes to relate to you personally bring home to yourself by serious reflection, and see what its effect will be upon you. You will then be able to judge of it." If the person we are supposing ourselves to address would listen, we would then open to him somewhat descriptive of his state as a sinner before God, and of God's mercy towards him through his beloved Son ; and we may venture, perhaps, to regard him as saying when we had finished—"This is a wonderful message. It certainly reads my heart, for I am the very sinner it describes. It rightly estimates my necessity, and provides, I must admit, an adequate ransom. The depth of its pity is marvellous, nor less

so the severity of its justice. It melts my heart, and bows my will. You said it was from God, and I cannot but believe you, since it is impossible it could have emanated from any other source. As coming from God I will accept and trust it. If effects like those which spring from it be not from heaven, all evidence fails; and, though I doubt not the other evidences you mentioned are satisfactory, I will not trouble you to go further into them."

If the process we have thus sketched be granted to be unobjectionable, the experimental evidence has its place even among the foundations of faith, and a direct applicability to the case of unbelievers. There is only one point at which we can conceive an objection to be raised. It may be rejoined, that it can hardly be deemed reasonable to say, Try an unproved system; that is, Try as divine what has not been proved to be divine. We should not admit this, however, as a just representation of our case. We do not say, Try the Gospel *as divine* before you have proved it to be divine; but, Try the Gospel *as professedly salutary*, in order that you may judge whether it is divine.

This is, in point of fact, the process which God has instituted, and the only one which could be generally carried out. Our Lord's great commission was not—"Explain the evidences of Christianity," but—"Preach the Gospel." Even those who lived in the time of our Lord, and were the actual objects of his ministry, were supplied distinctly with the experimental, as well as the external, evidence. Although Christ wrought many miracles, he did not work miracles everywhere, or in the presence of all his auditors. To Nathaniel he simply said, "When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee" (John i. 48). With the woman of Samaria he dealt in a similar manner, and this alone led to her ultimate exclamation to her neighbours, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29.) The same kind of evidence appears to have been the operating power on many of his disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles this feature of the case becomes still more conspicuous, miracles being occasional, and gradually disappearing from the field even of inspired labours. We do not doubt the propriety of investigating all the evidences of Christianity, and of cultivating a general acquaintance with them; but still—we must repeat it—the

great command of Christ is to preach the Gospel: by its moral power it is to reach man's heart, and his experience of this power is to supply the easiest and the surest attestation of its divinity.

Nor is this aspect of the evangelical system anything at all peculiar. The principle involved in it lies at the basis of all the processes which affect our welfare. Among the multitude of substances in the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds, some are beneficial to man, some are noxious: and how are we to know which? The only test is experiment. If our question be, Is this plant good to eat? the answer must be, Try it. And so in every other case. It may be possible that, by scientific knowledge and research, the plant in question might be traced to a family of known nutritious or poisonous qualities; but this is an accident and an exception, and not the rule. Even in cases the most critical and hazardous we have no other resource than experiment. Suppose a person seized with a dangerous disease, and one bringing to him a medicine which he says comes, and he can prove it comes, from a physician of infallible skill; is the patient to waste his little time and strength in asking how his benefactor knows that the medicine comes from the physician he has named, and to lie in the agonies of death while it is proved to him? Far from it. The first thing to be ascertained is, not whence did the medicine come, but what it will do; it is a question, not of evidence, but of cure. What is to be said to the dying man is this: "If you have any value for your life, TAKE THE MEDICINE; and, if it cures you, you will have evidence enough that it was prescribed by the proper physician."

We do not see why a plan which thus obviously pervades the providence of God, and is not only quietly, but thankfully acquiesced in by mankind, should be complained of in the department of his moral administration. It was doubtless divinely wise that the extraordinary dispensation of his mercy should be surrounded with special external attestations, and it is matter for great thankfulness to be assured that these bulwarks have endured triumphantly the assaults which have been made upon them; but the general mass of mankind have nothing to do with that battle. To them "the Gospel is preached;" and, if ever they will find any evidence that it has come from heaven, it will not be because

they have been able to vindicate the miracles against Strauss, or the Bible against Newman, but because they have read its irrefragable attestation in a broken, comforted, and sanctified, heart. How delightful it is to think that the experimental evidence of Christianity, which is thus the only one of which the bulk of mankind will ever know anything, is by so many degrees the most available and the most convincing of all!

ON CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.*

To *Sympathize* is to feel for and with another. Of this it has pleased God to make our nature capable; and among mankind universally sympathy is both habitual and powerful. We now speak of it as existing among Christians. This is by far the most interesting and important aspect in which it can be regarded—the aspect in which its defects are most injurious, its cultivation most imperative, and its enlarged exercise most amply rewarded.

I. On this subject we observe, in the first place, that *a ground is laid for sympathy among Christians.*

There is so inasmuch as Christians are men; for among mankind as such there are grounds for sympathy, which are not destroyed when any become Christians. Of these the first is that we possess a common nature. We can enter into each other's feelings because we have similar capacities, and are similarly affected by similar causes. It is the want of similarity in these respects which cuts off the human race from the inferior tribes, and renders us as incapable of sympathizing with them as they are of sympathizing with us. It is by possessing this mutual resemblance that we are qualified to make another's feelings our own.

A second ground of universal sympathy is that we are placed in common circumstances. Though the actual circumstances of men are greatly diversified, so that probably no two persons may be in a condition exactly similar, there is a general resemblance. As all live in the same world, so all are liable to the operation of the same causes, and to the occurrence of the same events. No one is exempted from sickness or from poverty, or from any of the nameless ills by which any other of mankind may be afflicted; nor can any one be found suffering a grief the counterpart of which has not already been suffered by some one of his species. This

* Circular Letter of the Berks and West London Association for 1835.

community of condition prepares every *man* to feel for his fellow. Now the same causes qualify and prepare every Christian to feel for his fellow. Religion is but something grafted on our common nature, something added to our common lot; something, therefore, affording only a new occasion, and a larger scope, for sympathy.

Sympathy among Christians, however, has additional and more powerful sources. The first of these is community of character. In the world at large diversity of character operates strongly to the diminution of sympathy. One is a miser, another a voluptuary, a third a man of ambition; neither of these can sympathize extensively with the other, but only with persons of a similar cast. Thus the human race is divided, as it were, into smaller communities, each in a great measure insulated, and in its sympathies rent from the rest of the world. As Christians we are not liable to be thus separated from each other. Whatever may be our constitutional or acquired differences, our great and influential principles are the same. We have all realized the powers of the world to come, and are walking under the commanding influence of its magnificent objects. Our affections are set on things which are above. The adorable Saviour who sits enthroned there has engaged our hearts, and our lives are consecrated to his praise. Hence our preparation for sympathy. We are not merely a company of human beings, but of persons inflamed by a common passion, and ardent in a common pursuit. If men of kindred minds, such as painters, mathematicians, or poets, sympathize intensely when they meet in the wide world, much more may Christians.

To this it may be added, secondly, that we hold our religious as well as our secular condition in common. With endless differences is combined a general similitude; and, as any one of us is liable to whatever of joy or sorrow may befall another, so the actual joys and sorrows of the heavenly pilgrimage are scattered with so even a hand, that no one is long disqualified for sympathy by experimental ignorance. If one finds the plague of his own heart, so does another; if one encounters temptation, so does another; if one passes through deep water, so does another; and, if any be on the mount, he may find companions even there.

The ground of sympathy among us as Christians is strengthened by the consideration that we are held together by

common ties. The great bond of faith in our Lord Jesus, and love to his holy name, which unites all Christians to the Saviour, unites us all through him to each other. We are thenceforth as children of a common parent, as brethren and sisters of the same family. Hence an additional spring of mutual affection, so that the condition of each more naturally becomes a matter of joy or mourning to the whole. So close is this union that it is illustrated by allusions to the human body, which, though it is composed of many members, is nevertheless one body in a sense so intimate that, if one member suffer, all suffer with it. Not less quick and tender, the apostle gives us to understand, is the sympathy for which preparation is made in the mystical body of Christ—that is, in his church; every member of which is united to him as its common head, and to all other Christians as members of one body. In this respect there clearly should be a resemblance between the members and the head. He sympathizes promptly and powerfully with all who are united to him in that holy and mystical bond; and should not the members too? Are we not to bear his likeness, and to partake of his spirit? Hath the Scripture said in vain, “Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”?

The powerful exercise of sympathy among Christians is much facilitated by our sanctification. The evils of a corrupt heart greatly obstruct and disturb the sympathies of mankind.

A universal selfishness has taken possession of our race, and manifests its hardening influence in a thousand ways. One is petulant, another is proud, a third is envious; and thus the kindlier feelings are either frozen into indifference, or superseded by asperity and bitterness. Not so among Christians. If these melancholy mischiefs are not (as, alas! too often appears) entirely driven from our hearts, they no longer reign there: self is cast down from its pre-eminence, and every thought brought into subjection to Christ by the obedience of faith. The soul becomes animated with a generous and expansive sentiment, and is prepared to blend itself with joys and sorrows other than its own.

On a slight survey of the grounds which are thus laid for the exercise of sympathy among Christians, their sufficiency and strength must be fully apparent. If, indeed (may each of us say), my heart is rescued from its criminal selfishness, how shall I not feel in what may happen to *a man*, partaker

as he is of my nature, and I of his condition? But how much more promptly and more deeply shall I not feel in what may concern a *Christian*—a brother, not only in the human family, but in the family of God; with whom I am thrown into the common lot of mortal joys and griefs, both natural and spiritual; with whom I draw my strongest impulses from things unseen, and look for my highest happiness in realms of glory. If I can see *his* joys without rejoicing, or *his* tears without weeping, my heart must be hard indeed.

II. We proceed then to observe, in the second place, that *the exercise of sympathy among Christians has great value and importance.* It answers most excellent and blessed purposes.

It is a source of happiness. It is so apart from religion. The greater part of the happiness of the world arises from it. Where would be the pleasure even of pleasurable feeling, if it were necessarily confined to one's own breast? What would the thrill be with which we contemplate a beautiful prospect or a brilliant sunset, if there were no companion to whom our emotion might be expressed, and by whom it could be shared? What would social and domestic life be without sympathy? The husband, the wife, the parent, the child, the neighbour, the friend—suppose them to be henceforward bereft of the power of sympathy, each to feel for himself alone, and no longer for another; and how much of the world's happiness would survive the stroke? We might almost say—none. A universal solitude would be constituted, scarcely less melancholy than the grave. It is much the same in religion. We do not deny that an insulated Christian may be happy, for in communion with God he has both society and sympathy; but his happiness is greatly enlarged by sympathy with his brethren. He rejoices more when he can breathe of his pleasures to a heart that enters into them, and sorrows less when he vents himself to one whose bosom responds to his sighs. Hence much of the pleasure of social and public worship, the sacred delight of the Lord's table, and the untold sweetness of Christian converse. Banish sympathy from the church of Christ, let no Christian henceforth feel with or for another, but let all confine their feelings to their individual concerns—and you do a fearful violence to the pleasures of religion.

Sympathy among Christians is a spring of action. It does

not expend itself in feeling, but supplies an impulse of no inconsiderable or unimportant power. It draws us as Christians into communion with each other; rendering our association delightful, it engages us to use the means by which it may be facilitated and enlarged. It brings us to prayer-meetings, where the hearts of many find an utterance by the lips of one. It draws us within the circle of church-fellowship, and constrains us to bind ourselves together in sacred pledges of mutual love. It resembles the magnetic influence, a power which draws every congenial particle to the common centre.

It induces combined operation. It is owing to Christian sympathy that no pious person can employ himself in useful labour without some, and perhaps many, others coming to his help. If one is seen endeavouring to raise a Sunday school, or to preach the Gospel in a village, another sympathizes in the feelings which have prompted the effort, and hastens to become partaker of the toil. Were it not for this, supposing all Christians to be active in their Master's service, each might nevertheless be working by himself; impelled, indeed, to labour, but not drawn by sympathy to labour with his brethren. Sympathy among Christians is the great spring, not only of association, but of co-operation. It arrays multitudinous bodies in compact masses, and induces them to act in concert; and hence is derived the aspect of unity, which must be esteemed one of the most delightful features of all the great undertakings of the church in the present day.

Christian sympathy leads to acts of benevolence, and exercises of compassion. It arises hence that, if one see his brother have need, he does not shut his bowels of compassion against him, but promptly ministers to his wants. It arises hence that, if one be afflicted or bereaved, another is found by his side in condolence or in prayer. It arises hence that the abundance of the wealthy becomes a supply for the poor, and that the steps of the happy trace out even the meanest and obscurest of the abodes of distress. Were we not to feel for each other, those who rejoice and those who suffer might form two separate bodies, divided as by a barrier of adamant, which no foot should pass, and no thought surmount. Of all practical benevolence sympathy is the vital power.

Sympathy among Christians is not only a source of happiness and a spring of action, it is a bond of union. Unlimited

in its exercise, it not only spreads through distant lands, but reaches a more distant world, and holds *all* the church together, in heaven and on earth. How often we have felt with and for the converts to our Lord in heathen countries, and especially for those who have most cruelly suffered, as beneath the scourge of slavery! Thus sympathizing, we are bound to them by a tie, not only of unquestionable reality, but of conscious strength; a tie far more strong than any which unites us to the irreligious inhabitants even of the place we live in. Sympathy is not less the cement of every separate church of the Lord Jesus. It is our more warmly feeling with them that makes one company of pious people more interesting to us than another; that makes us look with peculiar pleasure on the face of a fellow-member, and cherish a sort of inexpressible fondness for the very place of our assembly. This is the power which holds churches together in the cloudy and dark day, as well as in bright ones, and generates an attachment too strong to allow of our being shaken off by the occurrence of difficulties, or the attractions of novelty.

Much on this subject might be added, but more need not be said to show that sympathy among Christians possesses great excellency and importance. How much of that which is valuable, both to the church and the world, is imparted by it! How deplorably would both suffer if it were to become extinct! How loudly might both rejoice if it were more eminently to abound!

III. Having thus briefly shown the grounds, and illustrated the value, of Christian sympathy, we proceed to offer some practical remarks, by which these general views may be brought to a suitable application.

I. It is a frequent complaint that professors are very deficient in Christian sympathy, and in its characteristic exercises towards one another. Such a complaint deserves to be inquired into, that its justice may be ascertained. It can scarcely be the opinion of any person that sympathy is altogether banished from the church. There are yet too many evidences and pleasing examples of it to permit any such accusation; nor are we willing to estimate the complaint even at its apparent amount. On many grounds it is probable that the lamentation expressed may exceed the real magnitude of the evil. Among those who complain it is possible may be found some who are self-important, and demand that which

is unreasonable, if not impracticable; some who are censorious, and much more gifted in exaggerating the faults of the brethren than in doing justice to their excellences; and some who are lukewarm, if not inconsistent, and thus present a character which it is not very easy to love. Complaints from such sources as these deserve comparatively little regard, and sanction, at all events, a considerable reduction in a candid estimate of the case.

If, however, the complaints alluded to are not wholly just, neither can it be affirmed that they are altogether groundless. There can be no hesitation in saying that there is not among Christians so much sympathy as there ought to be, nor so much as Christianity provides for. An unequivocal evidence of this in the church at large is furnished by the party spirit which yet characterizes it, far exceeding the just feeling of denominational attachment, and too clearly indicating a sectarian rather than a catholic temper. Nor are painful signs wanting in smaller communities—in our own. The spirit of mutual love is not always fervent, nor does every worthy effort meet with universal co-operation. Apathy, estrangement, neglect of holy converse, reluctant support of public objects, are things not unknown among us. And much as there is of care and visiting of the poor and sick, there is also much neglect of such things. They are confined to a comparatively few, while, among the far greater portion of professors, sympathy with the suffering is practically non-existent.

It is of much importance that all of us should closely examine ourselves in this matter. Christian sympathy is a personal thing; and, if it exists at all, does not exist in a society, not even in a Sick Man's Friend Society, but in the individual breast. Let each reader of these pages say, Does it exist in mine? Does it glow there? Do I feel as warmly for and with my fellow-Christians as, on the grounds before stated, it may be expected I should? And are such manifestations of sympathy as are appropriate to my circumstances apparent in my conduct?

2. As a deficient exercise of sympathy among Christians will doubtless be readily acknowledged, it is of importance, in the next place, to trace this deficiency to its source. To know the cause of an evil is clearly essential to its cure. Now no doubt can be entertained but the outward expressions and manifestations of sympathy among Christians fully

correspond with the degree in which sympathy itself exists, inasmuch as it is plainly of too influential a nature to exist anywhere without characteristic operation. We directly infer, therefore, that sympathy itself is defective. And whence, again, this defect of sympathy among Christians?

Probably, in the first place, because we overlook the necessity of cultivating it. We are too apt to imagine that the renewed heart will, like good ground, "bring forth fruit of itself;" and that, if we are really saints, every holy temper will *of course* arise within us, and acquire its due vigour. But this is by no means the fact, nor have we any ground for expecting that it should be so. After regeneration, everything in religion is voluntary—matter of intention and effort. The power of religious principle and the influence of divine grace are shown, not in generating right dispositions without our endeavour, but in prompting us to endeavours for their production. We are never in any respect more holy than we try to become; and every advance in holiness is connected with, and may generally be traced to, some vigorous exercises of mind. Now, if we have forgotten to cultivate Christian sympathy, it is no wonder that it is feeble. If we have expected that it would arise of itself, it is most natural that it should still sleep. And it will undoubtedly sleep until we take pains to awaken it. If we wish to have a warm fellow-feeling with our brethren we must acquire it. The selfishness and apathy which have possessed the heart in its unrenewed state will not voluntarily depart, they require to be expelled. The mere renewing of the heart does not accomplish this, but makes a provision only for its accomplishment in the use of appropriate means.

Or, if we have not overlooked the necessity of cultivating sympathy with our fellow-Christians, we may have shown little diligence in doing so. It may be a part of our character to which we have never attached much importance, and on which we have never bestowed much pains. The effort required is plainly one of realization. It is needful for us to recollect, and ponder deeply, the fact that there is not only a Redeemer, but a people redeemed; that not only Christ exists, but Christians; and that Christians hold to us the relations of unity, community, and congeniality, which have been already described. We have then to ask ourselves, How ought I to feel towards these brethren? And do I feel

towards them as I ought? If I do not, let me awaken the feelings which are dormant, and enhance those which are defective; and see to it that my heart answers to such tender and touching appeals. Even a few minutes' discipline of this sort would not be fruitless; and such quickening exercises, if frequent or habitual, would be effective beyond calculation. Will the reader be good enough to ask himself whether he has ever made such efforts; or made them with any such frequency and power as might fairly indicate an earnest desire to cultivate a sympathizing heart?

The exercise of Christian sympathy may be much obstructed by the indulgence of such evils as are strongly opposed to it. So, for example, if a person is of retired and unsocial habits, and yields himself to a constitutional bias in this direction, it is obvious that sympathetic feelings can have no scope. If one be proud and self-willed, or full of self-complacency and self-importance, or peevish and irritable, or jealous and envious, or resentful and unforgiving, these tempers clash fearfully with sympathy; they all tend to shut us up within our own concerns, and to reduce to the smallest possible amount our feelings with and for others. Yet, who that knows the church of Christ does not know that such tempers exist, and in too many cases with lamentable power? Or who, with any confidence, can say, that anything like a just vigour is put forth by professors at large in mortifying these deeds of the flesh? Can Christian sympathy enjoy herself in such company?

3. If the reasons why this excellent grace is languid be sufficiently apparent, let us next observe that, whatever reform in this respect is necessary, it should be immediately and earnestly begun. Under no defect of Christian character should a Christian be content. There is none in which he can justly be complacent, none which he ought not to view with shame and regret. Who would be satisfied, were it in his power to remedy the mischief, with the absence of some member of his body? The graces of the Spirit are to our character what the members are to the body; each is unspeakably valuable in its place, and essential to the completeness of the whole. The man of God should be "perfect."

If every grace should be sedulously cultivated, there are strong grounds on which we may say *more especially this*. How deeply it affects our own enjoyment! What a recompense of pleasure will every enlargement of Christian

sympathy secure! What an immeasurable scope of delight is yet before us in this respect, if we have only the resolution to go forward! How much our pleasures shrink in a contrary method! Dreary and cheerless, in comparison, must be the path to heaven *alone*; and a sore enemy to his own happiness is the pilgrim who, in the midst of companions, by an unsympathizing spirit creates his own solitude.

With powerful Christian sympathy is closely identified the honour of Christ in the world. One of the main glories of his church is its unity. In a world rent and torn by a thousand passions, he has formed his church for love, "the bond of perfectness." He has made provision for a vital sympathy, which, like the life of the animal frame, should pervade every part, and hold it together in a beautiful and blessed tie. Such has been his desire. Such was his prayer: "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may know that thou hast sent me." If the church has grievously failed in this respect, it is the more important to do what we can to repair the mischief. Let us try to make it visible to all men that Christians do love each other, and to banish those bitter tempers and unfeeling ways, which have served to generate so many dark spots on the face of a luminary whose brightness ought never to have been obscured.

The welfare of the church is not less concerned in this matter than the honour of her Lord. The ends which Christian sympathy is adapted to answer are of no mean importance; and there can be no considerable defect in this point without corresponding injury. To see those who fear the Lord, as of old, "speaking often one to another" in the utterance of devout affection, and thus rendering cheerful the ways of Zion; to see the healthy ministering to the sick, and the rich to the poor, so that the sorrowful shall never be without a comforter, nor the needy without a supply; to see the spirit of zealous activity run from breast to breast, so that every suitable effort shall be taken up by the community at large, and be sustained by a general co-operation; and to see, lastly, a whole society knit together as the heart of one man, and scattered neither by external attractions nor internal discords—to see all this, is to see what is fitted to bless our eyes and rejoice our hearts. Yet this is no more than the result of sympathy among Christians. Happy fruits! Inestimable grace! Which of us will be negligent

of its cultivation? Or who can bear to contemplate the consequences of its neglect? Is it not heart-breaking to find members of a church not filling up their places, estranged by little differences, or allured by trifling attractions, or liking any place rather than their home? Is it not heart-breaking to see the afflicted languishing in solitude in crowded streets trod perpetually by feet of fellow-Christians, which seldom, perhaps never, enter the gloomy apartments of sickness? Is it not heart-breaking to see a good design censured by some, unsupported by others, and struggling in weakness, or perishing in neglect? Yet let Christian sympathy languish, and which of these evils will not ensue, and evils far more grievous in their train? Sympathy may be called, indeed, the vitality of the church of Christ. As the members of the body would be far better separate than connected if life did not blend them into one, so, without sympathy, Christians had better remain insulated and dispersed; since, in that case, nothing but mischief can result from their union.

What grace can there be the cultivation of which is urged by stronger motives? What truly Christian heart can there be on which these motives shall be urged in vain?

4. We wish, in the last place, to inquire whether there are in existence among us any considerable impediments by which the exercise of Christian sympathy may be prevented. It is clearly most easy to maintain an actual acquaintance among the members of a church while it is of small magnitude. In a society of few members every one may be familiar with all the rest. In proportion as a church increases in size this facility diminishes; until in very large churches (such as those which consist of several hundred) many members are strangers to each other altogether. This result is not quite what could be desired; and it contributes, perhaps, to generate in some minds a sense of the want of sympathy, that members of the same church, sitting continually with each other at the Lord's table, should pass each other in the street in total ignorance that any such relation exists between them. It is not obvious how this state of things can be remedied. All that seems possible in large churches is that smaller circles of actual acquaintance should be formed within them; not each confined to itself, but connected with the rest by intersections on every side. At the same time, it must be admitted that much may be done to diminish the amount of

existing evil. Church-members might be far more studious than they are to enlarge their acquaintance *in* the church, and to select their friends from among their fellow-members. Much more pains might be taken to gain acquaintance with such as are recently admitted to communion, and to see to it that they shall not be solitary; an effort the more needful, inasmuch as the Gospel can scarcely be multiplying converts without bringing in some who have had no previous acquaintance with any member of the society they join.

It is more easy, likewise, to maintain sympathetic communion where the parties are all on the same level, or nearly so. This is the case particularly in some country churches, and it very much facilitates the manifestation of brotherly love. For the most part, however, it is not so. It pleases God to call by his grace persons in every rank of life, and to associate them where all are one in Christ Jesus. These diversities of social position more or less divide the several classes one from another, and do not allow so free and full an effect as might otherwise be produced by that great and blessed unity which draws them together on religious grounds. It is not quite certain, perhaps, that this obstruction to the free circulation of Christian sympathy can be altogether removed. Inequalities in society are not of recent origin, and it is not clear that we can reasonably look forward to their extinction; nor, while they exist, can we expect them to be wholly without influence. They have not everywhere, however, and at all times, an equal influence. Sometimes society is characterized by a spirit of pride, which makes much of these distinctions; at other times by a more generous temper, which makes little of them. In few countries, perhaps, is the effect of them greater than in England; in many certainly it is less. The kind of influence which Christianity is adapted to exert in this matter admits of no question. Without the shadow of hostility to diversity of ranks, it powerfully bears against their tendency to insulate and divide. It constitutes all ranks into but one caste; and, by the feelings which it generates of mutual esteem and affection, favours a universality of intercourse and sympathy. To persons of real piety this ought to be neither disagreeable nor difficult. There is something in religion which constitutes a preparation for unfettered communion *on that subject*, even where it can be on that subject alone.

While we thus speak of Christian sympathy in relation to the church of Christ at large, it is highly important to remember its ultimate and direct relation to individuals. The temper of a community can be no otherwise improved than by inducing every member of it to amend his own; and if there is to be more sympathy in and among the churches of Christ, it will result from the pains which every one will take with his own heart. It is a case in which, if all is to be right, every man must do his own duty. This should be especially remembered by those who complain that there is less sympathy than there should be. It is far from being certain that those who make this complaint have contributed their own share to the common stock. It is even possible that those whose complaints are the loudest may themselves be the most defective; and still further, it may be their own deficiency chiefly which furnishes the ground of their complaint. They may imagine that Christians do not love each other because they themselves do not love their brethren, and they may seem to be vainly expecting the church to grow warmer in sympathy while their own hearts continue ice-bound. This is as absurd as it is unfair. The case would be very different if we would pursue a different method. Instead of lamenting that there is too little love in others, let us see that there is the proper quantity in ourselves. Let us love, rather than reiterate that we are not loved; nor blame any till we ourselves are beyond crimination. The church would thus, in a moment, both *have* more sympathy, and *seem* to have it—it would both exist, and be apparent; and no inconsiderable progress would at once be made towards the cure of the evil we deplore.

It would be still further reduced in magnitude if we were to make reasonable allowances for such causes as impede the expressions of sympathy, and to interpret all circumstances in a favourable rather than an unfavourable manner. We might, without much hazard of inaccuracy, assume that what looks like a slight was not intended as such; and that a fellow-member really loves us though opposing circumstances, or some little want of consideration, have prevented the expression of it. It is certain that injustice is done to the real amount of Christian sympathy by loud complainers; and that there is much scope for the exercise of that charity which, in that which is good, "hopeth all things," and "believeth all things."

ON THE INDISPENSABLE IMPORTANCE, IN
THE PUBLIC MINISTRY, OF EVANGELICAL
DOCTRINE.*

BELOVED BRETHREN,—Allow me to express the sentiment of congratulation which I am persuaded we all cherish, on being permitted to assemble ourselves at another Annual Session of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, and more particularly on the circumstances in which this assembly is gathered. The fact is well known that the Baptist body in the United Kingdom, so far as it is characterized by the holding of evangelical sentiments, consists of two principal portions—the Particular Baptists and the General Baptists, or those who hold respectively the doctrines of particular redemption and general redemption. In whatever respects separate, these two portions of the body are largely combined in the Baptist Union, and a token of this fraternal amalgamation is our assembling here to-day. We are not only holding our Annual Session in the country, as distinguished from the metropolis, where considerations of convenience usually convene us, but in a part of the country where the churches of the General Baptist Association are particularly numerous and powerful; and we are assembled here at the request of that body presented through its annual meeting in 1855, with the avowed desire of cultivating an enlarged fraternal fellowship. To a desire and request at once so kind and so Christian I need scarcely say that the Union itself has most cordially responded; and, although without an official form, I am sure I may make for that portion of the denomination to which I more particularly belong (or, if there be exceptions, I must leave them to pronounce themselves) a response equally cordial. For myself, at least, while not, I trust, holding lightly by the

* Introductory Discourse at the Annual Session of the Baptist Union, held at Nottingham June 30th, 1857.

truth of God in any of its aspects, I do not see why such doctrinal differences as may exist among us should hinder our mutual love, or obstruct our fellowship in our common Lord. Taking them at their utmost range, they may be said to extend from Arminianism on the one side, through Moderate Calvinism to High Calvinism on the other; a range certainly comprehending not inconsiderable technical or systematic diversities, but none, I think, affecting the saving truths of the Gospel of Christ, or the vital interests of his kingdom. I am little disposed to lay stress on so uncertain and variable a consideration as that which is sometimes adduced, that the respective theological systems which I have indicated are held at present with less rigidity or distinctness than formerly, so that the professors of them are practically nearer together than they were: I prefer rather to allow them their most full and characteristic development; and then I say that all hold the head, even Christ, "from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16).

In selecting a topic on which I may not unprofitably engage your thoughts, dear brethren, for a few moments on this occasion, I choose one, certainly not unimportant in itself, nor wholly unsuitable to the aspect of the times in which we live. It is the indispensable importance in the public ministry of evangelical doctrine.

The subject I have thus announced divides itself naturally into two parts; the first of them relating to doctrine itself, and the second to its evangelical character.

It may seem strangely unnecessary to insist on the importance of a doctrinal element in the ministry of the Gospel; for, if it be not the teaching of doctrine, what is it? Ah! yes: we are assured there is something else which pre-eminently constitutes it. Christianity—such is the maxim now laid down on high authority, and repeated by many mouths—Christianity is not a creed, but a life. Let us briefly examine this assertion.

Christianity, it is affirmed, is not a creed, but a life. On the latter part of this proposition I hold no controversy. Undoubtedly Christianity is a life; and I wish to say this once for all with so much distinctness and force that I may

have no occasion to say it again. That part of the proposition to which I demur is that Christianity is not a creed.

On this assertion I may observe, in the first place, that the presumption is against it. The manner in which it has been formed is patent. It is evidently the mere revulsion of an opposite opinion which has been carried too far. Because some persons have held Christianity to be a creed only, and have not assigned to doctrinal truth its just practical influence, therefore others, in their laudable zeal for Christian living, deny altogether the importance of doctrinal truth. As an intellectual phenomenon this is frequent and familiar enough to be easily understood. It is the mere recoil of the human mind, like that of an elastic spring after too severe a pressure. Or it may be compared to the oscillation of a pendulum, which swings from one extreme to the other of its range, and knows not how to rest in the centre. It would be absurd to allow ourselves to become the victims of such a piece of human weakness. A wise man may well rectify an extravagance on one side without being betrayed into an abandonment of truth on the other.

To this it may be added, that the opinion in question has, to a great extent, a bias in its favour. It is to the doctrines of the Gospel that the corrupt heart of man especially objects. Men will accept, or profess to accept, its morals, who will not receive its doctrinal statements; and they find at once a plea and a justification for their cherished unbelief in the idea that doctrine is no essential part of Christianity. The favour which such an opinion finds with a corrupt heart, however, constitutes no recommendation of it. On this ground suspicion rather attaches to it, and a presumption lies against its truth.

I go on to observe, in the second place, that the arguments by which this opinion is sustained have no sufficient weight.

From the mode in which it is expressed it would appear that an antagonism is assumed between the two principal terms of the proposition. Christianity, we are told, is not a creed, but a life; as if it were intended to say that Christianity cannot be a creed because it is a life. This is clearly the species of argument called by logicians a *non sequitur*; since no reason arises from the admitted fact that Christianity is a life tending to prove that it cannot be a creed also. It

is not necessarily of the nature of a creed to stifle and suppress activity, but rather the contrary. The argument, indeed, is not only illogical; it is suicidal. So far from its being true that Christianity cannot be a creed because it is a life, the very opposite may rather be laid down as an axiom—namely, that because Christianity is a life it is, and must be, a creed; the speculative being, according to the nature of man, one true and necessary source of the practical. As I shall have occasion to advert to this topic more fully hereafter, however, I pass lightly over it now. I shall only add here, that the argument we are considering flies in the face of notorious facts. Christianity as a creed has been, at least in some cases, too manifestly connected with a characteristic life for its power or efficacy to be doubted. It is not only that, in a large number of instances, professing Christians have been virtuous and holy men, leading a life which moral principles of a worldly kind would never have been able to sustain, but some of them have been specifically CHRISTIAN men and women, maintaining a course of action and of suffering which nothing short of the great doctrines of Christianity can for a moment be supposed capable of having originated, or upheld. Witness the devotedness of the missionary, the patience and fortitude of the martyr. In some cases, at least, Christianity has borne fruits demonstrative of its practical power.

It has been alleged, however, that whatever power doctrine may have to produce religious activity, an activity truly religious may exist apart from doctrine. We are gravely told that there is a sanctity in common things, and that religion consists in fulfilling the duties and relations of life. *Laborare est orare*, said one of the old writers, perhaps in rebuke of the prevalent monastic sloth; an apothegm to which Mr. Carlyle has given a pointed translation in his pregnant saying, "Work is worship." And there is undoubtedly a measure of truth in the sentiment. Far would I be from depreciating the common duties of life, or from denying the nobility and the holiness which may be found even in the world's drudgeries. Assuredly there *may be* sanctity in common things, and work *may be* worship. But it is not necessarily so. In this respect everything depends, not so much on that which is done, as in the spirit in which it is done. Even acts externally religious, not performed in a

religious spirit, are not religious, but profane; and, by the same rule, the activities of common life not performed in a religious spirit cannot constitute religion. It is enough to admit that they are so perfectly in harmony with religion as to be capable of being animated with its spirit, and transmuted, as it were, into its substance; and nothing more than this can be conceded. It may be religion to work, whether in the household, the manufactory, or the field, if you work in the fear of God, and for his glory—that is, under the influence of Christian doctrinal truth; but to work for self and for the world, in whatever fascinating colours such a course may be exhibited, has in it, at least, no sanctity.

“And yet see,” it is reiterated, “in what an uninfluential manner the great bulk of religionists have ever held the creed which you boast to be so powerful!” Alas! we are compelled to admit the fact on which this cutting retort is founded. We ask, however, what is proved by it? That Christianity is not a creed? Assuredly not; but only that some who have professed to hold it have held it unworthily. We all know that there are uninfluential modes of holding, or of professing to hold, even the most exciting opinions. Christianity as a creed may be held speculatively, or may be accepted formally, or may be professed hypocritically; in neither of which cases will it produce its appropriate effects. How largely the general profession of Christianity has been impregnated by infusions of this kind history abundantly testifies, and by these at least Christianity itself is not to be judged.

But now, in the third place, let the opinion we are examining be subjected to the pressure of positive evidence, and let us see whether it can abide this test. I will endeavour to prove that Christianity is a creed.

In proof of this position, it would be neither unnatural nor unfair to appeal at once to the documentary records of Christianity itself, in which there is abundant evidence that doctrines are to be found. I will not avail myself of this facility, however; I will rather construct an argument on ground furnished by the adversary, and prove my point by means of the very concession he makes to me. Christianity is a life, says he. I might, indeed, object to this as an unsatisfactory view of internal, or subjective, Christianity, which I shall hereafter show to involve something more than

is here ascribed to it; but for the present I will content myself with this definition, and I say that, since Christianity is a life, it must be a creed.

Not in any mode does life exist of itself. All life has some originating and sustaining cause. Human life in its simplest form is instinctive, the product of impulses supplied by nature itself. Advancing beyond this, it is a response made to the appeals of external objects, which, by many attractive aspects, stimulate our active powers. It is so with commercial life, with scientific life, with political life; and it is not less so with religious life. In all these cases there is something known and believed—a creed—from which knowledge and belief the corresponding activity springs. To internal, or subjective, Christianity, consequently, there must stand related an external, or objective, Christianity, a characteristic object of knowledge and belief; a Christianity as a creed, without which Christianity as a life could not exist. To imagine a Christian life without a Christian creed were, indeed, to imagine an effect without a cause.

It is but common justice that is thus required to be done to Christianity. No peculiar favour is asked for it. In no other case is it called in question whether a religious life supposes a religious creed, or whether a religious creed produces a religious life. There was a life of ancient paganism, and this was the image of its creed. The life of modern paganism is also the image of its creed. The life of the Moslem is the image of his creed. The life of the Romanist is the image of his creed. And if every kind of life, ordinary and religious, has its creed, why not Christianity? Or will those with whom we are arguing maintain that, since Christianity, being a life, is no creed, so, amidst all the forms of human life which the world has seen, no creed has ever existed?

But let us now, in relation to this admitted life, look at Christianity itself, and see what preparation is made for it in its documentary record, the Bible.

A strenuous effort is made to separate the Bible into two portions—the doctrinal and the preceptive—in order to applaud and adopt the preceptive while the doctrinal is repudiated. Now I do not complain of any one for applauding the preceptive portion of the Bible, which is undoubtedly worthy of the highest admiration, and the completest fulfil-

ment. All I have to say is, that the preceptive part of the Bible alone will be found insufficient for the purpose for which it is adopted. Precepts are not adequate to originate and sustain a life of any kind. It is their business to regulate a life, not to originate it, and their applicability always supposes life to be previously existing. Were the moral precepts all the Christianity of the Bible, no life could possibly be originated by it.

It may be observed further, that this is not the method by which Christianity proposes to originate and sustain the life at which it aims. On the contrary, it exhibits for this purpose a number of heart-stirring facts of extraordinary character, for the purpose of supplying, and unquestionably adequate to supply, a motive power. These facts are of two kinds. The first kind are historical facts, such as are comprehended in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ; the second kind are revealed facts, or facts not manifest on the face of the history, but added to it, and interpreting it. Of the latter kind, or revealed facts, John iii. 24 may be cited as a familiar example: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These two classes of facts, thus grouped together, constitute Christianity as it is external to ourselves, or as presented to our active powers, and intended to become the source of Christian life. It is a body of truth to be believed, and as truth believed it is to operate upon us. It is thus, by a fair latitude of expression, called a belief, or faith; or, to use a different word, a creed.

Without any misgiving of the strength and sufficiency of this argument, I now revert to an observation I made a little while ago—namely, that internal, or subjective, Christianity, is not adequately represented when it is said to be a life. It is a life, but it is more than a life; it is also a cure. External, or objective, Christianity finds man with a guilty conscience, and a corrupt heart; its office is to provide peace for the one and purity for the other, and thus to heal the moral malady. Now, manifestly, precepts cannot do this; a purpose, indeed, to which they have no adaptation, and for which they have no power. For this end it is indispensable that Christianity should exhibit the facts, historical and revealed, of which I have already spoken, for these alone

possess any adaptation to it ; and for this end, if Christianity be not a creed, it is not only nothing, but worse than nothing—it is a delusion and a snare.

The conclusion to which I come is this—that the proposition that Christianity is not a creed but a life is far from expressing the truth. Even regarding Christianity as only a life, in order to be a life it must be a creed, and it makes itself a creed in order to become so ; while it is in truth (what the proposition entirely overlooks) much more than a life—a process of spiritual cure, for which, except as a creed, it has no adaptation whatever. I cannot but express my conviction, therefore, of the serious mistake of those who would employ the pulpit exclusively on practical topics, and supersede the sermon by the homily. Let me not, however, be mistaken. I do not wish that preaching should be wholly doctrinal, and that practical discourses should be excluded from the pulpit—far from it ; but I do think that Christian character has its proper nourishment in Christian truth, and that the doctrines of the Gospel constitute the moving power of a holy life.

I now come to the second part of my subject ; and, having shown the indispensable importance of doctrine generally, I shall proceed to insist on the equal importance of evangelical doctrine.

The general ground on which this may be maintained is sufficiently obvious. The doctrinal views entertained of Christianity are not simple and uniform. Under a common name, they are of considerable variety ; and assuredly not all of them are of a similar tendency. It is the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, which is the power of God to salvation. Nor can everything be accepted as the Gospel which comes under its name. Even in the earliest age of the church, Paul detected a scheme which he described as “another Gospel, which is not another,” and a similar discrimination is necessary still. Without, I hope, rendering myself liable to the charge of bigotry on the one hand, or of latitudinarianism on the other, I must express my own conviction that the preaching of the Gospel is, briefly, the preaching of Christ as a Saviour for sinners guilty of breaking the law of God, and condemned by his justice ; that salvation being effected by Christ’s obedience unto death as an offering of expiation for sin, and embraced by faith in his name. Without this

doctrine I acknowledge no Gospel ; with it, I own a substantial fraternity.

Under this head, I shall perhaps best explain my views further by adverting to three points in which a failure in this respect may be observable.

First, the doctrine brought into the pulpit may be defective in quality. I will explain myself here by an example.

We are told that God is a father ; and, in accordance with this general conception, the fatherly character is made to represent his entire relation to the world. In support of this view is cited the declaration of the apostle that "God is love"—love only, love infinite, love inexhaustible ; and to believe in the love of God to mankind is the great attainment of piety. Such is a scheme of the Gospel now in some circles prevalent—it may be said, perhaps, fashionable. Now I am not insensible to the beauty of this conception, or to the touching eloquence with which it is sometimes discoursed upon. Nor do I deny its partial truth. The fault I find with it is that its truth is but partial, and that it uses a part to represent, and consequently to misrepresent, the whole. That God is to the human race merely a father, is to me a conception utterly discordant with Holy Scripture, and subversive of the Gospel of Christ. When it is made the basis of a system, the system which is founded upon it precludes all notion of law, of condemnation, of expiation for sin ; these and kindred elements forming a group which assuredly cannot be incorporated into a domestic administration. They belong to a judicial system, and require the fundamental conception of God as a moral governor and a righteous judge.

Secondly, the doctrine promulgated in the pulpit may be indistinct. A scriptural phraseology may be employed without its conveying, or being intended to convey, scriptural ideas. In this manner the cardinal doctrine of expiation for sin by the obedience unto death of the Son of God is at this moment most unsatisfactorily treated. Use being made of the word *atonement*, which is capable of being employed in two senses, although commonly employed in only one, the radical idea is completely altered, and a totally different one insinuated under the same phraseology. To test the orthodoxy of a professed brother, you ask, "Do you believe in the atonement?" "O yes!" exclaims your friend, "I believe in the atonement *subjectively*." If I understand this, it means

that your friend believes in the atonement, not as that which has taken place out of himself, by the death of Christ upon the cross, but as something which takes place within himself, by the reconciliation of his heart to God. And then he tells you, or is ready to tell you, in justification of his jugglery, that this is really the meaning of the word atonement; that to atone is to *set at one*, and that atonement is accordingly *at-one-ment*, or reconciliation. All this learning you may find in Johnson's Dictionary; but you find there likewise that the word *atonement* is used also in the sense of expiation for sin. So it is used in the Bible, and so it is currently used in theological discourse; but, if its capability of a double meaning is to become an instrument for expelling the true scriptural notion of a propitiatory sacrifice, and for substituting in its place reconciliation to God, or the sacrifice of self, as it is called, it can no longer be safely employed. What needs to be proclaimed to the world is not a subjective, but an objective, atonement; the great fact of an expiatory sacrifice for sin offered by our Lord Jesus Christ, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree—the only fact by which the love of God is adequately manifested to us, or by which our hearts can ever be truly reconciled to God.

Thirdly, the doctrine promulgated in the pulpit may be unstable. According to some, even truth itself is undergoing a process of perpetual change. That is true to every generation which every generation believes; but the world is always making progress, and each new generation may fairly expect to become wiser than the last. Accordingly, some preachers make to their congregations an announcement something like this: "I tell you what I believe to-day, but I am not at all sure that I shall believe it to-morrow. I am but an inquirer after truth, and I invite you to join in the search." Now, whatever real scope may exist for the exercise of so philosophical a spirit, I must claim to exempt from its operation the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel. Truth absolute and unchangeable is assuredly here. "For this end was I born," said our divine Lord, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto THE TRUTH" (John xviii. 37). And in accordance with this testimony before Pilate was his prayer to his Father—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17). The faith, says Jude, has been "once for all delivered to the saints," and as it was delivered it is for us to hold it fast,

even to the end of the world. Pitiabie condition indeed, amidst such awful liabilities as ours, to be "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth!"

To these illustrations I may add, that evangelical truth, when not wholly absent, may be introduced into the pulpit in defective quantity. I am far from advocating a restricted conception of Gospel preaching, or from requiring that the preacher of the Gospel should be perpetually reiterating the one great truth, or even the few great truths, which lie at the basis, or burn at the heart, of it. The preaching of the apostles as exemplified in the book of Acts had assuredly a large scope, and, in imitation of them, a preacher now may fairly take the widest range that the Bible will afford him without being liable to rebuke. It is, indeed, incumbent upon him that he should do so, in order to give continual freshness to a course of pulpit ministration. In perfect consistency with this object, however, he will find it possible, I think—and he should make it possible if he does not find it so—to keep the cross of Christ continually in view, and to exhibit under every form of instruction its quickening and consoling power. It may not be always so. It is possible that, although the leading truths of the Gospel may be heard sometimes, they may be heard unfrequently; as though they were intended rather to constitute vouchers for the orthodoxy of the preacher, than supplies of nourishment and consolation for the hearer. It cannot be said that such a preacher is not orthodox, for on one Sunday he preached on the atonement, on another on election, on another on the work of the Holy Spirit; and who more scripturally? But these discourses may have been delivered at such long intervals, and the spirit of them may have been so utterly absent from the many which have intervened, that the general character of his ministry may be frigid and powerless.

So, my beloved brethren, may it be given to us to preach, and in common with us, to all the ministers of our adorable Lord, that we may proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus at once in its simplicity, its fulness, and its power! May our discourses be instinct with doctrine, as the animal frame is with vital power; and may that doctrine be at once full in quantity, ripe in quality, distinct in utterance, and unfaltering in tone! So shall the sword we employ in the Holy War be at least of the right temper; and the Lord guide it to victory!

THE REASONABLENESS OF PRAYER VINDICATED.

To the Christian prayer is at once an important duty and an inestimable privilege, from which there is little danger, it may be hoped, of his being alienated by the scoffs of those who are ignorant of its value. Since, however, speculative objections to it are sedulously sown broadcast throughout the community, it becomes not only desirable, but in a measure necessary, that plain and common-sense answers should be supplied to them. In this manner we propose to notice some of those most frequently presented.

I. We are told that prayer is wrong—that is to say, an exercise inappropriate to our condition. The true providence of man, it is proclaimed to us, is science, or the knowledge of material agencies, and the application of them to our own wellbeing. We should be active, prudent, and skilful, instead of devout.

There is a mixture of truth and error in this statement. Undoubtedly we should be active, prudent, and skilful; and to a certain extent it may be admitted that science is a providence to man—that is to say, science supplies to man all the means he has of taking care of himself; but it does not follow from either of these positions that we ought not to be devout. The care we can take of ourselves with all our diligence is but very imperfect, and the means we have at our disposal with all our skill are far from being adequate to ward off every danger, or to supply every want. When we have done all for ourselves that we can do, and still find want, sorrow, and calamity pressing upon us, wherein is the impropriety of our asking help—if help is to be obtained—from Heaven? If the providence of God may not supersede, surely it may be superadded to, the providence of man.

Besides, the objection takes a very partial view of the objects for which we pray. Prayer is directed, not merely

to the attainment of some end immediately in view—as the recovery of a child from sickness, for example—but to the obtaining of inward assistance, or help to bear afflictions which may not be removed. We pray for gracious influences which may soothe a lacerated, or sustain a sinking, heart. Is this also wrong? And is the inward, as well as the outward, condition of man thrown upon a providence exclusively his own?

II. In the next place, however, we are instructed that, if prayer be not wrong, it will infallibly be mischievous. It will prevent our due appreciation and use of the agencies around us; or, in plainer words, it will make us careless and idle.

This objection confounds the use of a thing with its abuse. Undoubtedly the expectation of help may be abused to the indulgence of negligence and sloth; but this is neither its necessary result nor its natural tendency. Promises of help if it should be required are very frequent in human arrangements, and in their direct tendency they are encouragements to exertion, rather than bounties upon indolence. Nor are they far otherwise in their real influence; for in general they do operate as a stimulus to industry, though sometimes abused by the slothful to a different issue. It does not appear why our expectation of help from God should operate differently from a similar expectation when directed to human aid. Certainly the current language of divines warrants no imputation on them of encouraging such an abuse of trust in God; their language has proverbially been, “Labour as if all depended on yourself, and pray as though all depended on God.” And for those who may be in danger of betraying themselves to material ruin by the cultivation of a spiritual dependence, the divine Being has modes of chastisement sufficiently cogent and instructive. His providence assuredly befriends no idlers. However, if there be here and there a farmer who looks for growing corn when he has sown no seed, or a manufacturer who expects his steam-engine to work when he has not lighted the fire, we altogether disown them as examples of the influence of dependence on God, and abandon them to the rebuke and scorn of the infidel.

III. In the third place, we are told that, if prayer is neither wrong nor mischievous, it is at all events absurd; since we are placed in the midst of powers which act in

regular and certain methods, and of which the issues will be the same whether we pray or not; it cannot, consequently, be of any use to pray.

The regularity of physical agency, of course, cannot be doubted; but mankind in the depth of sorrow will be long in being convinced by this argument that it can be of no use to pray. It has, perhaps, been erroneously thought that prayer is known only as a duty of religion, and a precept of Christianity. It is, on the contrary, an instinct of human nature, waiting for neither prescription nor warrant, but brought into involuntary action whenever the circumstances arise which call for it. It may be very easy for men to live without prayer who live in undisturbed prosperity; but in extreme peril or severe suffering almost every one prays: the instances have not been few in which professed atheists have, in the near prospect of a frightful death, been seen upon their knees. Prayer, in truth, is the cry for help instinctively uttered by man's heart in the season of danger, and Christianity does nothing more than show the way in which this cry may be most acceptably and most successfully presented. If there be an error or an absurdity here, it is to be charged, not upon Christianity, but upon human nature. Here is, however, neither absurdity nor error. All instincts imply the reality of their objects. The parental instinct, which is nothing more than an example of the class, does so, whether we regard it in its more complex development in the human race, or in its simpler manifestation among the lower animals; were it not so, indeed, the instinct itself would be at once absurd and mischievous. Not less strongly does the instinctive impulse in man's heart to cry for help from heaven imply the fact that help is to be found there.

If, however, the regular action of physical causes renders prayer absurd, not less does it render labour so. For the argument arising out of it, if argument there be, is this, that no change in the sequence of events can be effected; whence it is useless, and therefore absurd, to ask the interposition of another in my affairs: but, if no change in the sequence of events can be effected by another, neither can any be effected by myself, and it becomes as irrational for me to exert my own power as to supplicate the exertion of another's. According to this view of the case, the dictate of common sense would be that I should at once abandon prayer and effort

alike, and submit myself wholly to the regular and inevitable order of nature. Such a conclusion, however, the common sense of mankind rejects, and even infidelity condemns. If there be a Power in heaven, even if of no higher than human capabilities, it must be as rational to ask his help as to employ our own.

In truth, the asking of divine help differs not at all in principle from the asking of human help. Other men, in common with ourselves, have a certain measure of ability to control the agencies of nature, and, when our own is insufficient for our purpose, we naturally and continually seek the aid of theirs. To say that it is absurd to seek the aid of a superior being, is in fact to deny to him even the small amount of power which we allow to be competent to man.

IV. Prayer, then, is neither wrong, nor mischievous, nor absurd. We are told, however, that it is enthusiastic, that there is an order of events established by God himself, and that to suppose him to depart from that order by direct interposition in answer to prayer would be to suppose a frequent, if not a perpetual, miracle.

Here, again, is a mixture of truth and error. It is not to be doubted that a course and order of events has been established in the wisdom of God, but this does not warrant the conclusion which the objector draws from it. God's plan necessarily comprehends the whole course of human action as a part of that on which it is formed. It is, to some extent, as foreseeing what man will do that God has determined what he himself will do, his conduct, as a moral governor and administrator of the great work of redemption, having necessarily a relation to the conduct of mankind. Now prayer is one part of the conduct of mankind, and can no more be conceived to be omitted from the divine regard than any other part of it. Instead of being excluded from the divine arrangements, it must rather of necessity be included and incorporated in them. In his absolute foreknowledge the eternal God beholds the actions of men, and fits the dispensations of his providence to them; and, as a part of this general system, he regards the foreseen neglect or exercise of prayer—the spirit of proud self-reliance or of devout dependence—and he adapts his dispensations to them. His hearing and answering prayer, consequently, is not a turning out of his course at a cry by which he is surprised, but

the accomplishing of his design in responding to a prayer which he foreknew.

And thus our own attitude in prayer is to be understood. It is not that we presume to interpose for the interruption of the chain of events which divine wisdom has determined, by breaking one of its links; we rather put ourselves into the attitude of prayer in order to constitute one of the links in that chain, that the predetermined connexion may be complete. In God's plan our very prayers have a place to fill up, an influence to exert; and it were as absurd to omit these as any other portion of our appointed activity.

V. We are now met with the further objection that, taken generally, the answering of the prayers of mankind is impossible. To answer the prayers of one or of a few, we are told, might be practicable; but, taking the world at large, prayers must be, not only so multitudinous, but so contradictory, that in no conceivable way could all of them be fulfilled. The interests of men, it is said, are so various that they will be found soliciting favours absolutely incompatible one with another—as farmers, to suit the different employments of husbandry, would be imploring, one rain and another sunshine, at the same moment.

Such an objector, it would seem, needs to be reminded that, beyond the sphere of miraculous operation, which constitutes an exceptional case, the Bible nowhere warrants the expectation of an absolute and specific answer to prayer. Like an earthly parent, the heavenly Father “*knoweth how* to give good things to them that ask him,” and he will manifest a blended parental wisdom and love alike in withholding and imparting. It would, indeed, be one of the greatest calamities for human kind if every prayer dictated by man's poor heart, and breathed passionately from his lips, were to be accomplished. Far too ignorant are we, too selfish, too corrupt, to be put into so fearful a position. Many things must be refused, but this by no means annihilates the system of requests. A father is not bound to say to a numerous family, “My children, make me no request, for I shall not be able to grant you all that you will ask.” He would rather say, “My children, ask from me what you will, only leave it to me to grant or to refuse your requests, and be assured of my tenderest love in both.” It is thus that the heavenly Father deals with us. In all things by prayer and supplication we

are to make known our requests to him, and then we are to leave the decision in his hands, assured that he will do what is best for us. It is, accordingly, the Christian's habit to ask for all things in a spirit of blended submission and hope, assured that prayer will be kindly heard, and prepared to exercise resignation if the benefit be refused, no less than to show his gratitude if it be vouchsafed.

If it be replied that, upon such a system, prayer is to a very large extent unanswered, and therefore vain, we rejoice that this overlooks the principal end of prayer itself. Undoubtedly, everything that God pleases to do for us and with us might have been done by him without any exercise of prayer on our part; there is not in the nature of things a necessity for prayer. The ground of it rather is that there is an expediency in it, a suitableness to man's condition, and a conduciveness to his moral benefit. We are to pray, not because we cannot obtain any good things without it, or because we can obtain all things by it, but because this is the attitude in which we shall best receive the lot which is assigned to us, and in which we shall most largely and effectually cultivate the moral sentiments—the dependence, the gratitude, the trust, the resignation—fitted to our condition. Unanswered, as well as answered, prayer finds its place in such a system.

VI. Even if we offer prayer, however, and it is answered, we are told that no answer to it can be proved. It is tauntingly said to us, "Where is this interference of a divine providence on your behalf? Show it to us. Where does it begin? Where does it end? And what has it done for you?"

We acknowledge the delicacy, and even the difficulty, of the task which is thus set us; we confess, moreover, that, in attempting to trace specific answers to prayer, much ignorance and folly have been shown. But we think the demand is unfair. It is, if we understand it, a demand to make a divine interposition visible, or manifest to the senses. "Show it to us," says the objector. We make no such pretension; but we ask the objector whether he believes nothing that he cannot see? Our senses are very useful to us, but they are far from being the sources of all our knowledge. There are great facts which all men hold, not only independently of the testimony of their senses, but contrary to it. In like manner

the providence of God, though it cannot be traced by the eye, has its proper proofs; if it cannot be demonstrated to the senses, it can be demonstrated to the mind.

And, to free ourselves from the embarrassment incidental to individual cases (although many of them are very striking), let us look abroad on human life at large. Let any man contemplate the history of the world as a whole, and say whether there are not indications of intelligent management in it. Or let him take an instance of conspicuous magnitude, and say what he thinks of the past and present position of the Jewish nation, whom he sees dispersed among all peoples as no other nation has ever been, and yet not lost, but held separate, as in obvious reservation for a future national destiny. We, of course, cannot dictate convictions to others, but to us it appears far more difficult to conceive of this as an unmanaged world, than to conceive of a Supreme Being who has it under his control, and who is conducting its multiform affairs after his counsel.

We may be told that, when we have proved a general providence, we have not proved a special one, and that we cannot apply our general conclusion to individuals. Our answer to this is, that a general providence must in the nature of things be special also. Take, for example, a million of money. It consists of single sovereigns, or, we may say, of single farthings. No man can take care of the whole of it without taking care of every fraction. If he loses a single farthing he has no longer his million of money. So in any other case, and not less so in the grandest of all cases—the providence of God. Having charge of all this vast world constituted of an infinite number of minute affairs, he must of necessity care for the small, or he could not secure the great. If he listen not to the cry of the hungry lion, if he watch not the fall of the sparrow, if he count not the very hairs of our heads, he cannot be answerable for the general management, or the final result. Linked together as causes and effects are, a minute neglect might occasion wide disorder. It is not necessary, therefore, to adduce proof in detail of a special providence, since the conception of it is pre-supposed in that of a general providence, which is, in truth, nothing more than an accumulation of individual facts. We might rather challenge the objector to show how, a general providence being granted, a special one can be denied, or how God, in caring for all, can do otherwise than care for each.

VII. We are told, finally, with a boldness that might seem to indicate desperation, that a divine providence is disproved by facts. "Look, for example," says the objector, "at the *Amazon*. There is a fine ship on fire at sea, with hundreds of lives in imminent peril, and heart-rending cries for deliverance; had any human being been witness of that scene with power to help, he would have rushed to the rescue, and the fact that God did not proves to a demonstration that there is at least no God that heareth prayer."

The example is well chosen, and we do not wish to ignore the fact. On the contrary, we could supply the objector with many such, and with some still more terrific. He might adduce the earthquake at Lisbon, the fire of London, and the great plague, by each of which calamities many thousand persons perished. But what is he to prove by them? If only that the ways of divine providence are sometimes awfully mysterious, or, as he may be pleased to say, unintelligible by man, this we are quite ready to admit—it is one of the doctrines of the Bible, as well as one of the facts of the universe; but if he claims these facts as proofs that there is no divine providence, we deny the conclusiveness of his argument. For what is the principle of it? It is obviously founded upon the assumption that, if there be a divine providence, it must be benign, not only universally and without exception, but in a manner always level to human comprehension. This is a large assumption, and, we may add, a baseless one. It is much more rational to admit that, if there be a divine providence, its dispensations will often be to us untraceable. Placed infinitely above us as God is, and in a position of moral government of which we are the subjects, it is to the last degree improbable that we should be able to judge of his ways. In these circumstances mystery is his necessity, his right, his wisdom—an attribute which it is not less than presumptuous to deny to him; and, whatever may be the amount of it discoverable in his ways, it is much more easily reconcilable with the fact of his administration, especially as exhibited in the great work of redemption, than the total abandonment of the world would be with the conception of his existence.

The argument of the objector, indeed, would prohibit the introduction into a system of divine providence of any painful element at all, since, under the dominion of a benevolent

being, the very existence of physical evil is a mystery. It is not the occurrence of a *great* calamity, but the occurrence of *any* calamity, that is radically unintelligible. And thus, in order to please the infidel, we must have nothing less than an impossible providence, or one which should absolutely exclude physical suffering from the world.

But enough. We accept a divine providence with all its mysteries far rather than the greater mystery of an abandoned and desolate universe. Prayer, while approving itself to the philosopher as reasonable, and appealing to the heirs of sorrow as a needful resource, is found by the Christian to be an inestimable consolation. He hears the voice of the heavenly Father, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, saying, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers until calamity be overpast;" and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he responds to it in the confiding language, "My Father, I will make my refuge under the shadow of thy wings."

ON THE
SECULAR ASPECT OF CHRISTIANITY.*

You are aware of the occasion of this discourse. We hear much at the present period of Secularism, or of a course of action strenuously devoted to the promotion of worldly interests, and we hear, also, loud complaints that Christianity stands in the way of its advancement and success. "Undermine and remove Christianity"—such is the cry—"for until it is taken out of the way the concerns of this life cannot go on as they ought." We take this occasion, then, to look into so important a matter, and to inquire calmly what the secular aspect of Christianity is.

From the urgency of the complaint against Christianity now made, it might be supposed that before its appearance the secular affairs of the world were going on to admiration, and making a progress in every way satisfactory; yet, if history be true, this was far from being the case. In about 1500 years after the creation, the earth was so "filled with violence" that "it repented" God that he had made man upon it, and, with the single exception of the family of Noah, he thought fit to destroy by a deluge the entire population of the world. Even the waters of the flood, however, did not cleanse the earth from its pollution. Under the reigning influence of universal selfishness, tyranny became again the practical habit of mankind, and such, according to the unequivocal testimony of history, both sacred and profane, it continued to be, under all forms of government, whether despotic or republican, until Christ himself appeared upon the scene. It must be admitted that, in his person, Christianity looked out upon a world the secular affairs of which (to say nothing now of its spiritual ones) were in a state eminently unsatisfactory.

* A Lecture delivered at Devonshire Square Chapel, London, February 27th, 1853.

And this, certainly, after no very brief period of the world's history. Not yet has its existence extended to six thousand years; but four thousand of these were allotted to an experimental development of human powers, and an application of providential discipline, as if in order to see what the world could do without Christianity. Nor can it be denied that the powers of man were developed in a manner sufficiently vigorous. In the antediluvian world corruption proceeded to such lengths as, not merely to annoy, but to disorganize human society, and to leave to the Supreme Ruler no course more desirable than its entire dissolution and reconstruction; while, in the postdiluvian world, the successive despotisms of Assyria and Babylon, Egypt and Persia, resolved themselves at length into the all-absorbing tyranny of iron-footed Rome. Never were greater monarchs, generals, and statesmen; never were more celebrated sculptors or architects, poets, moralists, or philosophers—the envy of modern, as the glory of ancient, times. Yet men were not happy, and society was not at ease. An element of progress and improvement was evidently wanting, which, after a trial of, perhaps, more than half the world's duration, human nature had shown itself inadequate to supply. For this, at all events, Christianity cannot be held responsible. If all have not been well since it has appeared, neither was it so before; and it cannot be less than unfair to charge on Christianity the origination of mischiefs which have too evidently issued from another fountain.

We ask with perfect readiness, however, what the aspect of Christianity on secular affairs really is. What is it adapted to do, and what has it actually done?

Two general observations must here be premised.

First: Christianity must not be made accountable for all that has been done in its name. Too notorious is it that in the name of Christianity corruptions have been fostered, and crimes have been perpetrated, a contemplation of which is enough to make the blood run cold; but no candid man will blame Christianity itself for atrocities which are so diametrically opposite to the precepts and spirit of its Founder and to the tendency of all its doctrines. Nothing can be so purely good as to be exempt from liability to abuse; and it is characteristic of all good things, that the abuse of them is pernicious in direct proportion to their excellency.

Secondly: In order to ascertain the real influence of Christianity on secular affairs, we must look, not on society at large, but at single individuals; for it is the principle on which Christianity acts to affect society only through the individuals which compose it. It neither lays down general laws, nor aims directly at general reforms; its method is to isolate every man from his species, to place him separately before God, to renovate his heart and life, and thus to constitute him a fountain of salutary influences on the world around him. It is in the individual, consequently, that its influence is directly to be traced.

Look, then, at a man as in imagination placed before us, a man of the world, a man without religion. We suppose him to become a Christian; that is to say, we suppose him to become deeply convinced of his sinfulness before God, of his awful exposure to future misery, of the inestimable value of his spiritual welfare, and of his absolute need of redeeming mercy; in addition to this, we suppose him to appreciate the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, to submit to it, and to rejoice in it, as believers in Jesus well may, "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And, with all this before us, we ask, What has religion done for him in relation to secular affairs?

It has undoubtedly wrought a great change. He is no longer the man he was. In particular, he has come to live under the prevailing influence of the unseen and the eternal, to which the seen and the temporal is now, and henceforth, decidedly subordinated. This, indeed, is the thing that is complained of. It unfits a man, it is said, for any proper attention to the business of life. We say, No. On the contrary, such a man is more fitted to conduct worldly affairs than he was before. The change is for the better, not for the worse. Let us endeavour to show this in a few particulars.

1. In the first place, religion qualifies a man for the better discharge of the duties of this life by RECTIFYING HIS ATTITUDE.

It is an excellent maxim in household affairs, "A place for everything, and everything in its place." In this great world of God's there is "a place for everything," and we never can attend to its duties so well as when we put "everything in its place." The objects to be pursued once thrown into disorder, the pursuit of them must necessarily be obstructed,

and uncomfortable. Now in the case of a worldly man this supposition is clearly realized. Things are obviously out of place with him. He has two classes of objects to pursue, the eternal and the temporal, and he gives his chief regard, not to the eternal, which deserves it, but to the temporal, which does not deserve it. He idolizes the world. He asks, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" as though he had no soul to care for, or to save. Hence his pursuit of the world is characterized by an excessive eagerness, dictated by, and corresponding with, his excessive love of it. His state of mind becomes feverish, and his activity unquiet. His desires are too intense, his aims too grasping, his expectations too large, his anticipations too impatient. Even if he is successful he is not satisfied. He has more power of loving than the world has of recompensing love. His heart is too large for the object with which he is endeavouring to fill it. It becomes corroded with care, and his very face ultimately bears unmistakable marks of blended eagerness, anxiety, and chagrin.

Not so the Christian. Having set his supreme affection on things that are above, he has only those of secondary power for things that are on the earth; but these are exactly such as earthly objects are entitled to demand, and fitted to gratify. He estimates them at what they are worth, but not at more than they are worth; and he accordingly directs towards them only a proportionate energy, and expects from them only a corresponding result. His heart is cheerful in his toil, and his expectation will not be disappointed.

It is alleged, indeed, that another world engrosses too much of a Christian's heart to leave him any due regard for this, and cases of a morbid and enthusiastic nature have been cited in support of the allegation. It is not needful for us to deal with these cases, which are clearly exceptions to the general rule. It is enough to say, that Christianity requires its disciples to be no less diligent in business than fervent in spirit, and that, generally speaking, Christians are as industrious as other men. It is not in the nature of genuine heavenly-mindedness to produce neglect of earthly duties; on the contrary, the Christian sees in them the sphere in which the God whom he loves is to be glorified. Nor does the fact differ from the doctrine. There are in the world slothful men, and men negligent of the duties of life, but no

one can say with justice that these are distinctively Christians; by a subordinated worldly affection they have only learnt to regulate their toil by a juster standard, and to pursue it in a serener spirit.

2. In the second place, religion qualifies a man for a better discharge of the duties of this life BY INCREASING HIS FITNESS FOR THEM.

It must be immediately manifest to every observer of human life, that its duties are often neglected, or very badly discharged, through the culpable incompetence of the parties concerned. One is idle, another is careless, a third is dishonest; and through endless forms might this vicious inadequacy be traced. Now this, and all this, Christianity has at once a tendency and a power to correct. A mere glance at its precepts is sufficient to show that every form of social criminality is prohibited and rebuked by it. Let the reader take a single example: "Putting away lying, let every man speak truth with his neighbour. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him work the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians iv. 25, 28). And with the Christian indeed these precepts are not fruitless. His heart being set right with God, his law is written there, and all the motives of piety enforce obedience to it. There is no credit whatever to be given to any man's profession of religion in whom corresponding conduct does not appear. Christianity goes, indeed, among the vilest as well as the most respectable of men, but it is not ashamed of its conquests. The drunkard made sober, the thief made honest, the sensual made chaste, the spendthrift made frugal, and the idle made industrious—these are its trophies, and it has no need to be ashamed. Its highest honours are rendered to it by the faithfulness, integrity, and veracity, of its adherents; and the power that makes them such has surely no unfriendly aspect on the affairs of this world.

Scarcely less important in the present world than integrity, is benevolence; for it is a world of want and sorrow, and human nature, in its universal agony, is crying out on every hand for kindness and for aid. But, alas! the world is as selfish as it is sorrowful; and, even if there be any ground on which benevolence is recommended, it is on this pitiful philosophy that to help your neighbour is the best way to take care of yourselves—benevolence being, according to

Secularism, but "an enlightened system of self-defence." Not so cold and chilling is the aspect of Christianity. It strikes the first blow that has ever been struck—and mankind have reason to rejoice that it is an effectual one—against the selfishness of the human heart. The golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" (Matthew vii. 12), is its exclusive glory. Melting man's hard heart to love, it opens his breast also to sympathy, and makes him at once a living representative, and a willing instrument, of the divine benignity. A Christian is ready to "weep with those that weep," as well as to "rejoice with those that rejoice," and, as he has opportunity, to "do good unto all men" (Galatians vi. 10). His benevolence is not self-defence, but self-sacrifice; a kind of benevolence, surely, of the two the better adapted, in the breadth of its aim and the tenderness of its spirit, to the aspect and necessities of the world.

3. In the third place, religion qualifies a man for the better discharge of the duties of life BY ELEVATING HIS MOTIVES.

Apart from religion, what is the end of human life? We should ask rather, what are its *ends*; for there is no one end to which it is directed. Man's heart and energies are broken up among a thousand objects, and frittered away in the pursuit of them. Pleasure, wealth, honour, are the divinities which in some form he worships; a worship by which the votary is at once degraded, and rent in pieces. None of them is worthy of the entire consecration of man, and none of them pretends to satisfy all his desires.

Far different is the position of the Christian. Most unjustly, indeed, has it been said that his great object in life is to save his soul; on the contrary, he would have had a great object in life if he had never needed salvation. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him; that he needs salvation is but an incident arising from his disobedience, and his attainment of salvation does but restore him to a position in which the primary end of his being may be resumed and secured. Nor are the exercises by which God is to be glorified exclusively of a spiritual, or devotional, nature. No claim is made upon a Christian to retire into a cloister, or to be always upon his knees. His post is still in the family and the world, where he is to sustain his old

relations, and to fill up his former place, only under a new rule—"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians x. 31). He has thus at once a higher aim than ever could be taken by a man of the world, and lives for an end incomparably more noble.

The Christian sees everywhere around him, not only the actual relations and conditions of society, but in them divine institutions. He feels himself to be in the place which God has appointed for him, and in the duties of his situation he discerns what God has given him to do. Whether he be a master or a servant, a parent or a child, in the manufactory or the field, "the will of God" is before him, and, in the cheerful and diligent accomplishment of his various labours he is "doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians vi. 6). Or, if he is permitted to perform acts of benevolence, and to soothe the sorrowful by manifestations of sympathy, he acts as a minister of divine compassion, and an almoner of heaven.

What a meaning and soul is thrown into human life by such considerations as these! Verily, it becomes a thing altogether new, and as noble as it is new. The least of its activities is made great, and the meanest is dignified. The aim and scope of it is the highest that the mind of man can embrace. In spirit and motive it is identical with angelic life, and it goes far towards making earth resemble heaven.

It need hardly be said how powerfully such a class of motives must assist in the faithful discharge of the duties of life. We all know how monotonous many of them become by incessant repetition, and how often industry, when not urged by immediate want, languishes through disgust. What can supply an impulse ever delicious, ever new? Religion, and religion only; which gives to life in all its aspects—alike to the responsible movements of Cabinets, to the humble diligence of the Household, and to the unnoticed patience of the Poor-house—an aim and end for which, and for which alone, it is worth while to live.

4. In the fourth place, religion qualifies a man for the better discharge of the duties of life BY PROVIDING A RESOURCE IN TRIAL.

It is too obvious to need remark, that, however competent man may be to labour, he is not able to command success. There is evidently some hand disposing human affairs besides

the busy hands of men themselves, and this with a supremacy of power which none can resist. The high places of society are few, and not all mankind can be placed on them; the great majority occupy the lower ground, and many find their abode deep in the vale of poverty and sorrow. In such a world as this, consequently, man's heart finds many causes of irritation. The poor look up with envy to the rich, and the rich sit uneasily at the feet of the honourable; those whose schemes are thwarted are chagrined at the success of the more fortunate, and it may be hard to say whether there is in the world more joy in good attained, or vexation at disappointed hope.

Amidst such incessant and multiform trials for which the world has no balm, it is a great thing to say of any element that it provides a suitable and adequate resource. Yet this can be truly said of Christianity.

"The wisdom that is from above" breathes forth to us the kindly counsel, "Be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews xiii. 5); and it supplies abundant reasons for the temper it enjoins. It teaches us that our positions in this world are ordered, not only by a supreme, but by a paternal, hand, that all are compatible with the enjoyment of real happiness and the attainment of the great ends of life, and that in none shall be wanting the aids and consolations which can make even the most painful of them blest. "Why, then," it is for the Christian to say, "should I repine that I am born in a condition of poverty from which I cannot escape, or that I form schemes of advancement only to be laid in the dust? Were a different condition better for me, would it not be mine? Shall I not here be glorifying my Father which is in heaven in his own way? And will he be wanting to me in the grace that shall strengthen me to do all his will?" Ah! what a profitable secular wisdom is this! This which enables a man to see around him rank, riches, and prosperity in a thousand forms, without envy, and to say with a moral heroism, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content" (Philippians iv. 11).

The world presents not only many provocations to discontent, but many trials of patience. When health is demanded by calls to exertion, then comes sickness, and the strong man who would fain be in arduous toil is laid helpless on the bed of pain; when well-planned schemes should be in effective

operation, then comes negligence or treachery, and the criminality of one frustrates the combined wisdom and energy of many; or, when human agencies have all been perfect, then the lightning kindles a fire, or the atmosphere generates a blast, or the clouds give birth to a flood, by which all that man has done, or can do, is consumed or swept away. How does poor human nature appear amidst such scenes as these? Wrecked, like the fortune amidst the wreck of which it stands. Perhaps excited to helpless anger and petulant repining; as if saying, "What have I done to be visited with such a dispensation as this? Or why is this to me more than to another?" Perhaps overwhelmed with sorrow, like a lost vessel engulfed in the waves which the tempest has raised around it, and breathing forth only the sigh of despair, "I have lost my all." O! be assured of it, the idolatry of this world gives a terrible pungency and weight to its calamities, beneath which the sufferer may with a literal justice adopt the exclamation, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" (Judges xviii. 24.)

Far otherwise is it with the Christian. Not by his religion rendered callous, or less sensible than other men, to the sorrows of life, he is yet enabled to bear them in a very different spirit. Having laid up for himself a treasure in heaven, in bags which wax not old, and where thieves do not break through nor steal, it is comparatively unimportant to him what becomes of his possessions on earth, they bear so infinitely small a proportion in value to his safe and celestial store. Were he bereft of all, his God, his heaven, remains, and he is rich and happy still. He knows, too, that none of these afflictions come by chance, that they are permitted by the Sovereign Ruler for important ends, and that they can, and shall, be overruled for good. Indeed, they do him good now, as medicine to the sick, and as discipline to those in course of education. They teach him more of himself, they bring him nearer to God, they exercise him to patience and trust, they make him lean with his whole weight on the "great and precious" promises. And they prepare good for the future, even a brilliant felicity for the production of which, assuredly, "all things work together." Under the influence of such considerations as these, it is not in vain that it is said to him, "In your patience possess your soul" (Luke xxi. 19); and it is not without a blessed experience of the truth of the promise

that he carries out the precept—"Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart through Christ Jesus" (Philippians iv. 6, 7).

In one word, the character and state of the worldling and the Christian may be thus exhibited in contrast. The temper of the worldling is positivity and desperation; he will be prosperous, or he will be angry, and, perhaps, throw away his life by a rash and criminal act of suicide: the temper of the Christian is submission and resignation; he is willing to take the cup which his heavenly Father puts into his hand, and he says with a truly enviable serenity, "Not my will, but thine be done." Which, now, of these is the better prepared for secular duty?

5. In the fifth place, religion qualifies a man for the better discharge of the duties of life BY PREPARING HIM TO QUIT IT.

It is a fact of universal bearing that this life must be quitted as well as entered on. Pleasurable as it is, it cannot last for ever. At the longest it is but short, and our hold of it is not secure, even for an hour. The noiseless and stealthy footstep of death enters alike the cottage and the palace, the counting-house and the exchange. Princes, merchants, tradesmen, peasants, render equal homage to this awful conqueror. By a stroke as sudden as that of a sword, or by a process so lingering that its daily advance shall be scarcely perceptible; to the man of grey hairs or to the blooming youth, in the crowd of busy activities or amidst the cherished sweets of retirement, still he comes: and, when he comes, his summons is urgent and irresistible. Who then is best prepared to live, but he who is also best prepared to die?

It is the notorious habit of worldly men to "put far away the evil day," and, if they are resolved to be worldly, this course is not without some practical sagacity; for there is, in truth, no way of bringing the habitual, or frequent, remembrance of death into harmony with worldly pursuits. It haunts men like a spectre, and thwarts them as by a perpetual contradiction. They must forget it, or they cannot go on with their business. Hence a cherished, laborious, and universal, thoughtlessness; and it is amidst this elaborate thoughtlessness that the forgotten enemy really comes, with an approach only made by it a thousand times more terrible.

How different is the condition of the Christian! Death

is to him no object of dread, because it is an event for which he is happily prepared. At peace with God and with a home in heaven, with his best friends already there, and anticipating there the consummation of his highest joys, why should he fear to die? Not without a full appreciation of all that may be enjoyed on earth, what awaits him beyond the grave is so much more attractive, that he is led rather to say, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Jesus." And thus divested of its terror, the remembrance of death is capable of mingling with the affairs of life without disturbing them. It sheds over them, indeed, a sobering influence, but no more. It teaches a Christian to live as a dying man, and to have his affairs always in a condition in which he would wish to leave them; and so it is best that dying men should live. For the rest, it is rather heaven than death that engages his attention. He is like a man of two spheres, employed at present near the portal that connects the one with the other, but glad at any moment to hear the summons, "Come up hither." Say, now, whether of these two is the better prepared to act his part in a dying world.

By these simple and obvious illustrations have we endeavoured to make it appear that, so far from unfitting a man for this world, religion, in its genuine tendency and influence, qualifies a man for the better discharge of its duties; it rectifies his attitude, it increases his fitness, it elevates his motives, it provides a resource for trial, and it prepares him to die. Such, dear reader, is the secular aspect of Christianity.

If you deem it a drawback on this representation, that Christianity occasionally exposes its sincere and steadfast professors to trials of its own, that it sometimes involves the loss of employment, of reputation, of property, of liberty, or even of life itself, I need only remind you that this is not to be set down to the fault of Christianity, so much as to the malice of the world. It had been impossible to devise any holy and worthy religion that the world would have loved, and its hatred to Christianity is only a reluctant testimony to its honour. This is a kind of hostility which it is noble to bear, especially when we bear it in company with the Immaculate One who came down from heaven. And the suffering which is incidental to the position of Christians in this world the Author of their hope will amply compensate in that which is to come. Glorious recompenses are provided there,

and the Captain of our salvation addresses all his followers in the animating terms, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation ii. 10).

If you deem it a further drawback on the representation we have made of the secular aspect of Christianity, that it prescribes rules of duty more strict than you are prepared to obey, that it withholds you from courses of profligate pleasure, and enjoins a cordial respect for social rights, to this we can only say that Christianity will not attempt to excuse itself from such censures. It will abundantly help the doing in this world of all that is proper to be done, but it will go no further. It will not lend itself to the corrupt passions of men. For this Christianity wears no blush. Its purity is at once its glory, and its necessity; an attribute without which it could have neither any claim to the reverence of mankind, nor any adaptation to render them happy. If for this cause it forfeits your favour, you must take your own course; only remember for how base a reason it is that you have rejected its guidance.

We now proceed to observe that, while Christianity in the first instance benefits individuals, through them it benefits society at large. And this in two ways; first, in the persons of its disciples as constituent elements of society, and, secondly, by their influence on those around them. To this, indeed, it may be added, that the wide diffusion of scriptural truth has tended to elevate the prevailing level of knowledge and opinion, even far beyond the limits of "pure and undefiled religion." That Christianity has thus, directly and indirectly, done much for the world, is a conclusion, flippantly denied, indeed, by some persons, but not to be questioned by any who have a competent acquaintance with the history and progress of mankind. That Christianity has not wholly rectified the evils of human society, may well be accounted for by the partiality of its prevalence; that it has not made all its genuine disciples everything that they ought to be, results but too clearly from the imperfection of its influence; and that it has not done all that in some quarters has been demanded of it, may have arisen not unnaturally from the extravagance of the expectations entertained; I put it to Secularists themselves, however, whether they are not in candour constrained to recognize in Christianity a social element of a salutary tendency, and whether they have any chance of seeing the world in a better condition than that

which it would exhibit if a pure and genuine Christianity were universally to prevail.

Let me now, dear reader, reason with you as an individual, and alone. As one placed in this world, you are naturally and justly desirous of fulfilling its duties in the best manner, and of pursuing its interests to the greatest advantage. Be assured that "godliness is profitable for all things," and that Christianity is the true Secularism. Be not deluded by those who profess for you a special sympathy, and who tell you that it is only in the neglect of religion you can do well in this world. The divine Author of Christianity has far more real sympathy with you than these forward and flattering friends, and Christianity itself will do you much more good than their counsel. May God grant you grace to follow its dictates! If you want to be a wise, a respectable, a happy, a useful man, be a Christian.

Remember, however, that Christianity yields its full benefit for this world only on condition of guiding you also to the next. Its benign aspect rests alike on both, and it links them together in an indissoluble bond. It will not lead you to heaven without blessing you on earth, but neither will it bless you on earth without leading you to heaven. You need forgiveness of sins and peace with God; you need a justifying righteousness and a sanctified heart; you need a title to heaven and a preparation for its enjoyment. Accept these at the hands of Christianity on the terms on which they are presented to you, and all the secular benefits which Christianity can confer shall follow in their train. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of them" (1 Timothy i. 15). "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace" (Job xxii. 21). And say not that you have no time. I know that you must be busy in this world, but a single moment will secure your interest in the next. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "All things are ready" (Matthew xxii. 4), why should you delay? O! come at once to that gracious and almighty Saviour, whose arms are stretched out as in ardent welcome while he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew xi. 28).

ON SOCIAL INEQUALITIES.*

THE fact which we are this evening to consider lies broadly before us. Like the surface of the globe we inhabit, the condition of mankind presents many and great inequalities. Some are in possession of domestic or forensic authority, others are subjected to its exercise ; some are embarked in large commercial enterprises, others are confined to the loom or the ledger ; some are rolling in wealth and nursed in the lap of luxury, others are pinched with poverty and acquainted with the cravings of unsatisfied hunger. Not only are these diversities shaded off into innumerable degrees, but they ultimately reach extreme points. We gaze on the successive elevations of the rich and the noble, till we see their widening estates and augmenting splendour culminate in regal domains and the pomp of palaces ; while, taking an opposite view, we behold physical want and suffering descending through many gradations, till, in some cases, they reach an extremity which would scarcely have been deemed within human endurance. Nor are the diversities we are noticing confined to one aspect of society, or to one portion of the globe ; on the contrary, there is no respect in which society exhibits an unvarying surface, and there is no region where an exemption prevails from the universal law. Whether among nations civilized or savage, whether in combination with the amplest or the most meagre developments of science or of art, whether under aspects of nature more benignant or more stern, and whether under forms of government more despotic or more free, the condition of mankind is everywhere, and in every respect, the opposite of uniform. I said that herein it resembled the surface of the earth, but the comparison is not sufficiently strong, for the earth has occasionally its vast prairies and its vaster deserts—showing at

* A Lecture delivered at Devonshire Square Chapel, London, April 3rd, 1853.

one time a great extent of level fertility, and at another a yet greater extent of level barrenness—by which its snowy peaks and its noxious swamps are separated from one another; but the diversities of human society are as numerous as the individuals which compose it. In it there is no uniformity even in classes, but each man stands alone. If some occupy the glittering mountain tops, and others lie hidden in the obscurest dells, the region between them has rather the capricious irregularity of the surface of a glacier, on which whimsical and momentary forms seem frozen into perpetual crystal, than the gentle undulations of a landscape formed at once for beauty and for fruitfulness.

There can be no hesitation in admitting that the inequality of human condition, which as a fact is so palpably before us, is to a great extent an unsatisfactory and painful fact. Diversity, indeed, might be very well, and would doubtless be much more pleasing than uniformity, if all and each were in a condition of sufficient well-doing; but, even making a large allowance for the characteristic restlessness and discontent of mankind, this can by no means be affirmed. If many of those who are eager to better themselves have little to complain of, and are entitled to little compassion, there are also many to be found in a condition deeply painful to a benevolent mind. The really necessitous and destitute, unhappily, are by no means few; and it were a hard-hearted philosophy which should take any such view of the inequalities of human condition as would blind the eye to the existence of bitter sorrow, or close the bosom to an unfeigned and tender sympathy with it.

Most sincerely disavowing for myself all such stoicism, I am ready to admit further, that the spectacle presented to us by the condition of mankind is not only a painful, but a suggestive one. As if it were a group of interrogations, it asks many questions, or at least sets a thoughtful observer on asking them. Where there is want and distress in so many forms, it is clearly natural, if not imperative, to inquire, Are all these things as they should be? Do they result in any measure from the faulty arrangements of human society? And can anything be done to relieve or to amend them? I am aware that these questions have often been asked; I hope to be believed when I say that they are not total strangers to my own breast; and I will proceed now to the entertain-

ment and consideration of them with no reluctant or uncan- did mind.

Taking this practical view of the matter, it will be necessary for us, in the first place, to reduce the subject we are to handle within its proper limits. It must be clear that we cannot be concerned with *all* the inequalities of human condition, inasmuch as at least a considerable portion of them do not arise from human agency, and are not within reach of human remedy. Floods, tempests, and snow storms, are recent and familiar exemplifications of a class of agencies causing diversities in the condition of mankind for which no man is blamable, and which no man can cure; they are, however, mere exemplifications, and lead our thoughts to a great variety of sources of human ill the responsibility of which attaches exclusively to a higher power, and with that power we must leave them. It is not here, at least, that the Supreme Disposer of events will be spoken of in terms of challenge, or rebuke.

Besides those inequalities of human condition which originate in the divine will, there are not a few which are in such manner referable to mankind themselves that responsibility for them attaches, not to society at large, but exclusively to the individual. Idleness, intemperance, and sensuality, are sources of suffering which foolish men open for themselves, and the outflow of which no social arrangements, however wise or benign, can prevent; nor, until there is some way of cultivating with certain efficacy universal virtue, can there be any approach to even that partial equality of condition of which moral uniformity might, perhaps, be the parent.

By these two considerations the magnitude of the subject in our hands is materially diminished, and it becomes somewhat more manageable. There remain now such inequalities of human condition as social arrangements occasion, and as social arrangements may modify; or, in other words, the unequal distribution of wealth, either in itself, or in the thousand forms of physical comfort into which it is convertible.

Now it may be thought, perhaps, that I am going to say that these inequalities of human condition are ordinations of divine providence, and that rich and poor are of God's appointment. I am not, however, going to say any such thing. Far shall my lips be from throwing upon the bountiful and universal Benefactor what is justly resolvable into the

faults or follies of men—into oppression, cunning, or selfishness. To those who suffer, indeed, it may be a fitting and invaluable consolation to look up to a benign, though mysterious, providence, by which social evils are borne with and shall be overruled; but never can those outstretched wings, which afford so sweet a shelter to the children of sorrow, be allowed to constitute a refuge for social wrong, or a hindrance to social improvement.

No. I frankly admit that there is much in the arrangements of society which is defective, ill-advised, and inequitable—much that is capable of improvement, and demands it; and I call as loudly for “equitable legislation” in this matter as any Secularist or Socialist. But what is equitable legislation? Here is the great question. What is to be the scope and aim of any contemplated change, and what the methods by which it is to be promoted?

Here, I have said, is the great question, and here, I may add, is the cause of difference. For we are not long without a distinct and loudly-pronounced answer to the question proposed. We have a principle broadly laid down, that “the inequalities of this world ought to be rectified in this world;” and it is declared to be the aim of practical Secularism to effect this object, or to equalize the condition of mankind. The equal distribution of wealth and its representatives throughout the community is thus demanded as a social right. There is a fundamental obligation, we are to learn, resting upon society, to make all persons share and share alike the good things which are to be enjoyed.

In proceeding to consider the question thus raised, I cannot but feel that it is one of an exciting kind, and that it touches the feelings, both of the rich and the poor, almost too strongly to allow of a very calm argumentation; I shall try, however, to keep my own feelings quiet, not only in order that I may reason clearly, but in order, also, that the feelings of my auditory may be kept quiet likewise. And to do the better justice to the argument, I shall enter first on its least exciting aspect, and look at it as a matter of theory.

The proposition before us is, that society is under an obligation to make among the community an equal division of wealth and its representatives.

This implies, of course, that society has a right to do so; and the first question to be asked is, Can this claim of right be established?

I am not going to deny that society has, to some extent, a right over the property of the community. The admission of such a right, so far as the external or internal safety or the essential wellbeing of the community may require its exercise, is a matter of necessity. We could otherwise have neither magistracy nor police. But is the right of society over the property of the community absolute, and without limit—for any purpose, and to any amount?

As a general rule, it may be admitted that society has an absolute right over its own creations, as over all corporations or endowments; and I would frankly say over property too, if that also were a creation of society. But it is not so. Property is a personal fact, which society finds antecedently, and therefore independently, existing; a fact which it accepts, incorporates, and, if just, guarantees, subject to the exigencies of its own existence. For example. Society is constituted, not by a number of persons having nothing combining together for mutual defence and other social purposes, and then creating the right of private property as a social institution; but by a number of persons some, or perhaps all, of whom have something (more or less as the case may be), and who combine, not only for social purposes generally, but for the protection of that property in particular, subject as before to manifest social exigencies. It appears to me, therefore, from the nature of the case, that society cannot rightfully interfere with private property beyond the limit prescribed by its own wants, and that to make any attempt of this kind would be to undermine the very foundation of society itself, and to risk the overthrow of the whole fabric.

There being no absolute right over the property of the community inherent in the frame of society, the question before us comes in the next place to assume this form:—Is the equal division of wealth and its representatives an object of such primary moment to the wellbeing of the community, that society would be justified in attempting to enforce it—as in imposing war taxes, or a police rate? This question introduces us at once into a group of topics, of which I shall endeavour to dispose in their order.

In the outset, I readily admit the painfulness of the distance between the very rich and the very poor, I acknowledge the unsatisfactory state of the relations between capital and labour, and I confess the occasional heart-rending opera-

tion of the law of competition. No one, by any recital of cases, could make me feel more strongly than I do on these points. The question, however, is, not whether this state of things is bad and deserving of a remedy, but whether it is such an evil as to demand the somewhat violent remedy proposed. And in this is comprehended another question, namely, whether the measure proposed would be found to supply a remedy for the evil at all. I take up the second question as involving the first, and shall show my reasons for answering it in the negative.

1. To say nothing about the extreme difficulty—I might rather say, the utter impossibility—of effecting such a distribution, but, for argument's sake, to assume its practicability, and to take for granted its actual effectuation, I submit that no considerable or general good would be produced by it. It is quite true that cases of physical destitution and actual poverty would be temporarily relieved, and I am willing to take this at its full worth; but society at large would be little benefited, if at all. Wealth and the comforts it can purchase constitute but a small part of the elements, either of personal happiness, or of social wellbeing. Habit, culture, and, above all, moral character, have their bearing too, and a bearing far more important and influential. Upon the same principle that a sudden fortune is acknowledged to be the greatest trial, if not probably the greatest calamity, that can happen to a poor man, the possession of money beyond the aptitude and the wisdom to make a good use of it would be universally an evil rather than a benefit. Of what real value could comparative wealth be to a man who, it is plain from his present habits, would take advantage of it only for the indulgence of sensuality and intemperance? Other things being left as they are, the universal diffusion of opulence could produce little besides a multitude of wretched incongruities, from which the wiser part of the poor themselves might be very glad to escape, and in which assuredly society at large would have no reason to rejoice.

2. It may be observed further, that, if an equality of condition in respect of wealth and its representatives were at any time effected, it could not be maintained. An infinite number of causes would immediately operate to disturb the level. One man would exercise greater skill, another greater diligence, another greater frugality, while the faults antago-

nistic to these would operate in a contrary direction ; and thus an equality effected to-day would be broken up to-morrow, and all things would rapidly return to their former condition. In the free development of human nature such a result is obviously inevitable ; and it follows as a corollary from these premises, that no artificial equalization of human condition could have more than a momentary success. The attempt may be compared to the damming up of a river by an embankment, a case in which an obstacle is raised by art to the course of nature, but an obstacle soon to be carried away by the triumphant return of the waters to their customary channel.

3. To this it may be added, that the equal distribution of wealth would infallibly paralyze industry. It is vain to suppose that human industry exists without a stimulus, or that it could continue to exist after its appropriate stimulus should be destroyed. Now the stimulus to industry found to exist among the working elements of human society is twofold ; on the one hand is necessity, on the other is reward. The former is that which makes the poor man laborious, the latter is that which makes the rich man enterprising. But equalize now, by giving share and share alike to rich and poor, the distribution of the wealth thus created, and what is the result ? You take away from the rich the fruit of his enterprise, and from the poor the necessity of his toil, thus destroying the motives of both. The poor man says, I need not work, and the rich man says, I will not speculate ; and thus the whole social machinery is broken up, and productive action comes to a dead stop. There is clearly no remedy for this issue, since compulsion cannot be used on either side. The motives providentially adapted to produce the respective results being superseded, there are no others to come in their room.

4. And once more, the equal distribution of wealth would not only annihilate the motives, but it would also destroy the sinews, of industry. All the great operations of social industry require a large outlay of money, and are practicable only because some persons are very rich. If the whole community had consisted of persons of equal, that is of very moderate, property, such extensive concerns as those which constitute the great mass of the manufacturing and commercial activity of this and other countries could never have

been established, or, having been established, could not have been maintained. If in a system of industrial operations labour is as necessary as capital, so in return it may be asserted that capital is not less necessary than labour. To break up the latter into small portions would be to unfit it for one of its great purposes, and might be compared to a process of reducing to useless fragments the massive stones prepared for the erection of a magnificent building. Were a large employer to distribute his capital equally among his hands and himself, all might soon go a-begging together.

For the reasons thus briefly stated, I cannot hesitate to come to the conclusion, that the advantages attending the distribution of the wealth of a community in equal shares among its members, are not such as to supply to any intelligent legislature grounds for recommending it. It would evidently be, on the contrary, a piece of destructive folly akin to madness.

I now turn to the consideration of an argument of another kind, by which an equal distribution of wealth has been pleaded for, I mean that of moral right. The producers of wealth, it is affirmed, are all so mixed up in a common toil that they have a common interest, and that whatever is gained *ought* to be equally divided among the whole. This argument is so strongly put in a letter with which I have been favoured on the subject under the signature of "A Working Man," as to lead to the assertion that our "laws respecting money, land, and exchange," perpetrate "a robbery" of the poor on behalf of the rich.

I am not eager to object to the use of the somewhat strong and exciting term "robbery." On the contrary, I am ready to admit that laws affecting property *may be* so palpably unjust as to deserve the application of it; but whether the laws which among us secure to proprietors of estates the right to dispose of them, and to possessors of capital the profits of its employment, are thus unjust, is a different question, and one which requires to be calmly considered.

I confess that I can scarcely see how a system of community of goods can be said to be of moral obligation. Even if it were to be admitted that the recognized rights of society are of moral obligation, this would not carry the proposition in question, because, as I have already shown, such a disposal of the property of the community is not among the rights of

society. If, therefore, it be of moral obligation, this must arise from something in the nature of the case itself. We have consequently the question in this form:—Were there no law, *ought* persons who have property to throw it universally into a common fund, out of which all should take equal shares? I will notice the reasons assigned for an affirmative answer to this question, so far as I am acquainted with them.

I advert, first, to one which I have already cursorily named, and which may be said to belong to the department of political economy—namely, that in society all classes are so mingled together that all have a common interest; and that, consequently, each has a right to an equal share of the aggregate wealth. I do not see, however, how this can be shown to arise out of the nature of human society. That all classes are so mingled together as to have a common interest is quite true, and that all have a right to an equal share of whatever benefits it is the object of society to secure; but we must clearly stop here. Now among the recognized objects of society is the protection of person and property, which will serve as an example sufficiently illustrative for my present purpose; and I say accordingly, let every man, rich and poor alike, have equal treatment at the hands of the police, the magistrates, and the law. The production of wealth, however, is not one of the objects of society, but an object of individual effort exclusively; and it is hard to see why the fruits of this effort should not be assigned individually also.

My correspondent already referred to lays it down as a principle that “wealth is the produce of labour,” and he would hence infer the obligation of an equal distribution of it among its producers. I submit, however, that his basis is too narrow. Wealth is not the produce of *labour alone*, but of labour and capital conjointly; and the man who finds the capital, although he may do nothing else, is clearly entitled to a share of the profits. It may be said that he has too large a share, and I say at once that I think he has. It is a sad and sorrowful spectacle to see the wide, wide, difference between the wealthy manufacturer, for example, and the pale faces by whose daily toil his ample gains are won; and I should rejoice to see the relations between capital and labour on a considerably different footing. It is not for me to enter minutely into commercial affairs; but I think—and

my opinion to this effect is already before the public*—that capitalists who employ labour might with great wisdom, propriety, and rectitude, divide among their hands annually, in addition to wages, a proportion of their profits. I think they ought to do so, and that it is a matter of moral, though I cannot see my way to make it a matter of legal, obligation. This, however, is very far from a compulsory equal division of the aggregate wealth of the community. That, so far from a moral right, I cannot but clearly see to be a moral wrong; since it would involve an equal division of wealth among those who certainly have *not* equally contributed to it, and would do an injustice to the skilled and industrious artisan scarcely less than to the capitalist and the employer.

My correspondent refers me with great confidence to the Bible, and the instructions of Jesus Christ. Now I submit at once to the authority he adduces, only let the tenor of the Master's instructions be correctly understood. "Jesus Christ," says he, "taught the working classes the doctrines of liberty in right, equality in law, and fraternity in interest. The sublimest feature in Christ's character was his noble daring, in a corrupt age and for the first time, to teach the equality of men in the sight of God. This was deemed crime; and, when he proclaimed the golden precept, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' those who lived by demanding the fruits of their neighbour's industry became alarmed for their spoil."

So far "A Working Man," for whose warmth of expression I make ready allowance, and address myself to his argument. That Christ taught "the equality of men in the sight of God" is doubtless true; but is it clearly deducible from this that he meant they should share equally the good things of this world? Whether to allow that Christ taught "the doctrines of liberty in right, equality in law, and fraternity in interest," I scarcely know, since I do not fully understand the terms of this effort to engraft upon his teaching a political phrase of modern times not very congruous with it; but, if he did, it seems to me to lay but a slender foundation for the doctrine of a community of goods—a system to which, so far as I know, the actual brothers of mankind have by no means generally submitted. The

* See vol. iv., pp. 487 seq.

“golden precept” I accept as the undoubted rule, and one of the ethical glories, of Christianity; but what does it inculcate? A social intercommunity of goods? I think not. It enjoins me individually to do to another what, if I were in his place and he in mine, I should wish—considerately and fairly wish—him to do to me. I will suppose, then, that I am rich and you are poor. If we were to change places, I to become poor and you rich, what should I considerately and fairly wish you to do to me? Should I wish you to give me the whole or the half of your property? Should I think you *ought* to do it?—for that is the point. If I should, then here is clearly a suggestion and a guide as to my own duty, but no more. In all probability, however, I should not think any such thing, and my largest wishes might be satisfied on much easier terms; in which case I get a different rule for my own guidance. Even to individuals, therefore, the “golden precept” prescribes nothing definite. It merely makes a man’s cupidity the corrective of his selfishness, and summons his self-love to interpret the rule of his duty to his neighbour. And, as here is no definite law for the individual, still less is there one for society.

“Do you know, Mr. Hinton,” says my valued correspondent further, “why Christ told the young man to sell all that he had, and give it to the poor? It was because Christ knew that a *young* man had not had time to accumulate his riches by honest industry. What you would call the young man’s own property Christ knew was spoil bequeathed him, and it was only strict justice that that spoil should be returned to its original owners, the poor, from whom it had been stolen.”

I must do my friend the justice to say that I am indebted to his originality for this criticism, which is entirely new to me, as it probably is to most of my auditory. Under the guidance of other commentators, I had been accustomed to think that Christ’s direction to the young man was designed to detect the worldly love of which he was unconscious; but I now learn that it was Christ’s intention to intimate, that what he held as property he held by robbery and wrong. Why? Because it was “bequeathed” to him. Is then every bequest a robbery? So in the opinion of this writer it would seem to be, and no man, according to him, has a moral right, either to bequeath property or to accept a bequest. This, certainly, is at once new gospel and new law; on which, how-

ever, I shall make no further remark than this, that I entertain grave doubts whether Jesus Christ can be made responsible for either.

It may be said, however, "But do you not know, and will you not admit, that the doctrine of Christ favoured the poor, and that he pronounced a benediction upon them?" Undoubtedly; but the benignity of Christ's aspect towards the poor related not so much to the treasures of this world, as to those of that which is to come. These, if I recollect rightly, were his words: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20).

Had it been the design of divine providence that a social equality should prevail among men, there was once an opportunity when explicit and ample provision might have been made for this purpose. The Hebrew nation came into being under immediate divine superintendence, and its lawgiver drew his statutes from heaven. "Remember the law of the jubilee!" my Socialist friends may exclaim. It is the very thing I am thinking of. The land having been divided to the Israelites in common, once in fifty years such alienations as might have occurred were to be restored. It is to be observed, however, that this process of equalization rested on the basis of an original allotment, that the institution of it implied the inevitable operation of causes tending to disturbance, that it was to take place at long intervals, implying repeated and continued disturbance, and, finally, that it had no reference to any other kind of property than land. There is neither precept nor pattern, consequently, for the great scheme of Secularism in the Hebrew polity.

Under the New Testament we do find a period when the disciples of Christ had all things in common, and when, by a sale of estates, a fund was created out of which distribution was made to every man according as he had need. It is clear, however, first, that this state of things was confined to the church, and never extended to society at large; and, secondly, that it arose out of the temporary pressure incidental to the organization of Christianity, and was allowed to disappear when the urgency was past. The New Testament, consequently, is in this respect as barren as the Old.

The Bible, in one word, neither enters into speculations as to the theory of property, nor defines its rights; it everywhere accepts property as it finds it, and inculcates and

enforces in the tenure and use of it a union of strict integrity with enlarged benevolence. Beyond this the Bible cannot be made to go, and the advocates of Secularism know that it cannot. It is for this reason, doubtless, that its great apostle denounces the Bible as "the ruin of progress," and that strenuous efforts are made by the party to remove Christianity out of the way. I cannot say that I wish them success; but I can sincerely say that I wish them a wiser and a more practicable object. Why, indeed, even for their own ends, should they wish Christianity abolished, when it is clear that it presents the only chance they have of seeing any approximation to success? That the nation, as a nation of worldly idolators, and selfish, irreligious men, will ever consent to legislative measures enacting and enforcing an equal distribution of wealth, is utterly inconceivable. If there is any possibility whatever that a willing approach may be made towards equalizing human conditions, it lies in the diffusion of pure and undefiled Christianity. The strict rectitude of its principles, and the disinterested expansiveness of its benevolence, are the only powers that can effectually contend with the selfishness of the human heart, and correct the mischiefs of oppressive legislation. To help on social reforms Secularists should first become Christians, and then endeavour to make all others such.

Why, then, it may be asked, has not Christianity done more? I answer, Because its influence is so limited and so imperfect; because, among a multitude of nominal Christians, so few are Christians indeed; and because those who are Christians indeed are far from being what they ought to be.

Hear me, Christian brethren! O be not forgetful of the expectations which your profession warrants, and the fulfilment of which the honour of your Lord demands! As men of business, as possessors of property, as employers of labour, it is not for you to be as other men. The world is governed by an all-pervading selfishness which makes men grasping, hard-hearted, extortioners, unjust. The voice of your Master says, "Be not ye like unto them." Do not stint the remuneration of labour. Do not monopolize the profits of capital. Though not bound by the letter, act towards those you employ in the spirit, of a partnership. Share freely with the less favoured what provides for you such abundant luxuries. Constrain all who have to do with you

to be thankful that you are Christians, by making them partakers of the happiness which you yourselves derive from Christianity. Do what lies in you to wipe away the reproach which nominal Christians on the one hand, and inconsistent Christians on the other, have brought with too much justice on Christianity itself; and to convince even the loudest gainsayers that, when exhibited in its true features, it is the divinest benefactor of the world. It is for you to silence the cry, "Away with Christianity!" and, by an exhibition of its ennobling influence and its beneficent deeds, to win for it golden opinions even from the infidel and the profane.

But hear me, also, you that are "poor in this world;" for I must deal at once faithfully and kindly with you. Not that I am going to administer even the slightest measure of rebuke for the sensitiveness which you may have manifested to the trying characteristics of your physical condition. I know far too well how close these things come to every man's business and bosom, to wonder or to be displeased at the class of feelings with which the poor often regard the rich; a class of feelings, indeed, far from being wholly evil, and adapted, under proper regulation, to be productive of good. It is in the proper regulation of them that I desire to aid you, and I rely on at least your kind acceptance of my counsel.

Let me then suggest to you, in the first place, that the value of the physical inequalities of human condition may be very much overrated. "A man's life," said our Lord—that is, the substantial happiness of his life—"consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Your observation and consciousness can amply test the truth of this declaration. Not because a man is more rich than yourself is he certainly more happy. There are things that enter far more deeply into the nature of happiness than money. Health is one of them; good temper is another; a clear conscience is another; a good name is another; well-placed affections are another; useful activity is another. How many times is the very contrary of all these associated with wealth; and the very riches of which those who have them not heedlessly become the worshippers, not only prove themselves incompetent to confer happiness, but become a source of temptation and of wretchedness. To whatever degree the materials of physical comfort are unequally distributed among men, there is assuredly a remarkably equal distri-

bution of the elements of happiness. The chief pleasures of life, such as the exercise of the social and domestic affections, for example, are absolutely common to all classes; and, if the balance of human condition incline in respect of happiness to either hand, it is towards the poor rather than the rich.

What, then, under these circumstances, is your wisdom? Surely to take an enlarged, that is, a just, view of your condition; to regard it as a whole, to apply yourselves to the promotion of your general and highest interests. To your being wise, useful, and happy, there is no hindrance; you have, indeed, innumerable facilities for it, and nothing can do you more credit than the discernment and improvement of them.

But you will perhaps say to me, Are we, then, to lie down supinely under the disadvantages of our position, and make no effort for the removal of recognized and admitted evils? I reply, Far from it; only have your eyes open and your senses about you.

You will plainly act with the greatest practical wisdom in such a case, and with such an object, if you will be observant of such general laws of divine providence as bear upon your condition; and this with two views—first, to avoid setting yourselves in opposition to any of them; and, secondly, to take advantage of any which may seem favourable to your interest. For these laws, although of silent and almost imperceptible operation, are of vast and uncontrollable power. Wonders may be done with them, nothing against them. Guided by such an aim, you will, I think, avoid two evils. On the one hand, you will not concur in the oft-repeated denunciation of competition as the law of trade, or in the call for a co-operative system instead of it. I have already admitted the occasional hardship to which competition leads, but I am, upon no superficial consideration, convinced that competition is the necessary law of trade, that its benefits have been, and are, immensely greater than its mischiefs, and that relief under its occasional pressure must be found in collateral sources. Such is my conviction theoretically, and the failure of every experiment on the co-operative system affords practical proof of its truth. On the other hand, you will attempt no artificial interference with the rate of wages. Labour, like food, has a market value; it cannot permanently

fetch more, nor will it permanently fetch less. The market price fluctuates, no doubt, according to supply and demand, and, of course, you are at liberty to watch the market, like the vendors of any other commodity; only let your rule be, never to ask more than the market price, and to take contentedly the best price you can get. An artificial rate of wages could no more be maintained than an artificial price of potatoes or calico.

If, however, you can discern a law of divine providence operating favourably to your interest, put yourselves into harmony with it. Now such a law presents itself to you, I think in a manner sufficiently obvious. If human nature is so constituted that its unequal developments inevitably lead to inequalities of condition, these inequalities need not be aggravated by artificial means. There is no inevitable necessity that mankind should crowd themselves together in such dense and multitudinous masses as to incommode, and almost to starve, one another. On the contrary, God's primary benediction on the race was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Domestic, relative, and local affections, it is true, hold people together; but, as if in order the less painfully to relax this bond, God has been pleased to add inducement to necessity, and to scatter over the whole earth materials of so much value as to tempt, not only commercial enterprise, but permanent settlement. Hence colonization, which is but sowing the seeds of empires; and hence emigration, which may be said to be the great providential equalizer of human condition. The coal-pits of England have gathered round them a multitude too dense, a multitude among whom life is a struggle too hard; and can any one be at a loss to know the reason why uncounted nuggets and sands of gold, which have for ages lain open to the atmosphere and glittered in the sun, have only now been brought forth as out of God's "hid treasures," to attract the strugglers to a region in which their industry shall be more largely productive, and their physical comforts be incalculably multiplied?

I am far from saying that something, or that much, may not be done to render legislation at home more equitable. Much has undoubtedly been done, as in respect of free trade, and more is to be anticipated in this and other departments; but it is in the nature of things that changes of this class must be of comparatively slow effectuation, and of gradual

influence. It is clear, also, that, to be safely accomplished, they must be accomplished by recognized and existing social machinery. If a precious vase be cracked, it is better even that it should not be mended, than that in the mending it should be broken. Changes wrought by violence do, by the manner of their accomplishment, more harm than their accomplishment itself can do good. In all cases in which the several classes of the community resort to its physical powers, none has so much to fear as the weakest. In the event of any social agitation or convulsion, none have so much really to lose as the working classes; and none have so little to gain by what appears to be the ambition of some persons, the breaking down of the protecting barriers of property, and a general scramble for its possession.

Let our watchwords, then, be, improvement, not disturbance; co-operation, not estrangement. Nothing but mischief can result from mutual invective; from denouncing the rich as actual robbers of the poor, or the poor as the would-be robbers of the rich. I believe that the facts are not so, and that, if the rich and the poor knew each other better, they would be satisfied they are not. There are small and partial irritations, but the social body is healthy, and the main current of the nation's blood runs kindly. Exciting as the subject is to the working classes, and sensitive as poor men's hearts must ever be to the fond announcement of "wealth for all," their good sense and good feeling will, I doubt not, avail to neutralize what may be of mischievous tendency, and to turn even irritating elements to the ultimate nourishment of social virtue and wellbeing.

Let me not part with you, however, dear friends, especially from such a place as that which I now occupy, without solemnly reminding you that there are some things unspeakably more important than the inequalities of the present life. The most momentous elements of human condition are to be found in the life to come. The great Master whom I serve has given me a commission to press home upon all who will listen to me the question first propounded by his own lips, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" You labour with an honourable industry for the bread that perisheth; but will not that very industry rebuke you, if you do not labour with a proportionate earnestness for the bread "which endureth to everlasting life"?

“The things that are seen are temporal,” and the inequalities of earthly condition, felt for a moment, will speedily vanish away; but “the things which are unseen are eternal,” and the joys or sorrows to which we go will have no end. Can you not, without neglecting this world, prepare for the next? And will it make your industry less productive, if you also lay up treasure in heaven? Ah! how rich may even the poorest be, if he become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus! For “if children, then are we heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ” (Rom. viii. 17). And how welcome will even the unworthiest be to His love, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost”! (Luke xix. 10.)

THE ASPECT OF THE BAPTIST DENOMINATION IN RELATION TO UNION.*

OFTEN has it been a matter of regret that the Baptist denomination in England should be so much divided, and often have devout ejaculations been uttered that it might become more united. Occasionally, indeed, attempts have been made towards effectuating an object so much to be desired, and hopes even have been entertained—or at least expressed—of success, especially as one of the fruits of the Bicentenary excitement. It will not, therefore, be unseasonable—I trust it may not be found unprofitable—if I make this subject on the present occasion the theme of a few remarks.

The desirableness of denominational union cannot, I suppose, admit of doubt. I, at least, entertain none, and am far from intending to make any observations adapted to suggest even the shadow of one. Obviously, denominational union is denominational beauty, and denominational strength. The unloveliness and feebleness resulting from denominational division are too manifest to be denied. And it would seem that, among evangelical churches, denominational union should be as easy as it is desirable. A difference on any of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel would no doubt be, not only a justifiable, but a necessary, cause of estrangement; as would also any considerable diversity of views on matters of ecclesiastical order: but neither of these causes of separation exists among us. All parties so far hold the grand verities of the Gospel as to acknowledge each other as brethren in Christ; and all concur in maintaining the independence of the churches and the congregational system. In point of fact, however, denominational union among Baptists has been slow in manifestation, and difficult of cultivation. We have long been a divided body, and we are so still; and, if any progress at all have been made, it is unquestionable, both that much remains to be done, and that the most recent efforts have met with little success. Under such circumstances, it may not be without its use to ask, What is the prognosis in this case of apparently morbid apathy, and what the prospect of cure? In other words, What is the aspect of the Baptist denomination in relation to denominational union?

The Baptist denomination, while in *name* one, is in *fact* many. If it were an evil spirit, it might say, "My name is Legion." Let us glance for a moment at its several parts. In the first place, it is divided into two by a difference of doctrinal sentiment, some churches holding the Calvinistic system, some the Arminian. These constitute respectively the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists; bodies distinguished, not, as has been sometimes supposed, by practising open and strict—or general and particular—communion, but by maintaining the doctrines respectively of general

* Introductory Discourse at the Annual Session of the Baptist Union, held in London April 24th, 1863.

and particular redemption. Of these two bodies, the larger, or the Particular Baptist, is itself divided by a doctrinal diversity, according as the Calvinistic system has been found capable of being modified into two forms, which have been called High and Moderate Calvinism. That there is an appreciable difference between these two systems admits of no doubt. Sometimes, indeed, to the system named Moderate Calvinism the honour of being called Calvinism at all has been tenaciously denied, and those who are not High-Calvinists have been reproachfully designated Arminians. Moderate Calvinism, however, is assuredly not Arminianism, as all systematic Arminians will readily acknowledge; and, if it may not be called Calvinism—which, however, I think it may—that will scarcely grieve the holders of it, who assuredly are not solicitous to be called after any man. Let it, then, for distinction's sake, be called by another name—say, Fullerism; in which case (as has been somewhere suggested) High-Calvinism might be called Owenism—John Owen being more Calvinistic than John Calvin himself, and the proper parent of English High-Calvinism. The Particular Baptist body is further divided by a practical diversity on the subject of communion. It contains churches which restrict fellowship at the Lord's table to persons who have made profession of their faith by baptism, and churches who admit to communion professed believers in Jesus, although unbaptized. These are called respectively Open-communionists and Strict-communionists. Among these there are still minor differences, but I do not think a notice of them material to the object of the present address.

We have, then, six parties. What are the obstacles in the way of their union? Among these I may notice in the first place one of a legal character, which divides the General from the Particular Baptists: I mean the tenor and terms of their trust-deeds. Their ecclesiastical property of all kinds is held, I believe, for the use of the New Connexion of General Baptists. Considering the formation of that body as a separation on evangelical grounds from the older and original body of General Baptists, the use of the term was natural and appropriate; but it would scarcely have been adopted if at that time there had been cherished any desire for union in the Baptist denomination as a whole. It is true that this designation was the obvious correlative of the phrase employed in the trust-deeds of the other portion of Evangelical Baptists, whose property was held for the use of Particular Baptists; and it must be admitted that, in both cases, the language used was unfortunate. Unfortunate, at least, in its bearing on the question of union; since, by force of legal obligation, it makes the one denomination of Baptists organically two bodies, and this in a manner altogether incurable except by Act of Parliament. In relation to the Particular Baptists no such impediment exists on a doctrinal ground; the phrase Calvinistic, or Particular, Baptists, used in their trust-deeds, having always been held, I believe, to comprehend those called Moderate Calvinists as well as others. How far trust-deeds which affirm the principle, and require the maintenance, of strict communion may be held to constitute the Particular Baptists into two bodies—the Open and the Strict Baptists—can hardly, perhaps, be said.

Besides the legal obstacle to union now noticed, one exists of a moral kind. To a great extent, the *feeling* of the respective bodies is not favourable to it. It is true that the constitution of the Baptist Union, which in terms comprehends all Evangelical Baptist Churches, permits the combination of all; an opportunity of which the General Baptists early availed themselves, by giving in a body, through their Association, their adhesion to the Union. It is true also, that, about two years since, the General Baptist Association, at its annual meeting, passed a resolution expressive of a desire for further union. At a later period so much regret was felt

by General Baptist ministers that that resolution had not been responded to on the part of the Particular Baptists, that, on this ground explicitly, the attempt was declined to indicate in what practical methods a scheme of union might be carried out. It should not be forgotten, however, that the Particular Baptists are not an organized body, as the General Baptists are, and that they are not in possession of any mode by which their united sentiments might be expressed. County or other local Associations would scarcely have presumed on such an utterance; and, if they had, fully one-third of the Particular Baptist churches are not in any Association at all. It has been suggested, indeed, that the Baptist Union should have spoken; but the Baptist Union, if in any way a representation of the Baptist body as a whole—which may well be doubted, if not denied—is in no way whatever a representation of the Particular Baptist body, not one-half of which is included, while the General Baptists themselves constitute fully one-third of it. It may be regretted, however, that the General Baptist Association was so quickly discouraged in its attempt; since well-advised suggestions of a practical kind would have been sure to have gained consideration, and might have done more, by even a partial immediate adoption, to advance the object, than a hundred declarations of sentiment and principle.

Giving cheerfully to the General Baptist brethren all the credit that is due to them, and looking now to the Particular Baptists, it must be admitted with sorrow that this body is far from being united within itself. Its differences, both doctrinal and ecclesiastical, are strongly defined and tenaciously held. For the most part the lovers of high doctrine love it too well to sit under a preacher of the moderate order, while the advocates of strict-union plead loudly for more entire separation from open-unionists than even now exists. As an illustration of what I mean (although I am far from taking it as a sample of the whole body) I may quote the answer which I had from a church in Wiltshire, to which I had sent the usual application for a triennial return. It was in these terms: "I don't want to have anything to do with Mr. Hinton, or his Union." I am far from blaming this attitude of isolation—I merely state the fact. Undoubtedly, it is quite possible that this tenacity and rigidity may spring from a simple sense of duty, and be an expression of the purest fidelity to Christ and his truth; and, as we are not to judge one another, not a word shall escape from my lips of suspicion that it is not so. All I have to ask is, What is the bearing of this fact on the question of denominational union? That it is not favourable to union is clear; it can scarcely be unsafe to say that it is not compatible with it. If by any means such elements were brought into close combination, the process might not unaptly be compared to that of loading a bombshell with materials inevitably destined to explosion. Nor does it at all go to the bottom of this matter to say that there should be more love. This is true, but not the whole truth. The question of duty takes precedence of that of love. Even "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." While High-Calvinists attach so much importance to their hyperism, or strict-unionists to their exclusiveness, as to think it their duty to alienate themselves from their brethren, I cannot plead with them for love's sake to abandon their course. I could plead with men for love's sake to correct their tempers, to relinquish their prejudices, to change their usages; but I cannot ask any man, even for love's sake, to desert his convictions. If our brethren think their course to be according to the will of Christ, and for his glory, let them follow it out, although denominational disunion be the result of it. I find no fault with them. According to their light let them walk.

It may be said that the existence of the Baptist Union itself is a great

fact, demonstrating at once an aptitude for union within the denomination, and a capacity for more extended combination. Those who are acquainted with the origin of the Baptist Union, however, will be well aware that no conception can be more fallacious. It seems, indeed, most natural to suppose that such an organization must have been the result of some strenuous movement towards union in the body within which it has arisen. Far different, however, was the fact. From the year 1812 there was held, in connection with the denominational anniversaries, a social gathering, under the style and title of "The Annual Meeting of the Ministers and Members of the Baptist Denomination in London." The earliest separate account I have of the "proceedings" of this body is dated 1832, in which year a report of the state of religion in the denomination was read by the Rev. Joseph Belcher, of Chelsea, who had been requested to draw it up, and who was at that meeting appointed secretary. He was instructed to prepare a report for the meeting of 1833, "under the direction of the Baptist Board." In the "Account of the Proceedings" of this meeting in 1833, the title "Baptist Union" first appears. The title-page runs thus:—"Account of the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Union in London, 1833." When, how, or why, this title was assumed, or who were the constituents, or what were the objects, or what the organization of the Union, appeareth not. In the meeting of 1834, a treasurer, secretaries, and a committee were chosen; and the "Account" of 1835 presents the following imposing title:—"Account of the Proceedings of the Twenty-third Annual Meeting of the Baptist Union, held in London June 17th, 1835." Of the genesis of this magnificent designation there is no relation; it is obvious, however, that Mr. Belcher, who was the presiding genius of the Union at that period, was desirous of identifying the Baptist Union, as it was then developing itself, with the Ministers' Meeting of 1812—a theory which, I fear, will scarcely bear examination. In the same year appears for the first time a "constitution." It is gravely called a "revised constitution"; but by a clear misnomer, not a shadow of a constitution of any kind being antecedently discoverable. At the committee meeting in which this constitution was discussed I had the pleasure of being present, it being held on the eve of the quarterly meeting of the Missionary Committee; and I can very well recollect the warmth of that extended discussion, especially in relation to the objects which should be contemplated. What a poverty-stricken resolution it is that defines those objects was as strongly felt then as it has often been felt since; but it was absolutely ALL that the assembled brethren would bear. In the "Account" of that same year appears also the first list of churches belonging to the Union, and these, without exception, are attached to it, not by any act of adhesion on their part, but solely by the fact of having contributed to the expenses of Dr. Cox and Dr. Hoby in their voyage to the United States, a contribution which was sagaciously, but arbitrarily (and very much to the surprise of some parties), assumed to constitute a link "connecting themselves with the body." Happily for the denomination, as I think, the Baptist Union has continued in existence until now, and has been useful; but its existence has been a continual struggle; and, even by those who learn only by experience, it must be expected to be so still.

My general view of the prospect of denominational union among us will now be easily discerned. That it might to some extent be advanced by well-directed efforts is, no doubt, possible. I would be far from discouraging endeavours in this direction; but that, in the present state of conviction and feeling, it is at all possible as a whole, or even under existing circumstances desirable, I cannot for a moment conceive. At all events, a first object would seem to be to engage Particular Baptists to be united

among themselves; they might, then, perhaps, be willing to approach somewhat nearer to the General Baptist brethren. In the present state of sharply-defined distinction and alienated feeling among Particular Baptists, for one portion of them to cultivate further union with General Baptists would assuredly be to widen the distance which already separates them from their nearer brethren. What, then, I may be asked, remains to be done? Are we to remain content with our divided condition? Far from it. Only let us apply the remedy at the source of the disease, and not at once delude and weary ourselves with Utopian schemes. We must first become wiser and better Christians; must better understand the will of our Lord, and cultivate proportionally more fervent love to our brethren. Then we shall come together without solicitation, and without hazard. In the meantime let those unite who are prepared to unite, and, according to the grace given to them, do what they may be able to do for the glory of their Lord.

Beloved brethren, I am aware that in what I have now read to you, I have uttered sentiments differing, perhaps widely, from those of some highly-respected brethren; but I do not care to say more respecting them than that they are sentiments not lightly entertained. I have watched with lively interest the correspondence in the periodical press—particularly in *The Freeman* newspaper and “The General Baptist Magazine”—on the subject of denominational union, and I have often been tempted to mix myself up with it; but I have never done so. It seemed to me, however, that the present occasion was one on which I might speak my mind fully and freely. “I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say.” My knowledge of the denomination is not now a growth either of a few years, or of a narrow experience; and the opinions which I have been led to form I express without reluctance, on probably the last public occasion on which I shall have either the responsible honour of giving it counsel, or the exquisite pleasure of receiving a token of its love.

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