

DISSENT NOT SCHISM

A DISCOURSE

BY

THOMAS BINNEY

Quinta Press

Quinta Press, Meadow View, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, Shropshire,
England, SY10 7RN

The format of this volume is copyright
© 2012 Quinta Press

www.quintapress.com

For proof-reading purposes the line breaks are in the same place as the
original, hence the stretched text

DISSENT NOT SCHISM.
A
DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED
IN THE POULTRY CHAPEL, DECEMBER 12, 1834,
AT
THE MONTHLY MEETING
OF
THE ASSOCIATED MINISTERS AND CHURCHES
OF THE
LONDON CONGREGATIONAL UNION,
AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST.

BY T. BINNEY.

LONDON:

JOSEPH O. ROBINSON, JUN.,

25, LUDGATE-HILL.
MDCCCXXXV.

THOMS,
PRINT, 13, WARWICK SQUARE.

TO
THE MINISTERS
OF
THE LONDON CONGREGATIONAL UNION,
THE
Following Discourse
DELIVERED BY THEIR APPOINTMENT
AND
PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,
IS, WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND AFFECTION,
INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR DEVOTED FRIEND AND BROTHER,
The Author.

A DISCOURSE,

&c.

MARK ix. 38–40.

“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which 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.”

IT has been allotted to me to discuss, this morning, the following subject—"Dissent not Schism." I think it right to state that I was not aware of this appointment till I saw it in print. The notice convening the meeting at which the subjects for this year's course of lectures were fixed upon and appropriated did not reach me in time: had it done so, I certainly should not have selected for myself the theme of this day's discussion. Not that I think such subjects at any time improper, or at the present time unseasonable; but considerations of a personal nature would have prevented me—my dislike to controversy in

4

general, and my knowledge and experience of the misrepresentation and injustice to which we become exposed by touching the ecclesiastical controversy in particular. The subject, however, having been appointed me by my fathers and brethren in the ministry, I did not consider myself at liberty to disturb that appointment. Trusting, therefore, to that candour on their part which in such circumstances I need, and praying for that assistance from on high which in all circumstances I need still more, I would now advance to the discharge of the prescribed duty. I shall offer a few remarks on the nature and criminality of *schism*, and on the question of its identity with *dissent*, and shall then conclude with such general observations as the subject may suggest.

Before advancing to the discussion, it may be proper to make a preliminary remark. The question respecting the identity of schism and dissent derives its interest and importance from the fact that the advocates of the Church of England generally identify them. Our argument, therefore, must necessarily be brought to bear upon that church. I hope, however, we shall be able both to conduct and to apply it, without indulging that

spirit which it will be our duty to condemn. The following passages from a book recently recommended to his clergy by the bishop of London will show you the light in which the question is

5
 viewed by that prelate:—"Dissenters, in dissenting and separating from the church, commit the heinous sin of schism, which is, in my opinion, a greater sin than that of drunkenness, and therefore a great deal more frequently spoken of in the word of God."—"I look upon schism, in fact, as tantamount to a renunciation of Christianity. What is it but a renouncing of the church of Christ—a renouncing of her ministers, and through them of Christ himself?" Such is the accusation against us, adopted and endorsed by one of the first dignitaries of the land, and thus virtually published from cathedrals and palaces—such is the crime which, on so high an authority, our countrymen are taught to consider as identical with dissent. Suffer me to say that I should have deemed it uncandid and unjust, both towards his lordship and towards the writer (whoever he may be) whom he has honoured by his patronage, to have quoted these passages, had they not been a perfectly fair specimen of the publication from which they are derived. Had they stood out, in sentiment, phraseology, or spirit, from the rest of the work,—had they appeared the hasty expression of a moment of excitement or forgetfulness, contrasting with pages and chapters of deep thought, manly sense, sound argument, or Christian moderation,—I should have passed them by. I should have

6

scorned to make a man an offender for a sentence, I should have doubted whether the expressions were meant in the sense which they seemed to

bear, and I should have given both the individuals concerned the benefit of that doubt. This, however, I am compelled to say—and I say it with grief rather than resentment—cannot be sustained. I have examined the work itself, and I can conscientiously declare that the passages just repeated are of a piece, both in doctrine and language, with the tone and texture of the entire publication.

Passing from this remark, and proceeding to the discussion before us, it seems proper to observe that, in attempting to ascertain the nature of schism, our enquiry is after the scriptural meaning of the term and the scriptural description of the thing. We say not, therefore, at present, whether what men have called schism be schism or not; we say not whether their conceptions of its criminality have been imperfect or exaggerated; we say not whether the original import of the word be or be not the same with that which it has assumed in ecclesiastical history, or which is associated with it in modern usage;—at present, we give no opinion on these matters: but this we do say, that, in a scriptural enquiry, we have not, primarily, to regard what any at any time may have said or thought, or what any at

7

the present moment are saying and thinking; but we have to do with what *they* have said “who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” and in whose writings, and in whose writings alone, we have at once the conceptions and the “sayings of God.”

It is obviously both proper and important to put the matter in this way, and to place the discussion (first of all at least) upon this footing; for if any thing whatever be regarded either as crime or virtue, and if that thing be represented as described, as forbidden or enforced, stigma-

tized or commended, in the word of God, then “to the law and to the testimony”—let us look for and listen to the words of God upon this subject, whatever it may be; for that which *He* means is that which alone is to be either feared or followed, as it is that only which, in *his* view, possesses the character either of virtue or of crime.

“What then saith the scripture” upon the matter in debate? What is the New-Testament view of the nature and the criminality of schism? To this question our present enquiry is reduced, and by this authority must it be answered and determined. We shall endeavour to collect from the sacred writings what they appear to teach upon this subject.

The term “schism” occurs only once in our English version of the New Testament. It is to

8

be found in the 25th verse of the 12th chapter of the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. The apostle, in the context, institutes a comparison between the Christian church and the human body, and says, in relation to the latter, that God has connected and tempered the members together so “that there should be no *schism* in the body.” This is the only place in which the word is to be found by the English reader. It is here untranslated. The term “schism” is, in fact, Greek, and, to an English ear not previously instructed, it can convey no meaning till it be translated or explained. In the other passages in which it occurs in the original scriptures it *is* translated in our version. The number and arrangement of the whole may be thus given:—to have the entire case before us, we shall refer, not only to the passages in which the word itself is to be found, but to those also where the verb from which it is derived is employed.

The noun rendered "schism" in the passage just quoted occurs seven other times in the New Testament—that is, eight times in all. Six times it is in the singular, "schism," twice in the plural, "schisms." Of these eight instances, five are in the gospels, and three in one of the epistles. Of the five in the gospels, one is in Matthew, one in Mark, and three in John; the other three

9

are all in the first epistle to the Corinthians. The whole may be thus classed:—the two in Matthew and Mark are *literal applications of the term to a material substance*: the three in John are all *figurative applications of it to states of mind*: and the three in the Corinthians are applications of the same nature, of which one is a tropical illustration, the other two *specifically refer to what was existing in the church*. We may say perhaps, without impropriety, that the uses of the word divide themselves into the *literal*, the *figurative*, and the *ecclesiastical*.

The noun "schism," then, it appears, occurs eight times in the New Testament; it is now further to be observed that the verb from which it is derived is to be met with ten times in one or other of its forms. Of these ten instances, eight are in the evangelists (two in each), and the remaining two are in the Acts of the Apostles. Of the eight in the evangelists, all of them are of the first class before mentioned, namely, *literal applications of the word to material substances*: the two in the Acts are of the second class, *figurative applications to states of mind*: of the third class, the ecclesiastical, or applications to what was existing in the church, *there are none*.

Having thus given, in general terms, the number and the classification of the passages in which the term "schism," or any of its kindred, may

10

be found, we shall now adduce the passages themselves, as they stand in the authorised version, and submit such remarks upon them as may serve to assist us in the prosecution of our enquiry.

The first class, consisting of *the literal application to material substances*, either of the noun or of the verb, are in all ten. They are confined to the evangelists; some of them are merely repetitions of the same expression and the same statement by two or more of the different writers. The following are the particulars:—

The noun *twice*. Matthew ix. 16, “the *rent* (σχίσμα) is made worse.”—Mark ii. 21, the same expression, “the *rent* (σχίσμα) is made worse.”

The verb *eight times*. *Once* in relation to the same thing as that referred to in the preceding passages, the putting of a new piece on an old garment; Luke v. 36, “the new *maketh a rent*”—tears it (σχίζει). *Thrice* in relation to the veil of the temple, Matthew xxvii. 51, “the veil of the temple *was rent* (ἐσχίσθη) in twain.” Mark xv. 38, “the veil of the temple *was rent* (ἐσχίσθη) in twain.” Luke xxiii. 45, “the veil of the temple *was rent* (ἐσχίσθη) in the midst.” *Once* in relation to the prodigies affecting the rocks at our Saviour’s crucifixion, Matthew xxvii. 51, “the earth did quake and the rocks *rent* (ἐσχίσθησαν). *Once* in relation to the phenomenon in the

11

heavens at the Redeemer’s baptism, Mark i. 10, “coming up out of the water he saw the heavens *opened* (σχιζομένουσ). *Once* in relation to the garment of Jesus, John xix. 24, “they said, Let us not *rend* it” (μὴ σχίσωμεν). And *once* in relation to the net used by the disciples in connection with a miracle, John xxi. 11, “for all there were

so many, yet was not the net *broken*" (οὐκ ἐσχίσθη). In these instances the words are translated by "rent," "rend," "opened," and "broken." The literal idea seems to be a rent, rupture, or division *in* a thing, *produced by some degree of force or violence*.

Of the second class of passages, *the application of the word to states of mind*, there are five, three in the Gospel by John, and two in the Acts of the Apostles; the three in the evangelist are the noun, the two in the history are the verb; they stand thus:—

John vii. 43, "There was *a division* (σχίσμα) among the people because of him." Some saying, "Of a truth this is the prophet—this is the Christ;" others, "Shall the Christ come out of Galilee?" &c. John ix. 16, "There was *a division* (σχίσμα) among them," that is, the Pharisees in council assembled, on their examination of the blind man whom Christ had restored to sight upon the sabbath; some said, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day;"

12

others objected, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" hence the division, *schism*, or, as Doddridge, "angry debate," between them.—John x. 19, "There was *a division* (σχίσμα), therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. Some saying, "He hath a devil and is mad; why hear ye him?" others, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? "There was thus difference of opinion and consequent altercation.

Acts xiv. 4, "The multitude of the city *was divided*" (ἐσχίσθη); some took part with the Jews, others with the apostles, the unbelieving Jews having stirred up the Gentiles, and made the minds of a portion of them evil affected towards the brethren.—Acts xxiii. 7, "There arose

a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude *was divided*" (ἐσχίσθη). Paul had cried out in the council, when he saw the parties of whom it was composed, that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee; he thus roused the feeling of the one against the other, and the multitude, catching the infection, sympathized in the contest. In these passages, the words are invariably rendered by "*division*" and "*divided.*" They refer, in every case, to a difference of judgment and opinion *among a number of persons considered collectively as constituting a whole*; and they include, in some

13

instances, if not indeed in all, an allusion to *the warmth, temper, and violence*, with which that difference was accompanied or maintained.

Of the third class of passages, *the application of the term to the church*, there are three, all of them instances of the use of the noun, and all in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Two of them refer to what actually existed in a particular society; the other is a figurative allusion to a general truth. They are as follows:—

i. Cor. i. 10, "I beseech you, brethren, that there be no *divisions* (σχίσματα) among you." xi. 18, "When you come together into the church, I hear that there be *divisions* (σχίσματα) among you." xii. 25, "That there should be no *schism* (σχίσμα) in the body." In these passages the word is rendered "*divisions*," except in the last, where it is left untranslated. The two former are the only instances in which the term is employed in relation to ecclesiastical proceedings. It is here, therefore, if any where, that the "sin of schism" must be found. Whatever that offence may be, *here* we may expect to meet with it. Let us carefully examine the passages, and collect from them, if we can, what it was

that really constituted the object of the apostle's condemnation.

I Cor. xii. 24-26, "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant

14

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.*"

We take this passage first, though last mentioned, because we regard it as containing a key to the others. It illustrates the state of matters in the *absence* of schism, and may therefore enable us to understand in what it would consist. It not only furnishes an example of the use of the word, but, immediately on the use of it, it furnishes, by way of contrast, an apostolical description of the thing. It is the only place in the English translation of the scriptures, as we have already noticed, in which the term schism occurs, and it was no doubt used here because, from the explanatory statements with which it was accompanied, it was seen that its exact sense could not be conveyed by any single term in our language. The figure and the interpretation are as follow:—The corporeal system is contemplated as a whole composed of a number of parts; these parts, differing among themselves in a variety of ways, are spoken of as united and framed into one body, and as *so* framed and "tempered together" as to feel as one, and to have a mutual care of and a mutual sympathy

15

with each other; and *the want or the violation of this care and sympathy* is the thing here denominated a schism. By a strong figure, the mem-

bers of the body are regarded as individually animated, sensitive, and intelligent—as possessing a distinct and separate consciousness; and the harmony of the whole, through a sentiment of affection common to all, and the extinction, so to speak, of the selfishness of each,—*this* is the absence of schism from the body. A schism, therefore, in the body, according to the figure, would not be the fracture of a bone, or the amputation of a member, but the want of united action and reciprocal sympathy among the various members of the body itself—their *not* “having the same care one for another,” so that if one member suffered all the members suffered with it, and if one was honoured all the others rejoiced with it. Such is the apostolical description of the matter in debate. Thus this passage evidently furnishes a key to the whole enquiry, and affords a principle of interpretation for the others. What is supposed in the figure may be expected in the fact. What would be schism in the body will be schism in the church.

1 Cor. i. 10–12, “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* (schisms) among you; but

16

that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, *that there are contentions among you*. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,” &c.

This passage, you perceive, is an exhortation addressed to a number of persons united together as a church in the profession of the faith of Christ. They are addressed in their collective capacity, and in that capacity are regarded as one.

As such, “members one of another,” they ought to have been distinguished by reciprocal affection, and by unity of spirit and of purpose. Instead of this, they were torn and rent by intestine dissensions. There had sprung up among them certain “strifes” and animosities, inconsequence of their improper partiality to particular instructors. One was of Paul, another of Peter, another of Apollos, and so on. A secondary and subordinate attachment was extravagantly and disproportionately indulged. Esteem for the “ministers by whom they had believed” was suffered to interfere with the “brotherly love” which they owed to each other. It led to estrangement, alienation, partisanship. It broke in upon that mutual regard, that entire and universal sympathy, that expansive and all-embracing affection, by which

17

it was their duty to be distinguished, and in the indulgence and exercise of which they ought to have “lived, and moved, and had their being.” These violations of love—these strifes and “contentions,” are the schisms complained of. The church, as such, continued; there was no departure or expulsion of a part from the rest; but it was *itself* broken and divided. There were ruptures and breaches in the feeling with which the members should have regarded each other. Hence the “schisms” “in the body.” The members were not *so* “tempered together” as to have “the same care one for another,” so that if one suffered the others sympathised, and if one was honoured the others rejoiced.

With a view to the extinction of these dissensions, the apostle exhorts the Corinthians “all to speak the same thing,” and “to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” It is not to be inferred from this language either that the Corinthian schisms

were mere differences of opinion, or that Paul expected all to whom he wrote to think precisely alike on every possible subject that might engage their attention. Not the former; for the “schisms” of the one verse are evidently alluded to and interpreted by the “contentions” of the other, and may also be supposed to be connected

18

with the “envying, strife, and factions”* of the third chapter. Not the latter; for that is opposed both by the nature of the thing, and by the fact that the apostle actually did permit great diversity of opinion on secondary matters. This was the case both at Rome and at Antioch, as appears from Romans, chapters xiv. and xv., and Galatians ii. 12-14. If there had been among the Corinthians differences of opinion without the formation of parties,—or if there had been classical divisions of the members, as a mere matter of prudence or convenience,—and in neither case bitterness and controversy, there would have been no “schisms among them,” because all this might have been without any rent in the spirit of love, or any real disunion in the body of the church. The exhortation, therefore, rather means that they should keep their attention fixed upon the same great saving truths which all equally admitted to be of the first importance,—that they should speak of these in their private intercourse, and desire and discourse of them in their public assemblies,—and that, being united in a like relish and enjoyment of these, their subordinate partialities and private differences being kept out of view, they would be “knit together in love;” they would feel as if

* 1 Cor. iii. 3, divisions: *διχοστασίαι*, parties, factions.

19

“one heart and one mind” were diffused throughout the whole body, making “all one in Christ Jesus;” and thus their “contentions” and “strifes” would die away, and the spirit of universal sympathy and charity return.

I Cor. xi. 17-22 (we omit the parenthesis in the nineteenth verse, which is not essential to the present question, and would require a dissertation for itself):—“Now, in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions (schisms) among you; and I partly believe it. ... When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.”

From this passage it is obvious that what the apostle calls schisms, and condemns as such, were what took place among the Christians at Corinth when they came together to partake of the Lord’s supper. It appears that they manifested, by their conduct and proceedings, a total want of regard for each other, and evinced that

20

they were sadly deficient in sympathy of feeling and unity of spirit. They came together, indeed, into one place, and they came as one church; but they came careless of each other’s feelings and circumstances. Instead of uniting in the participation of what was common to all, they acted as they had been accustomed in their

social festivities, each providing his own repast according to his separate ability. And not only so, but when they had arrived at the place of meeting they betrayed the most shameful selfishness: those that were first began without waiting for the others; those that had abundance indulged themselves *to the full*, if not to excess, without thinking of those poorer members who had nothing; they had not “the same care one for another;” the opulent did not stoop to “suffer” with the destitute, nor were the destitute invited to “rejoice” with *them*; “one was hungry while another was drunken.”* Conduct like this was not only itself a violation of Christian sympathy, but it led, necessarily, to other disorders. There sprang from it, doubtless, many unhappy and unhallowed altercations. There would be contempt and resentment, bitterness

* The verb μεθύειν, however, it may be remarked, does not necessarily mean *to be drunken*; but may be used to signify taking a full sufficiency, when there is not intemperance. This is intimated in the text.

21

and debate, boisterous censure and angry re-
crimination. Such was the state of things which
the apostle condemned. Hence strifes, “conten-
tions,” and breaches of charity, or, in other
words, *schisms*, arising, not like the former from
partiality to their teachers, but from their utter
disregard and forgetfulness of each other.

Having thus cited every passage in the New
Testament in which the word schism occurs, and
having examined those which immediately bear
on the primitive import of the term, we shall
now state the particular points which seem to be
made out, and the general conclusions to which
they conduct us.

It may be remarked, in the first place, as a
singular fact—on which, however, I lay no stress

as a matter of argument, I merely notice it as curious,—it may be remarked, that we never read in scripture of “the sin of schism” at all; we have no description of a distinct ecclesiastical offence under this name; for, in the only two places in which the word is used in relation to church matters, it is in the plural form—*schisms* are spoken of, not schism. From the frequency with which the word is to be met with, and the manner in which the thing has been denounced, in ecclesiastical controversy,—from the awful consequences supposed to be attached to the commission of the sin,—from the tremendous ex-

22

pedients, temporal and spiritual, to which men have had recourse, for the avowed purpose of punishing or preventing it,—from its being represented as “worse” than some gross and degrading moral offences, and as therefore “more frequently spoken of in the word of God,”—from all this, a plain man would be pardonable for expecting that the word would be found perpetually recurring in the New Testament, and that the sin, whatever it might be, would stand out as distinctly marked as any of those forbidden in the decalogue. For a person of unsuspecting habits, and unsophisticated sense, this, I say, would be natural. It seems, therefore, to warrant the passing remark that it is singular that the word should only occur once, and that, in the two places in which the thing is to be met with, it should appear in a form for which we should not be prepared by men’s current and customary phraseology about it.

The second remark is, that the “schisms” of the New Testament, whatever they were, were *among the Christians*, and among the Christians exclusively. They were in the church, and they were confined to the church. They had no re-

lation to “those that were without”—those that were not of the church—whether Jews, Gentiles, or apostate or excommunicated believers. The “schisms” were not between these parties, any

23

or all of them, *and* the Christians; but they were something between the Christians themselves; something “*in the body*,” something, therefore, to contract the guilt of which it was necessary for a man to be *of* the body. Such is evidently the import of what we have called the ecclesiastical use of the word; and it is sustained and illustrated, you may observe, by the analogies supplied by the literal and the figurative:—it was *the garment, the veil, the rock, that was rent,—the crowd, the council, the people, that was divided.*

The third remark is, that the “schisms” in question were confined to the church *at Corinth*. That church, so to speak, was in a state of schism; the whole of the members appear, more or less, to have been included in the apostolical reproof; the various parties into which it was divided were all, if not equally, schismatical. The church might have been regarded by other churches as in this schismatical state, and the members as governed by this schismatical temper; but they were not schismatics or schismatical *in relation to these other churches themselves*, or at least to one more than another,—to the church at Philippi more than to that at Ephesus, or to that at Jerusalem more than to that at Rome. Their schisms were among themselves, and were offences against each other; or, if regarded as extending beyond them, they were offences against their

24

Christian profession in general and the church of Christ at large, and not against any particular section or society.

The fourth remark is, that this schismatical relation which the parties in the church at Corinth bore to each other did not consist in the separation of some from the rest, and in the practice of separate communion; for the very time when their schisms were most obvious and offensive, was, when they had all come together into one place, and as one church, to eat the Lord's Supper. Nor did their schisms consist in departures from the faith, or from the original constitution and government of the church, whatever that might be: some of them, indeed, were connected with mistakes about the mode of observing a particular ordinance; they did not consist, however, in these mistakes themselves, though they were provoked and exasperated by them. But, from the facts of the case, and the phraseology of the record, it would seem that the schisms of the Corinthian church consisted in the indulgence of unchristian tempers, and in the violation of Christian sympathy—in heats and heartburnings—in strifes and turbulence—in acrimonious disputes—in factions and party feeling; in short, in such rents, breaches, ruptures, and divisions of the Christian body, as resulted from, or consisted in, the violation of

25

that love by which, as members of Christ, they ought to have been connected together, and the strength and purity of which it should have been their constant study to preserve and to increase.

We conclude—first, that, for men to be schismatics, they must of necessity be a part of the visible church. If they are not Christians, they cannot be schismatics. They may be something *worse*—they may be apostates or heretics, in the modern acceptation of that term;—but schismatics they cannot be. Second: that, as Christians, whatever they may profess or believe,

however accurate their views either of doctrine or discipline, if they are distinguished by a narrow, exclusive, and uncharitable spirit, they are distinguished by the elementary principle of the schismatical character. Third: that, for one class of Christians to be schismatics *in relation to another*, more than in relation to the whole Christian community, they must both be united in the same church—be visibly comprehended in the same body, and constitute together one whole. If they do not, then *what* they are to each other is a question to be taken up by itself, and disposed of on its own grounds, and is altogether distinct from what strictly comes before us in this first stage of our discussion and enquiry.

According, then, to these plain scriptural con-

26

elusions, are dissenters and dissenting churches, as such, schismatics or schismatical *in relation to the Church of England?* To this we reply, No; and that for two reasons:—

First. On the principles and reasoning sanctioned and recommended by the right rev. prelate to whom we have already referred, dissenters cannot properly be regarded as schismatics *at all*. They are far beyond that. They must take their station with infidels and apostates; for they are entirely excluded from the Christian community. The following passage, among others, will illustrate this statement:—“They, by their schism, cut themselves off from the visible church, and cannot, therefore, expect to be considered as Christians, but, according to the command of Christ, as heathens and publicans. In a Christian point of view, we have nothing to do with them—we must leave them entirely in the hands of God; they are without the pale of the visible church of Christ, and we

are to act in the spirit of what the apostle says, 'What have I to do to judge them also that are without? Them that are without God judgeth.' The curse of God appears to me to rest heavily upon them." Taking this representation in connection with the principles of scripture already adduced and illustrated, it is obvious that dissenters cannot properly be regarded as

27

schismatics. The bishop, and the writer whose "sound reasoning" he recommends, appear to be guilty of a great oversight in speaking of dissent as schism: they should have called it *apostacy*; for *that* is what it really is if their judgment respecting the condition of its adherents be correct.

Second. Supposing it should be conceded that this is carrying the matter "a little" too far, and that dissenters are to be acknowledged and regarded as Christians, then I should say, that, *simply considered as such*—as Christians and as Christian societies—whatever they may be in themselves, they are not schismatics in relation to the establishment; for, they are not members or parts of that church; *they* do not consider that they are, nor are they so considered by *it*. Even should we admit, therefore, that dissenters, as to their general character, are as black and bad as their assailants describe,—that they are bitter, exclusive, uncharitable, and morose—that their societies, as to their internal condition, are rent by irrepressible feuds and factions—in short, that they are distinguished by all the vices and the venom of the schismatical spirit—still this would not make them schismatics *in relation to the establishment* more than in relation to any other church. Simply regarded as Christians of such a character, and as Christian societies in

28

such a condition, they could only be condemned and shunned by one section of the general body in common with the rest; their schisms would be like those of the Corinthians considered as contemplated by the different churches of PM-lippi or Ephesus, Jerusalem or Rome. We conclude, therefore, on these two grounds, that, according to the strict letter of the scriptures, the charge urged against the dissenters cannot be maintained. If they are admitted to be Christians, it goes *too far* for any particular church to make; and, if they are not, it does *not go far enough*, and ought to be exchanged for one expressive of more aggravated criminality.

It may be said, however, that this, though it seems a fair application of the principles drawn from the nature and circumstances of the schisms mentioned in scripture, is yet not really so; for, though dissenters may charitably be allowed to be Christians, yet they cannot be regarded as existing in a state so independent of a church to which they formerly belonged as the primitive churches were of each other, and that, therefore, though there be no precedent in scripture strictly analogous to such a case, yet the general principles of scripture ought, in fairness, to be so modified in their application as to meet it. This places the subject in another light; and re-

29

quires for itself a distinct discussion. The next division of the discourse will embrace it.

II.

It may be put thus:—"Having acquired from scripture a definite idea of the nature of schism,

might not that idea be extended, as a general principle, to other cases besides those actually parallel to the primitive examples? Having found that 'schisms' signify in the New Testament rents and breaches *in* a church, differences of opinion and preference, leading to eruptions of temper and violations of affection, then, supposing such contentions to continue until there should ensue an actual separation of some part of the body from the rest, would not *that separation* also be schism? would it not be merely division of feeling, ripening into division of communion? would it not just be the giving of visibility and permanence to the rent and the rupture previously existing? Hence, would not separatist and schismatic—schism and separation—thus come to be identical? and then, on *this ground*, would not dissent be schism in relation to the establishment?"—To these remarks, regarded either as a matter of enquiry or a matter of objection, we should offer the following reply:—

First. We consent, for the sake of discussion,

30

to the proposed extended application of the notion of schism. Let it be granted that the term may be carried from strifes and divisions *in* a church, to their results and consequences in the actual separation of a portion from it. Still,

Secondly, It would be wrong on this account to identify schism and separation—separatist and schismatic; for it is obvious at a glance, that, while, in some cases, the things and persons would be the same, in others they might be totally different. Had some of the factious Corinthians, for instance, seceded from the rest (although such an act would probably have been regarded by the apostle as a distinct offence, and have been distinguished by another name from schism, yet) we will admit that it would have par-

taken of the nature of their previous criminality—that the separation would have been schism, and that *they* would have been schismatics. Suppose, however, that, instead of this, these same persons, in the same spirit, had so acted as to *compel* the others to withdraw, then those others, separating under such circumstances, would have been free from the charge: the accusation and the epithet would have clung to the act and the character of those who remained; for to *them* would belong the guilt of the visible rupture. The two things, therefore, schism and separation, are clearly distinguishable. Schism, in fact, is a thing bad in

31
 itself—bad in its very nature; separation may be bad or good, according to circumstances. A schismatic is an epithet of criminality; it indicates the personal character of the individual, and it describes that character as bad; a separatist is merely a name of circumstance: in itself it is neither bad nor good—it indicates nothing as to the personal character of the individual, it merely describes his position in relation to others. Schism can exist, as we have seen, where there is no separation; and separation itself is not necessarily schism;—not necessarily so, for, while it may be occasioned by crime, it may be occasioned by virtue; it may result, in those who depart, from intolerance attempted or intolerance sustained,—from the pride of faction or the predominance of principle,—attachment to party or attachment to truth. A schismatic, in short, *must* be a sinner, on which ever side he stands; a separatist *may* be “more sinned against than sinning.”

Thirdly. Separation not being necessarily schism, it follows that it is a thing to be judged of in each case according to its merits. It may appear under many forms. It may be faithless

departure from the church *of Christ*, and then it is apostacy; or it may be factious departure from a *particular* church, and then we consent to call it schism; or it may be compelled de-

32

parture *on account* of sin, and then it is excision and ignominy; or it may be unavoidable departure *from fear* of sin, and then it is virtue and praise. The circumstances connected with it, and the disposition and temper of the parties concerned, must determine in every case whether separation be schism or not; and, if it be, whether the sin rests on one party, or neither, or on both. It is quite possible for separation to possess these three different characters:—It may exist without schism at all—it may be attended with schism on both sides—or it may be attended with it only upon one, and then, in this latter case, the question as to *which* of the parties is chargeable with the sin—those who remain or those who depart—that, as we have just seen, must be determined by the causes and circumstances of the separation itself. Hence,

Fourthly, It does not follow that, because dissent was separation from the establishment, *therefore* dissent is schism. Previous to enquiry, we can only say that there may, or may not, have been schism connected with it;—on one side or the other there probably was; but as to *who* were the schismatics, that is not to be inferred from the mere existence of separation, but must be determined entirely by the facts of the case. What, then, were those facts? and what are the conclusions to which they conduct us?

33

To attempt, within the compass of a single discourse, any thing like a full reply to the first of these questions would be obviously improper;

nor is it necessary to do so. You may not only be justly presumed to be so acquainted with the circumstances of the event to which we refer as to see the drift of any general allusions to it, but *that one thing* on which the whole question, in the present stage of our enquiry, turns, stands out in the records of the period in which it occurred, and may easily be evinced to be as conclusive in argument as it is unquestionable in itself.

Dissent—present, existing dissent—considered as separation from the establishment, originated with the act of uniformity in 1662. Previous to that period, from the time of the Reformation, different religious parties were in their turn churchmen and dissenters, as political changes gave them, or gave them not, the advantage of each other. Since that time one has retained the advantage, and all others are of course dissenters. In the present branch of our argument, however, we refer exclusively to nonconformists, properly so called. We keep other religious bodies out of view, whether existing at the time to which we allude or not—whether of previous or of subsequent origin. We want to look at the act of our fathers in making a direct and de-

34

liberate secession from the establishment. The character of that act, and the character supposed to cling to their ecclesiastical representatives, must be determined by the circumstances by which it was occasioned. We shall take the matter on the ground which episcopalians consider the most favourable to themselves, by separating it from the proceedings of the religious bodies, and regarding it simply with relation to the legislature.

For this purpose we must distinguish between a church, an establishment, and a legislature,—

at least as far as may be necessary to enter into the case before us, without pretending that our distinctions will suit all cases. A church is composed of persons who, considered simply as men and as Christians, agree in the belief of certain articles of faith, and are united under a form of ecclesiastical order.—An establishment is this same body considered, not simply as men and as Christians, but as Christians of a certain nation, put in possession of the property devoted to religious purposes of which the nation has the control, and regarded as presenting that form of religion which is to be taught and recognized as that of the country.—A legislature are the constituted authorities of a nation, who have the power of determining what form of religion shall be thus honoured and in-

35

vested—in other words, what church shall, by law, be constituted the establishment. In illustration of these general principles, we may observe that the British legislature has determined that the establishment shall be in England an episcopal, and in Scotland a presbyterian body; and that it is obvious that there is in the one country an episcopal, and in the other a presbyterian *churchy* which can be conceived to exist, and which would exist, if all acts of parliament respecting them were abrogated, and all state favours recalled, and even all ecclesiastical endowments and edifices swept away. A legislature has not the power, properly speaking, of modifying the belief and institutions of a church; for it is always in the power of the church to prevent it, by just declining the price offered for its submission; but a legislature *has* the power of determining *who* shall enjoy what it has to give: it can select any church whatever and make it the establishment, or it can determine to have

no establishment at all. Whether it be right for a legislature to meddle in these matters is a question we are not at present discussing; its power is seen in the case of our own, which has constituted different churches the establishments for different divisions of the empire.

These things being understood, we proceed to say that, at the return of Charles II., the ministers

36

of the establishment might be considered as consisting of three classes of persons,—of conscientious puritans who had been regularly inducted previous to the usurpation, and were, to all intents and purposes, in legal possession of the livings they held,—of others who had been admitted during the usurpation, and who, therefore, whatever were their principles or characters, might be considered as possessed of other men's property,—and, lastly, of those who were sincerely attached to episcopacy and the liturgy, and those, whose only principle being that of keeping what they had, were ready at any time to profess and to practise whatever the legislature should “delight to honour.” Such was the state of things when, monarchy being restored, the episcopalians, who as such had been living in retirement and suffering from intolerance, were recalled to the favour of the state, and measures were taken for again making their church the establishment. Of the three classes of persons just mentioned, the last of course gave no trouble; they were ready for any thing, or were ready to anticipate what they saw was approaching. The second also were easily disposed of; they could be dispossessed of their livings by the law as it stood, and in this way were quietly ejected. The first class were the most difficult to deal with; they were in a position from which existing statutes could not remove

37

them, and they were under the influence of principles which human authority could not reach. They believed, however, in the justice and necessity of an establishment, and therefore, agreeing so far with the episcopalian, they were ready to seek for, and open to consider, such desired or proposed modifications of the existing one, as, being mutually agreeable and agreed to, might unite in it the services of both, without entrenching on the conscientious convictions of either.

Such was the relative position of the religious parties. We abstain from all reference to the manner in which the one listened to the scruples or regarded the reason and conscience of the other. We will even allow, for the sake of argument, that there was nothing but the display of the most bland and brotherly consideration; that there was the most sincere desire to meet the crisis, and so to re-construct the frame-work of the establishment as to secure to the men the possession of their property, and to continue to the nation the advantage of their ministrations. We suppose this. But we want it now to be observed that, in spite of this fraternal and affectionate intercourse, during which the one class of men stated to the other that they had conscientious convictions *against* certain observances admitted not to be enjoined in scripture, and *in favour* of certain views of the minis-

38

terial office resting in their opinion on scriptural authority,—in spite of the kind and candid attempts to multiply points of coincidence, and discover means of comprehension, by fair argument and mutual concessions,—in spite of this, the third party, the legislature, took the matter into its own hand, and proceeded to settle it by a much

more decided and summary process. It passed an Act enjoining that, on or before a certain day, all who would be recognized as ministers of its establishment were to give their solemn and unequivocal "assent and consent" to those very observances to which the one class of religionists objected, and were to abjure those very views of the ministerial office which they conscientiously believed. Such was the requisition and the demand—we do not say of the church instigating the legislature, but of the legislature choosing its church. Such was the requisition and the demand of the law; and to such a demand honest and honourable men had but one reply. They could not commit perjury; they could not profess to approve what they in reality condemned; they could not adopt what they believed to be false, nor abjure what they considered to be true. They could not do these things either to retain or to purchase the patronage of Caesar. They were placed in a position in which it was to be shown whether they would submit to man or

39

obey God. They chose the latter alternative. They determined to appeal from earth to heaven, and to cast themselves, their wives, and their little ones, on *Him* who feeds the fowls of the air and the beasts of the forest. The day fixed for the trial of their resolution and their consistency at length came,—the day fearfully anticipated but firmly met; it dawned upon them in the possession of that, which, but for conscience, they might have continued to retain,—it closed over them beggars and outcasts. "*This was the beginning of sorrows.*"

It was "the beginning of sorrows;"—but the question now comes, Was it also the beginning of schism? From that moment the men were separatists; were they also schismatics? It re-

quires little, I think, either of common sense or of common candour to furnish the reply. Scripture, Reason, Humanity, answer, No. The thing speaks for itself. The nonconformist confessors had no alternative but separation or dishonour—a peaceable departure from those of their brethren who felt that they could obey the demands of the state, or a guilty participation of what they considered *their* sins, with the conscious commission of others of their own.

Such was the origin of dissent considered simply as separation from a form of religion established by law. By what occasioned it, it

40

must be judged. Were we to take the ground of the Act of Uniformity, being the suggestion of the one of the religious parties, and the expression of their spirit and feeling towards the other, the question as to who were the schismatics would, in that case, be easily decided, as it would only be necessary to notice who, on that supposition, were the real and active agents in the separation that ensued. This ground, however, we do not take, not because we might not, but because we wish to dispose of the question on premises the least favourable to ourselves. Admitting, therefore, that the one body of men were just as innocent of the act of parliament as the other,—admitting, further, that the most of the ejected ministers had long before separated from the episcopal *church* (a thing hereafter to be considered by itself), or had never belonged to it, and that they now separated from the *establishment*, not because their brethren were inimical to union, but because the state decided against it,—still, even on this ground, their separation cannot be considered schism, so far as they were concerned. It was the mere exercise of a right, which every man possesses, to decline the favour

of princes when it is to be purchased by dishonour; it was occasioned by the exercise of an authority which is not to be obeyed when it contravenes the higher authority of heaven. When

⁴¹ required solemnly to declare what, in them, would have been falsehood, they “conferred not with flesh and blood,” but sacrificed every thing to “maintain their integrity:”—*this was virtue*, even if the men were mistaken in their opinions, and, as an act of virtue, and an act of sin, can never be identical, *this* and the “sin of schism” cannot be the same. In fact, the sin must rest, if it rest any where, upon those who acquiesced in a sectarian constitution of the establishment, and not upon those who were compelled to leave it,—on those who sacrificed union to compulsory uniformity, for the sake of the advantages offered by the state, and not on those who sacrificed the advantages already in their possession, and rejected a hollow and superficial uniformity, for the sake of preserving from defilement the sanctuary of their conscience, and of advocating principles which have more to do with the promotion of union than what even they themselves at the moment understood.

We are justified in taking this view of the subject, not only by the authority of scripture and the reason of the thing, but by the actual conduct and the recorded opinions of churchmen themselves—their conduct when placed in similar circumstances, and their opinions expressed in their controversy both with the Romanists and with us. In relation to their conduct, it may be

⁴² briefly observed that, *as* PROTESTANTS, they had their conscientious convictions when, in the reign of Mary, popery was recalled by the state, and

imposed on whomsoever consented to belong to the establishment. They had their conscientious convictions, and they acted upon them; they refused to profess what they believed to be false, or to comply with what they considered superstitious; they would not retain or purchase the favour of the legislature at the price to be paid for it; they dissented, and they suffered for their dissent. Thus, they did not “submit themselves to every ordinance of man”—they were not “obedient to the higher powers”—but they did not therefore regard themselves as schismatics, they attached the epithet to those whose conduct occasioned and compelled their disobedience. Again, *as episcopalians*, they had their conscientious convictions when, in the reign of the first Charles, episcopacy was gradually reduced, and presbyterianism admitted to succeed it. They had their conscientious convictions, and they acted upon them; again they refused to profess compliance, and again they dissented, and suffered for their dissent; and again, we say, that, though refractory and disobedient to the “powers that were,” they never thought of being stigmatized as schismatics *for that*; they accused the dominant religious party of the sin, *and they were right*.

43

As to their recorded opinions, if we were arguing on the supposition which we have consented to waive, that the episcopalians, as such, compelled by their conduct the separation of our fathers, we might mention that Chillingworth, in meeting the charge of schism which the church of Rome brings against that of England, takes precisely this ground, and reasons just as, with equal justice, a dissenter might reason against *him* as a churchman. We might quote such passages as the following, of which many might be found:—“Some perhaps say,” he observes,

in addressing the Romanists, “that they left not your external communion in all things,—meaning that they left it not voluntarily, being not *fugitivi* but *fugati*, as being willing to join with you in any act of piety; but they were, *by you, necessitated and constrained* to separate, because you will not suffer them to do well with you, unless they would do ill with you.”—Again, they are obliged not to communicate with you, “not so much because you maintain errors and corruptions, but because you *impose* them, and have so ordered your communion, that either we must communicate with you in these things, or nothing.”—We pass over this line of argument, however, and therefore take the following extract, which is more directly to our purpose, being coincident with the course of observation which

44

we have chosen to pursue:—“If the presbyterians, or papists, were to-morrow the great majority of the nation, and if the constituted authorities of the land, king, lords, and commons, thinking either of these persuasions the best religion, were to establish it by law, *I should then become a dissenter*. With my belief in the scriptural authority of episcopacy, I could not conscientiously be a presbyterian, and, with my knowledge of the anti-scriptural doctrines of the church of Rome, I *must separate* from her communion.”—Nothing can be plainer than this. Here is the distinction between a church, an establishment, and a legislature, clearly illustrated. Here is not only the power of the legislature acknowledged, but the right of the legislature defended, of choosing *what* church shall be the establishment; and yet, *even with this*, the imperative necessity and duty of dissent is maintained *for those* who cannot conscientiously obey the legal expression of the supreme will.—

Now then, observe, this language is not only the language of a clergyman, the Rev. Samuel Charles Wilkes, but it is his language in a tract published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and, therefore, it is no longer to be regarded as the language of a solitary individual, but as coming clothed with the sanction, and as uttering the voice, of the whole

45

episcopal bench! Here, then, we have the *principle* of our ecclesiastical ancestors' separation from the establishment asserted and advocated by every prelate of the land. They all concur in stating that, were they placed in the circumstances of our fathers, they would do precisely what they did. Would they consent, think you, for this, to be branded as schismatics, and scorned as perpetrators of a sin more disgraceful than drunkenness? No: they would be "confessors" and "martyrs,"—"their posterity would approve their sayings," and celebrate their sufferings, and rise up and call them blessed! We admit their principles, and approve their avowal, and we presume to think that what will defend *them* will defend *us*.—Let us hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter. *Dissent*, considered simply as separation from a form of religion established by law,—by law, even in the most strict and proper sense, not the enactment of a usurper, or of one class of the constituted authorities of the nation proceeding without the approval and concurrence of the others,—but law as the united voice of the three estates harmoniously acting, and that too in a province where episcopalians admit that they are competent to have a will and to exercise authority,—considered as disobedience even to *this*, and as separation from those who obey, dissent is *not* schism,

46

the archbishop of Canterbury, my lord of London himself, with all their brethren besides, being judges.

III.

These reasonings admit but of one reply. It may be said, "In both branches of the argument you have proceeded upon false and untenable assumptions. In the first, you assumed the possibility of the existence of a plurality of churches in the same nation; and you reasoned as if your societies were churches as distinct from that of this kingdom as the primitive churches were, and particular national churches are, of each other, leaving out of view the fact, fatal to your theory, that they were originally *separations* from the establishment. And now, in the second, when this startling and gravelling truth was to be disposed of, you have taken care to avoid the very gist of the question. You have reasoned only on the ground of resistance to secular authority, actually admitting that the separation of your fathers from the political establishment had been *preceded* by their separation from the episcopal church!—But *this last* is the very sin you are in search of!—the master sin—the source of your other and subordinate delinquencies. We do not charge you with schism for resisting the enact-

47

ments of human law; but we charge you with schism for resisting the enactments of the law of Christ. It happens, indeed, in England, that the legislature has hit upon the right church, and that obedience to the one is obedience to the other; but, where this is not the case, the establishment is itself but a form of schismatical

disobedience. We charge you, then, with guilt for abandoning episcopacy; for breaking the unity of the church by tearing yourselves away from the only truly constituted communion; for rejecting the divinely appointed authority of bishops, and the divinely authorised form of ecclesiastical order. *This* is the sin of schism.”—Such a reply might certainly be made to our argument, and with such a reply many would be satisfied. One charge of assumption, however, might be very fairly met by another. We might tell the objector that *he* assumes for his church what we do not grant, and what some of his brethren are wiser than to claim. But we will not do this. We will look at the subject in the new and enlarged aspect which it takes in the objection, and submit a few general reasonings adapted to meet it. I say “new and enlarged aspect,” for you will observe that schism, as thus stated, applies not merely to dissenters, properly so called, but to all Christians whatever who object to a particular ecclesiastical discipline. This

48

view of the matter, therefore, is far more sweeping and desolating than the last. It includes, in the compass of its condemnation, in addition to the actual seceders from the political establishment, all sects in the kingdom, and all churches in the world, whatever their faith, and whatever their form, who deny the divine right and the apostolical origin of the English episcopacy, or, at least, who deny and depart from episcopacy itself.

This is the charge which, in one form or other, is incessantly recurring, which is described in every variety of phrase, and urged against us with every species of violence and invective in the adopted publication of the reverend and learned prelate in whose diocese we are at present assembled. The following passages, as they are

a fair sample of what abound in the book, contain, we may presume, his lordship's opinion upon this point:—"I do not believe your societies to be churches of Christ, or their members disciples of Christ—or, in other words, Christians—any more than I consider your teachers ministers of Christ. Your societies, or churches as you term them, not being constituted according to the laws of Christ laid down in his word, as has been evinced, and, therefore, not in subjection to his authority, can have no right to be called Christian churches or Christian societies. They are neither a part nor

49

parts of the visible church of Christ; and, in consequence, can lay no claim to those blessings which God in the gospel has promised to the church;—of those blessings Christ is the grand inexhaustible fountain, and he dispenses them in his fold, the [episcopal] church, to every one of his sheep, by the hands of his appointed shepherds. I cannot see how, in what way, or by what means, dissenters can at all claim to be considered as Christians." "Dissenters may, some of them, possibly belong to the *invisible* church; with that, however, as we cannot discern spirits, we have nothing to do." "Without bishops, priests, and deacons, there is no church; and therefore *all the various* sectarian societies, which are without the presence and presidency of a regular successor of the apostles, are without the pale of the Christian church." "Dissenters, by separating from the [episcopal] church, reject her and her ministers, and through them Christ himself." "by rejecting the authority of Christ, as it exists in his delegated ministers [bishops], they are guilty of rejecting Christ." Of a piece with this is the doctrine of the "Oxford Tracts," recently published by a clerical society: one of

them says, "The bishops stand in the place of the apostles; and, whatever we ought to do, had we lived when the apostles were alive, the same ought we to do for the bishops. He that despises

50
 them despises the apostles." "*This* is faith, to look at things not as seen, but as unseen; to be as sure that the bishop is Christ's representative, as if we actually saw upon his head a cloven tongue like as of fire." Another says, "Why should we talk so much of an *establishment* and so little of an apostolical succession? Why should we not seriously endeavour to impress our people with *this plain truth*, that, by *separating* themselves from *our* communion, they separate themselves not only from a decent, orderly, useful, *society*, but from the *only church in this realm* which has a right to be quite sure *that she has the Lord's body to give to the people.*" The Rev. J. Stephenson describes the "*state and prospects* of the resisters, *whatever their denomination may be*, of God's arrangements and God's authorities" (meaning episcopacy), in this way:—"The offences" they commit "are spiritual, and the punishments *eternal*. The offence is resistance to the love, the wisdom, and the power of God, and the punishment is *the wrath of God*" The matter then stands thus:—By one writer the "eternal" "wrath of God" is the certain doom of dissenters, "whatever their denomination," in the *next* world; and to another, as we formerly saw, "the curse of God appears to rest heavily upon them" in *this*; while both, with others, concur in considering this state of malediction

51
 and abandonment as the necessary consequence of their schism"—that is, their separation from episcopacy—their departure from the only

“society” in this realm that is a “church,” or “the *only* church in this realm that has a right to be quite sure that she has the body of Christ to give to the people.”

On statements and denunciations like these,—not uttered, it may be observed, long ago, during the reign of infallibility, prescription, and ignorance, before God was permitted to declare his own will in his own words, or the right of his people admitted to examine and consult that will for themselves, but uttered now—uttered by protestant ministers, and uttered concerning and against other protestants, who, equally with themselves, hold the fundamentals of the gospel, and are at least *as* distinguished for their zealous and voluntary efforts to maintain them,—on such statements and denunciations, we submit the following brief and general reasonings:—

In the first place. Their very extravagance refutes them. There is something in every bosom in which Christian charity is not dead—something more rapid than reasoning, the logic of the heart, often sounder and safer than that of the understanding, which irresistibly and peremptorily rejects such conclusions. It is impossible not to suspect that there must surely be

52

a mistake somewhere in the reasoning that terminates in such tremendous results; and that there must be something dreadfully wrong about the soul of that man who can survey them, not only without anguish, but with apparent satisfaction. What a scene of darkness and desolation do these sentiments discover! The whole kingdom, if not indeed the whole Christian world, withering under the blast and ban of the Almighty, and exposed to his “eternal” displeasure and “wrath,” except a favoured flock, which enjoys at once health and protection, not from any

obvious superiority in the richness of its pasture or the whiteness of its wool, but because (“hear it, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!”), *because of the form of the fold in which it happens to be gathered!*—No hope of salvation, or very little—a mere faint, stray, solitary beam from “uncovenanted mercy,” for all who reject the authority of diocesan bishops, who enjoy not the services of one man episcopally ordained, and the “presence and presidency” of another episcopally consecrated,—the latter being the “direct successor” and the “express image “of an apostle, on whose brow, while sense sees nothing but a humble imitation of a cloven tongue, faith, “the evidence of things not seen,” penetrating to what is invisible, beholds the lambent circle of glory—the miraculous symbol of the descended Spirit! I

53

do not hesitate to assert that, on such principles, Christianity, regarded as a system intended to be universal, may be pronounced a failure—an entire and impotent failure; for, considering the nature of mind in *all* men, and the present and probable condition of opinion in the best—those who are not only themselves “the excellent of the earth,” but who are the most zealous and active in filling it with their likeness—it is impossible to conceive that this arrogant episcopacy will ever become the religion of the world.

It is admitted, indeed, that “*some* dissenters may *possibly* belong to the invisible church;” but the charge against them is incessantly repeated that, as a body, they, “by their schism,” in rejecting episcopacy, expose themselves to the eternal malediction of heaven. If this be schism, well may it be thought, as to its nature and consequences, to be a sin “greater than that of drunkenness;” for it destroys not merely the debauched and the dissolute, but the (apparently)

most moral and religious portion of the people: it destroys not *some* merely of these, but the mass and the multitude—sweeping them to “eternal” “wrath” by thousands and tens of thousands, except *possibly* here and there a solitary individual. And now, let it be particularly observed, that Dissent is chargeable with this amount of injury

54

and ruin to the souls of men, not because it bribes and allures into the ministry the ambitious and the secular,—not because it appoints to the care of other’s souls, those who have never bestowed a thought upon their own,—not because it leads, from whatever cause, in a vast majority of its ministers, to a style of instruction destitute of the life and power of the gospel,—not because it so confounds the world and the church, and in practice so equally recognises as Christians the righteous and the wicked, as to destroy all moral distinctions, and to prevent the truth from reaching the conscience,—not because it prescribes Offices which tend to deceive, and countenances views of the efficacy of the sacraments, and the power and virtue of priestly services, which engender among the mass of its adherents the most mischievous misconceptions,—not, in short, because it sustains among its teachers numbers who so preach as “to make the cross of Christ of none effect,” and by whom the great truths respecting “God’s method of justification,” the cardinal doctrine of scripture, are kept back, obscured, misrepresented, or denied. Were this the charge, we could understand it. Were dissent, as a *religious* system, represented as allied to or enclosed by another *secular* system, which, though separable from it, had, on account of

55

the connection of the two, the power to act most injuriously on its purity and working,—were *this* the representation, we repeat, we should be able to account for the statements referred to, and should be ready to attribute them to zeal for God and affection for *us*. But this is *not* the ground of the statements. Let it be granted that dissenting ministers are, in the strain of their instructions, the most evangelical; let it be granted that “Christ is preached” by them, and preached apparently in the most serious spirit and with most delightful results; let it be granted that there is not a minister in “all the various sectarian societies, that are without the presence and presidency of a regular successor of the apostles,” but what speaks and lives like those of our brethren in the establishment, for whose success we give God thanks, and in whose joy we cordially sympathize: let all this be granted,—yet all this avails nothing; the indications of piety, and the appearances of zeal and of success, are all false, nugatory, and deceptive—for the men, *by rejecting bishops, have rejected Christ*; they, and all connected with them, are separated from his sheep, and beyond the reach of covenanted blessings. They may meet together, but Christ is not in the midst of them; they may preach, but it must be without the unction of his Spirit; they may have churches,

56

“as they are called,”* but they form *no part* of his visible community. In consequence of “the sin of schism,” *that is, separation from episcopacy*, they are not in the ark in which alone it is possible to be safe amid the deluge which is to destroy the world of the ungodly! They may imagine that Christ is with them in the vessel in

which they have embarked, but he is *not, however strong and encouraging the indications of his presence.* In the second place. We object to these exclusive and arrogant pretensions because they are inconsistent with the fundamental principle of protestantism—that principle which alone justifies the reformation from popery. It is embodied in the well-known aphorism of Chillingworth—“The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.” In accordance with *this*, one man, and one body of men, examining that Bible for themselves, have just as good a right as others to say, with respect to the church, what was, or what was not, the primitive institution. The admission, by the reformers, of the *fact* that the church had fallen from its simplicity and purity and become corrupt,—and the admission, along with this, of the *principle* that the Bible alone was to determine *what* that corruption had touched, and *how far* it extended,—

* “Dissenting churches, as they are called.”—This phrase occurs in the body of the bishop’s charge, *as his own*. See p. 10.

57

and the further admission that, while the Bible is the exclusive rule and law of the church, it is also the universal property of the people;—these things bring the whole question respecting Christian truth, human duty, and church government,—not to the independent fancies and capricious conceits of individual *men*, but—to the testimony of scripture and the declarations of God. They move the matter beyond the control of human imposition and human authority; they bid every man, and every body of men, to be silent, as it regards dictation to their fellows, and command all to listen, with equal reverence, to what is equally spoken to all of them from the throne. Thus, while they inculcate the deepest

reverence for the divine word, and make all feel that it is at their peril to “invent” any thing in religion for themselves, they also set all free from submission to the respective “inventions” of each other; they require them to search, and permit them to determine, what is, or is not, the meaning of the rule, and they sanction them in peaceably and charitably acting on their convictions. These general principles recognized, expounded, defended, and partially applied, at the reformation, carried the then existing state of things to be pronounced upon by God himself as he speaks in his word. They are not, however, of limited and temporary, but of general

58

and perpetual application; they partake of the immutability and eternity of truth; they therefore sanction the carrying of the present or of any past state of the church to the same tribunal, and they will sanction the like process with any that are future. It is of no use, therefore, saying that the church of England never separated from that of Rome, but that, having existed as a distinct member of the catholic body long before the coming of Augustine, it, as protestant, only freed itself from the grasp of the Roman usurper, and reverted to its original condition; and that, consequently, it affords no approval of the right of private judgment, nor sanctions, by example, separation from itself. It is no use saying this; for, if the first supposed consequence be admitted, then, as by this the principle of protestantism is given up, our argument is at an end: not only is controversy precluded where there are no common principles to start with, but as, on this supposition, the English church is still popish, we have, of course, nothing further to say.—But, taking the other part of the statement, then, *on the principle of pro-*

testantism, it is obvious to reply, that, granting all that any one, on this theory, can possibly desire—granting that the church in this country, *previous* to the reformation, was not really the church of Rome which had *taken the place* vacated

59

by the ancient church of England, but was that ancient church of England itself, its ministers propagated by pure and regular succession from the first British stock, but then groaning Under the tyranny of the foreign intruder,—granting also that, *at* the reformation, the church was actually carried back to its original state, to what it was at the supposed second or first conversion of the country,—granting all this (and no reasonable man can require more), we say, that, on the principle of the only sound and defensible protestantism, this original condition of the church is, *itself*, to be carried and submitted to the scripture, and is to be judged of and pronounced upon according to the response of the “Holy Oracle,” just as much as the condition into which it was brought by the foreign deleterious infusions. The principle still recurs—“the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants,”—“to the law and to the testimony,”—“what saith the scripture?”—by *this* “prove all things,” and *then* “hold fast that which is good.” The state of things in the second century is as much amenable to scripture as the state of things in the sixteenth—the church of England as the church of Rome; that church it seems *could* be led into error by antichrist in his manhood; she *may* therefore have been led into error by antichrist in his infancy. He began to work under

60

the very eye of the apostles, and hence, it is by the principles of the apostolic law, and not

merely by the facts of the apostolic age, that the character of every church and of every age (even the first) must be ultimately judged. Even admitting, therefore, all that can be required by any advocate of the original independence of the British church, still, it is competent to every man to bring its claims and its constitution to the test of scripture, unless, indeed, it possesses the infallibility which it denies to the pope. In fact, there is no consistent medium between claiming infallibility ourselves and attributing it exclusively to Christ—between submission to the men of this age, as well as of any other, or submission to none in any, but the subjection of all to The Rule. Admit that we have the British church standing before us just as it appeared at its first introduction: it is either purely apostolical or it is not; this can only be determined *by trying it by the Bible*: and it is imperative to do this; for the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our religion. If it be, *it* has not the force of law—it is only worthy to stand or to be imitated because it is agreeable to the law of Christ; if it be *not*, then it is competent to reform or to leave it, in those points where it has left the law; or, if not, then the Bible alone is *not* our religion; the protestant maxim must be altered,—it must be, not “the

61

Bible alone,” but “the Bible and antiquity,”—not “God alone,” but “God and man,” or “God and tradition.” If this is to be defended, and what is admitted to be *not* apostolical is to be invested with *authority*, then *conscious* departure from scripture becomes a question of degree, of taste, or of convenience; and then, as of *this* men and churches will determine for themselves, some may choose a presbytery, and some may choose a pope, and the advocate of erring antiquity will be utterly unable to con-

demn either. It is well known, however, that what, for the sake of discussion, we have granted in this argument, cannot be maintained; that many of the most pious and learned of the reformers deeply regretted that the process of reform stopped where it did; and were of opinion that many things, which circumstances compelled them to retain, were departures from the *primitive* church, whatever they might be in relation to the *British* previous to Augustine. On the whole, it follows, from the great fundamental protestant principle, that the advocates of any system of church government have not only equal liberty with the advocates of episcopacy to consult the scriptures for themselves, and to adopt what they deem to be imperative,—but that they would be just as much warranted in denouncing and excommunicating *them* as they

62

are in flourishing and flinging their thunderbolts against every body else. The men who do this, whoever they may be,—whatever their stations in the church or in society,—might always be covered with the anathemas of the conventicle, with just as much reason as *they* have for fulminating their curses against schismatics and sectarians.

In the third place. We object to the claim of episcopacy to be regarded as the only safe and acceptable form of the church, every other being schismatical and dangerous, because, from the generality of scripture on the subject, we believe that God has placed church government among secondary things, and that, therefore, for persons really to be separated from the church of Christ, they must deny and dissent from fundamental truth, and not merely err in subordinate points of faith or in matters of ecclesiastical order. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that episco-

pany is right, this would not prove that all other forms are fundamentally wrong—so wrong that, however their advocates might embrace the verities of the gospel, they could not be saved. The whole spirit of the New Testament is opposed to this proud and uncharitable exclusiveness. It places individual safety in “repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” and it exhibits the oneness of believers as consisting in

63

this spiritual fellowship with their Head and with each other. With respect to all that is external and circumstantial and secondary in our religion, there is, if I may so speak, the incessant display of a noble indifference, because there is always the spirit of a sublime and a generous catholicity. From the nature of the case, there cannot be, in the New Testament, any recorded instance of different churches under different forms of government and discipline;—this is an admission which all parties must equally make, and implies no concession on the part of any;—there is not, then, this instance in *the facts* of the record: but there are general principles and expressions, in the annunciations of the *law*, which show how such churches, supposing them to exist, should regard each other. The very genius of the gospel is foreign to minute and particular prescriptions; its nature is noble, generous, and plastic; it is intended for the *world*, and therefore it is burdened by no complicated and cumbersome arrangements; it is for *man*, for the universal necessities and condition of humanity, and is therefore fitted to meet them under all the diversified circumstances in which man may be found: “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The Christians at Rome, under the teaching of the apostles, differing about the use

64

of meats and days, differed, considering their circumstances, quite as much as, in these times, *they* can be supposed to do who, equally holding the fundamentals of the faith, *conscientiously* and *from the scripture*, adopt different forms of church order. The lessons which the apostle addresses to the one are applicable to the other. Writing to both classes of the Roman believers, he commends both for acting according to their light and convictions; he forbids the language of condemnation or contempt; he exhorts to mutual love for the persons, and to reciprocal respect for the consciences, of each other; and he assures them that, being “fully persuaded in their own minds,” and sincerely endeavouring, according to their convictions, “to serve Christ,” they would be each, and equally, “acceptable to God.” In the same spirit, or rather in a spirit sublimer and loftier, showing a still higher attachment and a more exclusive preference to the *doctrine* of the gospel, in comparison with all secondary circumstances, he says, in writing to the Philippians, “some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ... not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. What then? Notwithstanding, whether in pretence or in truth, *Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*” Seeing, then, that the apostle neither enforced uniformity on the

65

church, nor consigned to “the wrath of God” those who received the gospel from men actuated by “envy and strife,” surely his “successors” might be expected to overlook differences which interfere not with *the faith*, and to respect those who, whatever be their errors, “*preach Christ,*” and preach him *not* in a spirit of hostility, but of

sincerity and love. I could quote many other passages in illustration of the general argument, but I content myself with adverting to that which I have selected as a text. The spirit of John, and the other disciples whom Christ reproved, is precisely that of the exclusive and uncharitable advocates of episcopacy: "Master, We saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Just so; in spite of the man actually using the name of Jesus, and using it with respect, and, as the event proved, using it in faith,—in spite of his success in casting out devils, and thus delivering the distressed from the "enemy and the avenger,"—in spite of the strength which he restored to the distracted intellect, and the tranquillity he infused into the tortured bosom, and the joy and the rejoicing which he sent into many families,—in spite of his diminishing the amount of human suffering, and lessening the demands on the public sympathy, and adding to the useful members

66

of the commonwealth, and augmenting the general sum both of happiness and virtue,—in spite of all this, he was to be forbidden and silenced by those whose pride was hurt, or whose envy was stirred, "*because he followed not with them.*" The reproof of the Master was beautifully illustrative at once of the mildness of his personal character and the spirit becoming his church; "forbid him not;" if you are impelled by jealousy for *my* honour, recollect that *he* is not likely to speak evil of a Name whose power he has learnt to value and to use; and, if you are seduced by jealousy for *your own*, remember that, by engaging in the work to which you are devoted, he evinces no common attachment to your cause; he shows that he is on your

side, that he desires what *you* desire, and that he aims at doing what, on your own principles, never can be done too soon; think of his success; love your common work better than your fellow and confederated labourers; *rejoice that devils are cast out*, whosoever may be the instrument; the blessedness of the achievement may well dispose you to overlook some little irregularity in the means.

In the last place. These considerations would show that dissent, honest and charitable dissent, from episcopacy would not be schism, *even on the supposition of episcopacy being right*; the true

67

faith might still be held, Christian charity still cultivated, the spiritual union of the church preserved, and the name of Christ used for “casting out devils,” and used with *his sanction* to give it success. The *supposition*, however, cannot be admitted. Episcopacy, as it is, certainly bears quite as little resemblance to the state of things described in the New Testament as any other system whatever. On the ground, then, of the denial of its exclusive pretensions, *two* courses of argument might be taken. Some would go so far as to advocate the divine right and exclusive authority *of other* systems; and, for my part, I see not, on the principle of protestantism, why the adherents of one system should not claim a divine right, and pretend to be the sole followers of the primitive pattern, as well as another. The law of the Master is open to all, and one class of his servants may be as sincerely convinced as others that *they*, and *they only*, reverentially search and scrupulously obey it. So convinced,—“we have,” they might urge, “the argument from scripture, and having *that* we have the argument from antiquity; *our* ‘Fathers’ are the apostles, and our ‘Councils’ the coun-

cils of heaven; the first age is ours,—the second and succeeding ones may be whose they may.” They who take this ground will consider, not that *they* are schismatics by dissenting from epis-

68

copacy, but that episcopalians are schismatics by separating from *them*. They would urge, too, that episcopacy had features of sectarianism peculiar to itself; that it was at once the source and the sustenance of schism, the origin and the perpetuator of strifes, because it not only departed from primitive order, but, by investing its own lie with the character of law, and repelling all approaches but on its own principles, it tended to prolong and to exasperate divisions. One advocate for divine right would of course fling the accusation of schism at another; and it must be admitted that, if *one protestant* church can consistently do so, any and all may consistently do the same. For myself, I do not go so far as this. I do not argue the present question from the divine right of some other system in opposition to episcopacy. I do not assert that “dissent is not schism” because dissenting churches are *alone* true and apostolical, and Independency the only thing that is *safe for man* or *acceptable to God*. I do not say this, because I do not believe it. I take the second course of reasoning to which I referred, and base the argument on a more catholic foundation. Taking the three great forms of church government, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism, I should proceed thus:—These three systems of discipline, brought honestly and im-

69

partially to the test of Scripture, are all right and all wrong,—though right and wrong in different degrees. There is something in the record in

favour of all, but the book is not the exclusive property of any. There is more, perhaps, in support of each than the thoroughgoing advocates of the others will admit. There is more of episcopacy than is quite palatable to the presbyterian and the independent; there is more of presbyterianism than the independent and the episcopalian can easily digest; and there is more of Congregationalism than either the priest or the presbyter can manage to get rid of. While, therefore, I have my personal convictions of what, in my view, is most accordant with primitive usage, and most agreeable to the spirit of the gospel, and most adapted to universality, yet I believe that all the systems, if worked by spiritual men, and for spiritual purposes, will be acceptable to God, their societies *churches*, and their advocates and adherents “heirs together of the grace of life.” Each “holding the head,” and striving “in godly sincerity” to serve him, and, while seeking to do so in that mode believed to be best, looking out with an eye of delight and a heart of affection on those who, in *their* way, are trying to do the same,—cultivating intercourse and communion with them,—and constantly saying, in their salutations and their prayers,

70

“grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,”—such men, *whoever they might be*, and such societies, *whatever was their form*, would have nothing about them of a schism or a sect.

And this is dissent. It is a stand not merely for the claims of scripture and the supremacy of Christ,—not merely for the liberty of all to consult his will and to follow their convictions, and thus to render to him a reasonable service; but it is a stand for the recognition of all as Christian brethren “who hold the Head;” it is a stand

for mutual indulgence to secondary differences grounded on agreement in what is supreme; it is a stand for substantial and visible unity, by being a stand for universal Christian communion,—for the unrestricted intercourse of ministers and churches in spite of the diversity of forms of discipline. To make uniformity of government the criterion of the church, and the basis of reciprocal intercourse and communion, is to put church-order in the place of Christ. Christ must be first, fellowship next, and *then* as much uniformity as will follow from the two. This is the principle and the spirit of Evangelical Dissent; and hence, *instead of being schismatical*, IT HAS LESS OF SECTARIANISM AND MORE OF CATHOLICITY THAN ANY OTHER SYSTEM WHATEVER.

71

IV.

I have thus endeavoured to discharge the duty to which I was appointed, in as full a manner as the limits of a single discourse would permit. The discussion having extended much further than I at first anticipated, I cannot enter at any length on the *general observations* which I purposed deducing from the whole subject. I shall mention, however, some of them, but without attempting their extended illustration.

First. Schism, regarded as the violation of Christian charity, ought to be felt to be an evil of great magnitude. It is a sin, and no slight one—a sin in its nature highly offensive to God, and in its consequences most injurious to the church. Upon this subject the unreflecting of different parties go to opposite extremes. Some see schism every where, some no where; some in every thing which men have stigmatized by the epithet, others not even in that which is

condemned by God: and in some cases, nor are they few, these opposite errors may be found to meet in the same individuals. The spiritually instructed will avoid both. He who has been so taught to fear God as to have learned to fear nothing besides, will dread the *sin*, but not the denunciations of those who mistake it. He will not smile at the mention of schism, as if it were

72

an absurdity to suppose it could be applicable to *him*; nor will he be “scared by visions” of immitigable vengeance for what his adversaries regard *in themselves* as partaking more of the nature of virtue than of crime. He will “watch and pray” lest he should offend God by contracting the guilt; but he will possess his soul in peace, an enlightened conscience not condemning him, when men—mistaken, prejudiced, presumptuous—cover him with insult or assign him to damnation.

Second. Let dissenters remember that, though dissent may not be schism, many dissenters may yet be schismatics. Our argument has been conducted to meet the accusation of a particular party: to apply it to ourselves, we should begin where we have concluded, advance to where we began, and then look at the sin in the light of scripture, and examine ourselves as in the presence of God.—*Ecclesiastically* speaking, we believe that we are not schismatics because we adopt a different form of polity from our brethren; *politically* speaking, we believe that we are not schismatics because we separate from those whose judgments can acquiesce in what ours cannot; *scripturally* speaking, we believe we are not schismatics in relation to *their* church, whatever may be the character and condition of our own: but, *practically* speaking, this condition and cha-

73

racter, however unimportant comparatively to others, is of deep and solemn importance to ourselves. Upon this, in the sight of God, rests, in relation to schism, our innocence or guilt. If it be “a small matter to be judged of men’s judgment,” it is the reverse when “he who judgeth us is the Lord.” Let dissenters then see to it, that, while their *system* is cleared from the reproach of schism, they *themselves* are not “found sinners.” This is the case, in churches, where factious tempers are permitted to exist,—where pride causes a want of sympathy, or ambition engenders the desire of pre-eminence. It is the case, in individuals, where there are no glowings of heart, and no gushings of affection, towards the entire and extended family of Christ;—where there is the absence of feeling towards “all who, in every place, call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours;”—where, towards any class, or any community, there is the indulgence of an envious or uncharitable spirit;—where, “in contending for the truth,” there is rancour or bitterness in the mode of doing it;—or where, in relation to the controversy of the present times, there is not made, both by the mind and the heart, a constant distinction between the political *establishment* and the episcopal *church*.

Third. An exclusive political establishment is necessarily and in principle schismatical. In the

74

preceding argument we have had occasion slightly to refer to past periods, when different religious parties were in their turn churchmen and dissenters, and when most, and many of our fathers among them, approved of state alliances and coveted to become the establishment themselves. We have nothing to do but to condemn all. Each,

as they obtained the advantage, forgot what they had felt, and learned, and pleaded for in the days of their adversity, and became, as politically constituted, both schismatical and intolerant. With our views, we are not concerned about balancing the relative amount of criminality between the episcopalians and presbyterians when respectively in power. The presbyterian, perhaps, might urge upon us that, when *he* ejected, he ejected on character and after enquiry; that he set apart a fifth of the income for the support of the repudiated; and that his enactments required, and that with considerable liberty, only the use or disuse of certain forms and not the abjuration of certain opinions. He might thus seek to condemn by comparison the establishment that crushed him. And then the independent might urge his claim for praise superior to either. He might assert, and he might say that his adversaries have admitted it, that he never sought establishment at all; that he advocated equal rights and universal toleration, which last was stigmatized by both the

75

others “as the God of his idolatry.” We have abstained, however, and we do abstain, from all these matters— We choose to have nothing to do with them. We neither praise the one nor estimate the proportion of blame to be attached to the others. This, however, we do say, that both the latter were in *principle* (we leave the question of *degree* to be settled by themselves) exclusive and schismatical, and that every system must necessarily be so that separates itself from communion with others, by submitting to be the recognized servant of the state. An exclusive establishment, fixing its terms, and appointing its tests, and imposing its formularies, by act of parliament, is not an expedient to unite and comprehend (at least not the conscientious, the thoughtful, and the free),

but is a means, by creating a *caste*, of fomenting discord, and widening division, and perpetuating animosities. The injury inflicted, by such institutions, on religion in general, is very great; nor is the amount small which falls on the spiritual interests of the favoured sect. The injury, for instance, inflicted on the church by the act of Uniformity, has been often lamented by episcopals themselves. Two thousand ministers—conscientious, active, and *evangelical*—were cast out of her bosom in one day, in addition to those previously ejected. Two thousand *evangelical clergymen* are now exulted in by their friends as included

76

among the clergy. The church has been nearly two centuries in repairing the wrong done to herself. And even this has been forced upon her from without—intruded, by the zeal of methodists and dissenters, on the coldness and darkness which soon settled on the establishment as their congenial home, when so much light and vitality were withdrawn. When it is remembered, however, that, at the time of the ejection, the population of England was under four millions, and that now it is fourteen, it may be said, with truth, that the evil of that act has *not yet been overcome*.

Fourth. The English establishment might not only be said, in common with others, to involve in it an exclusive and schismatical principle, but it might be shown, that it has divisions and schisms in itself, and that, even if it were as united as one man, its connection with the state has injured its catholicity. That, in spite of its boasted union and imposed uniformity, there are *two* great parties in the church every body knows; but nobody knows how many there would be if the force that keeps it together were withdrawn—that is, if the men were at liberty to appear fully

what they are. The evangelical portion of the clergy are constantly referred to by one class of writers as a *party* or *sect within* the church; and they, again, have something of the same feeling

77

with respect to their brethren, though they never perhaps express it in so contemptuous a manner. The English church, as a church, is precluded communion with the Moravian body, and with her episcopal sisters of Scotland and America, all of which have, by some of her writers, been considered genuine branches of the one true and apostolical community. The persons whom the bishop of Calcutta lately addressed in these words, "Receive the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of our hands, for the ministerial remission or non-remission of sins," would, I suppose, in spite of this celestial unction and tremendous capability, be, every one of them, inadmissible to the obscurist parish pulpit of this land. With regard to Scotland and America, the fact is admitted and lamented by an episcopalian writer, and is attributed by him, in so many words, to the thralldom to which his church is reduced by the state. After expatiating on "the unanimity, friendship, and correspondence, which subsisted between the various branches of the catholic church in its first and purest ages," and expressing his persuasion that "the same friendly spirit," "the same feelings and sentiments," continue to animate the bishops and other clergy of the existing branches of the reformed catholic church (the episcopalians of England, Scotland, and America), he adds:—"It is not, however, to be concealed that by the

78

present law, a law which was made in opposition to the wishes of the English bishops, a law for which the STATE, not the CHURCH is answerable,

no clergyman ordained by a Scotch or American prelate can officiate in England, unless ordained—that is to say, *re-ordained*, by an English or Irish bishop! By this law the English bishops are reduced to a dilemma. If they refuse when required to re-ordain, *they are liable to a civil prosecution*; if they *do* re-ordain, *they are guilty of SCHISM*; for no law of an English parliament, *which has in this instance arrogated to itself as great a share of power as ever was usurped by the pope of Rome* (putting aside the Erastian principle it would seem to advocate), can invalidate the orders canonically conferred by a bishop, *whose succession from the apostles is as clearly derived as that of the first of our spiritual peers.*”^{*} How mournful and how monitory is this! Well might the apostle say, “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage!” And yet these are the men who are hurt when we speak of them as “fettered and enslaved;” and who, having surrendered the rights and tarnished the purity of Christ’s church, can, from the

^{*} Sermon preached at the Consecration of The Right Rev. Matthew Henry Luscombe, M. A. By the Rev. W. H. Hook, M. A., p. 41, Notes.

79

lordly prelate to the simple presbyter, sneeringly refer to other and more scriptural communions as “*churches as they are called!*” Passing over this, however, we observe, that if, in answer to the first part of the remarks under this particular, it should be replied, “The establishment, after all, is of incalculable use in securing union; for, while it may be admitted that there *are* two parties within hen and that, so far, there may be ‘a schism in the body,’ the *sects*, you will remember, are a thousand and one!” If this should be said, we should re-join, If we are to compare things, let us compare

them fairly; if *the principle* of an establishment be compared with the *principle* of dissent, you must not only class together all sorts of dissenters, but all sorts of establishments; while, therefore, it is said, on one side, that the principle of dissent equally defends the Calvinist, and the Baptist, and the Jumper, and the Muggletonian; it must be said, on the other, that the principle of an establishment equally supports Popery and Mahomedanism, Superstition and Idolatry—that there is not an enormity or a delusion which haſt not been sanctioned by establishments, and which has not derived from them a prolonged and artificial existence, after that, on the principle of dissent, it would have been laid aside or reasoned to death. If the condition of a *particular* establishment be considered, and the union secured in *it* be dilated

80

on, then we insist, that the proper parallel to this is *one sect*; let the *many* things supported by the one principle be compared with the *many* things supported by the other, or let one thing be taken from each side respectively, and the actual condition of these be considered: on this ground, the only just one, let the ministers and members of the establishment be compared with the ministers and members of one of the sects (our own, for example) on the one point of their agreement among themselves, and it is not to be denied that every man, competent to have an opinion on the subject, *knows* on which side there would be a real and cordial unanimity, and on which there would be every shade of religious opinion between the two extremes of the freezing and the fervid.

Fifth. While what has been advanced in the last two particulars as to the schismatical principle, circumstances, and condition of the English establishment, is admitted, it should ever be remembered that *men* are often better than the

systems with which they are associated. Many of the orthodox and evangelical clergy differ, I doubt not, as brethren ought to differ, without either mutual contempt or estrangement; without feelings of bitterness or wrath; and, though classed with and clinging to their respective parties, yet without any of the hostility of a party spirit. Not only may there be this difference without dis-

81

agreement between the classes *within* the church, but there may be a far more catholic and charitable feeling towards "those that are *without*" than the system, as a system, can practically display. Many of the clergy who truly love all, who, under whatever name, love their Master, and study to be like him, would willingly, if they could, step over the walls by which they are surrounded, rejoice publicly to recognise the fact and to reciprocate the feelings of fraternity, and to escape from what, in some places, they feel to be the communion of the world to the communion of the church. They lament their exclusive and comfortless condition; they deserve sympathy rather than censure; they are our "brethren in bonds," and they feel it.

Sixth, As churchmen may be better, so dissenters may be worse, than their principles. I cannot but think that the exclusive communion of one section of the baptist churches is inconsistent with a thorough Christian catholicity. It is worse than that which divides the episcopalian from others; for, to speak ecclesiastically, there is the acknowledgment of the validity of ministerial orders, and the actual interchange of ministerial services, and yet the denial of sacramental communion, and in some, if not in all, cases, abstinence from ours. And this, not because they do not think us Christians, or because we absolutely reject baptism, but because they regard our *mode*

82

of the ordinance and our view of its subjects as nullifying the thing. Why, if a man nullified the thing by denying it altogether—if he disbelieved the perpetuity of baptism by water, but was believed by me to have had the baptism of the Spirit, I should not dare to keep him from *his* table who himself had “received him:” the thing signified is greater than the sign, and fitness for communion with the church in heaven is sufficient for communion with that upon earth. Independents, too, who are not satisfied with thinking themselves right, and affirming others to be wrong (which is just what every man who has an opinion *must* think), but who *un-church* other assemblies of Christians, whether episcopal, presbyterian, or methodist, because of their not being associated on *their* principles, this, I cannot but think, is to show rather more of the sectary than the Christian. As to the methodists, I should say, they are not schismatics in relation to the church, provided they are a distinct and separate community. In that case, they may be defended from the charge, in common with other sects, on broad, general, and protestant principles. If, however, they profess to belong to the church, to be parts of her body, and members of her communion, then, the accusation of schism comes against them with great power, because it comes with scriptural propriety. Can any thing

83

more disorderly be conceived than for the children of a church which takes such views as the episcopal, of the ministerial office, and the nature of the sacraments, and which so positively interdicts lay preaching and self-constituted assemblies,—can any thing be conceived more disorderly than for the professed members of that church actually to

meet for worship without their acknowledged authorised superiors, to assume the sacred function, to dispense the sacraments, and ordain to the ministry? This is a schism *in* a church of the most flagrant description: altar *against* altar to a most extraordinary extent. I have a high respect for the methodist body; I greatly venerate the character of their founder; I admire much of their discipline; I rejoice equally in their zeal and their success. With all this, I am compelled to say that, on scriptural principles, *as it appears to me*, they must be satisfied to be either dissenters or schismatics.

Finally. Let us all scrupulously attend to the nourishment and exercise of the catholic principle. Let us impress upon our minds the necessity of "keeping the heart with all diligence, for out of it" arise "schisms" and "strifes." Let us watch over ourselves, and guard against every circumstance that may diminish candour, pervert the judgment, or poison the affections. As Christians, let us war with what separates man from God; as dissenters with what separates Christian from Christian. Let

84

us seek the nearer approximation of church to church, and the ultimate recognition and union of all. Let each of us so enter into the spirit of our Faith, and so feel the propriety and understand the reasons of our ecclesiastical position, as to be able to say with boldness and truth, "I am a dissenter, because I am a catholic; I am a separatist, because I cannot be schismatical; I stand apart from some, because I love all; I oppose establishments, because I am not a sectarian; I think little of uniformity, because I long for union; I care not about subordinate differences with my brother, for '*Christ* has received him' and so will I: thus, cultivating the spirit of universal love, I am hastening, I hope, that day when the world itself shall become the church, and prepar-

ing, I trust, for that world in which the church shall be ONE—one in faith, in feeling, and in worship,—in a higher sense than can be witnessed here; while here, however, so far as the *spirit* and *expression* of affection is concerned, I am longing to witness and realize some approach to what I anticipate hereafter,—anticipate in that region where, amid the lustre and the loveliness of heaven, the jars and the jealousies of earth shall have passed away.” This, brethren, *ought* to be the feeling and the consciousness of “all who profess and call themselves Christians.” It ought pre-eminently to be ours. May God make it to be

85

so, and to be so universally, by pouring down upon his church the Spirit from on high, and by diffusing and sustaining in every part of it, the strength of love and the meekness of wisdom.
Amen.

NOTES.

P. 4, line 3d from the bottom. “*A book recently recommended to his clergy by the bishop of London.*”—It may not be improper to mention that the subject of the preceding discourse was appointed previous to the appearance of the “recommendation,” and of the book itself, to which this passage refers. That recommendation happening to attract the attention of the author just as the discourse was to be prepared for delivery, it led him to alter his intention of treating the subject without reference to modern controversies.—Having heard, after the sermon was in the press, that some modification of the bishop’s opinion had appeared, I immediately sent for the latest edition of the charge, deeming it simple justice towards his lordship candidly to inform that

portion of the public that may become my readers of any explanation he might have offered. I shall lay before them both passages as they appear in the first and in the second edition of the charge.

“*Other instances*” [of calumnies and misrepresentations against the church] “*are given in a publication which I RECOMMEND, as containing a great deal of USEFUL INFORMATION and SOUND REASONING, Set forth with a little too much warmth of invective against the dissenters, entitled ‘Letters to a Dissenting Minister of the Congregational Denomination, by L. S. E.’*”

Such was what appeared in the first edition of his

88

lordship’s charge; in the second, the paragraph *is omitted*, and the following note placed at the bottom of the page:—

“In the first edition of this Charge *reference* was here made to a publication *which contains* some other instances of the disingenuous proceedings of the society in question. *Upon a closer examination* of the work alluded to, I have thought it right to suppress *my reference to it*, on account of the controversial bitterness with which it is disfigured.”

Having alluded, in the preceding discourse, to the bishop of London’s opinion, I always intended to place his own words here, that they might be fairly and folly seen by the reader. His lordship, however, having thought proper to suppress them, I cannot now do so without adding a brief remark or two. It was necessary for me to give the first of the above passages in justice to myself, and the second in justice to his lordship; on both a few observations are offered in justice to the public.

In the first place, when any man “recommends” a book with which most other men are disgusted, the following alternative and train of reflection instantly present themselves to a thoughtful observer:—“He either read this book, or he did not; if he did, it is a question of

taste; if he did not, it is one of integrity. The first, in a Christian, would be disgrace; the second, in a gentleman, dishonour." This, I think, would be as natural as it is just. If, however, it were to be supposed that the *latter* was the case of a Christian prelate writing to his clergy, and writing for the public, there are perhaps no words in any language that could express either the feelings of an honourable mind towards such delinquency, or the extent and magnitude of the delinquency itself. So strongly do I perceive this that, when I have heard

89

it stated, by way of apology (*as I have often*), that his lordship could not have read the book in question, but had been misled by depending on the opinion, and taking the word, of some injudicious friend, I have always expressed my hope that such was not the case, as it would certainly be rather an aggravation than an apology. What! books to be "recommended" from the episcopal bench—a *character of them*, and a *description of their contents*, deliberately penned, and sent forth to the public, as a bishop's personal judgment—which books he had not personally read! The thing is too monstrous to be thought of, or to be admitted, for a moment, as within the compass of possibility. No: times of controversy *may* warp the judgment and destroy the taste, for a while, even of a Christian; but surely this should never be attempted to be palliated by what would be a violation of principle itself. I have always thought, therefore, that it ought to be admitted by all, whether the personal friends and apologists, or the ecclesiastical adversaries of the bishop of London, that he could not *but* have read the book of which he gave an account, and to which he attached his open and voluntary "I RECOMMEND," from the very circumstance of what would be involved in his conduct if he had *not*.

In the second place, had the "recommendation" been suppressed without any remark, it would have been right, perhaps, also without remark, to have accepted the tacit confession of inconsideration or error. Had no

explanation been offered by his lordship, I should have felt bound to suppose that he had quietly but manfully withdrawn the offensive statements out of respect to public opinion. What he has *done*, however, is connected with what he has *said*: on the latter, therefore, I feel myself at liberty to offer the following remarks:—

90

First. Passing over the fact that the *authority* of the book is still sustained, it being described as “a publication which *contains* some other instances of the disingenuous proceedings of the society in question:” I beg to ask, if any man, who had seen nothing but his lordship’s “note,” would ever dream that what he twice gently terms “*a reference*” to a publication was actually a distinct and emphatic “*recommendation*” of it, with a statement of the *reasons* of that recommendation? “A publication which *I recommend* as containing *a great deal of useful information and sound reasoning.*” Is this to be suppressed—softly put out of the way as “*a reference*”—a sort of passing allusion, that may be made one moment and forgotten the next?

Second. Seeing that the spirit of a writer is always more obvious than the justness of his thoughts; that the one colours the surface, and obtrudes itself on the most careless reader, of a book, while to judge of the other always requires close examination;—seeing that it is possible to perceive, at a glance, “controversial bitterness,” but *not* so to judge whether “reasoning” be “sound,” or “information” accurate and therefore “useful,”—is it not wonderful that this process should have been completely *reversed* in the present case?—that the bishop saw, instantly, the “useful information” and “sound argument,” just feeling that there was “*a little* too much warmth of invective,” and that it should require “a closer examination” for him to make out the “controversial bitterness?”—If a man were hastily to condemn a book on account of its bitter spirit, and then,

after forcing himself to bestow upon it a “closer examination,” was obliged to acknowledge that, *in spite of its spirit*, he must speak of it “as containing a great deal of useful information and sound reasoning,”—*that*

91

could be understood;—it is agreeable to the nature of things, and has occurred again and again: but, for *this to be reversed*, I cannot but consider as one of the most extraordinary facts in the history of the human mind.

Third. It was not to be expected, perhaps, that his lordship should refer to a pamphlet, which probably led him to reconsider what he had done. Whether it did or not, I deem it but justice to the author to do so. It is written with great vigour, but with much courtesy, and in an admirable spirit. It is alike creditable to the author as a gentleman and a Christian. It is entitled “A Remonstrance, addressed to the Lord Bishop of London, on the sanction given in his late Charge to the Clergy of that diocese to the *Calumnies against the Dissenters* contained in certain Letters, signed L. S. E. By Charles Lushington, Esq.”

Before I close this note, I deem it proper to offer a “remonstrance” myself against the use of language which, I do think, ought never to be employed by writers who wish to be regarded as having a proper respect either for their cause or their character. I refer to such expressions as the following, found in the 53d and 54th pages of the bishop’s Charge:—“The Case of the Dissenters, a pamphlet full of the most notorious falsehoods.” “Which might with greater propriety be designated as a society for INVENTING and propagating WILFUL FALSEHOODS.” Such a liberty of speech seems to me, I confess, very objectionable. A falsehood is not simply a mistake or error; the word has a relation to the character of the writer or speaker, and not merely to the statement he makes; it signifies not only that what is said is untrue, but that he who says it *knows* it to be

so, and says it with the intention to deceive. Even if the term itself did not convey this meaning, that mean-

92

ing is conveyed in the accusation of "INVENTING" *wilful* falsehoods;" this phrase presents us with a number of persons (each of whom might be described, in the language of scripture, as one that "loveth and *maketh* a lie") deliberately sitting down to pen, and to palm upon the public, what they have originated themselves, and yet offer as facts. A charge like this is terrible. I could point out in tracts, published by the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," statements which are not true; but I should hesitate to call them falsehoods, because I will not, and cannot, believe that the writers *thought* them untrue; they penned them in ignorance, and they believed what they penned. This might be very wrong. They ought to have informed themselves better; and perhaps the means of information were within their reach. Their ignorance, therefore, was extremely criminal; still I should not dare to speak of them in language so offensive to taste, not to say piety, to which I have referred. I do think that words which one gentleman would not be allowed to apply to another ought never to have fallen from the pen, or to have been found in the pages, of a Christian prelate.

P. 35, line 13th.—*A legislature has not the power, properly speaking, of modifying the belief and institutions of a church; for it is always in the power of the church to prevent it, by just declining the price offered for its submission; but a legislature has the power of determining who shall enjoy what it has to give, &c.*

As these principles, with kindred ones occasionally referred to in the preceding discourse, are of importance, in relation to one branch of the argument at least, I subjoin the following illustrative and confirmatory extracts from advocates of the establishment.

"I contend, that the Irish church was not bound to comply with the provisions of this unrighteous bill."

93

[The bill for reducing the number of bishops.] “If the clergy of the diocese of Waterford had elected a bishop according to the forms of the primitive church, and if the primate of Ireland had thought fit to consecrate him, he would have been as much a bishop of the united church of England and Ireland, as any of the bishops appointed by the crown. But Roman Catholics and dissenters have decided it to be convenient that the Irish church should henceforth have fewer bishops: and thus the church, in the language of Mr. Binney, is ‘bound, and fettered, and enslaved.’ But will she not burst her bonds? Will not her clergy rise from one end of the country to the other, and tell the legislature, in a voice which cannot be mistaken, that they will not allow dissenters from her creed, to dictate to her in matters of religion? How long shall our modern Uzzahs be allowed to lay their unhallowed hands upon the ark of our Zion? It is time to assert our rights. It is time to act upon principles, which dissenters have so ably vindicated, to demand a liberty of conscience, and the power of legislating for ourselves.”

“If the House of Commons should undertake to alter the Liturgy, and if a Prayer-book thus made for the use of the church of England should be sanctioned by an act of parliament, I state candidly and openly, that I shall not use it, unless my diocesan shall order me. There is no power in the state to make me use it.”

“Thoughts on the Separation of Church and State. By the Rev. Edward Burton, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, and Canon of Christ-church.” p. 62, 63.

It may be proper to apprise the reader of the above, that Dr. Burton’s opinion is, that parliament has lost its power in consequence of the admission of Catholics and dissenters; and that it is only on the presumption of

94

parliament being exclusively composed of members of the establishment that it can consistently make laws

to bind the church. Even then, however, his principles would forbid submission to laws which required more than he could *conscientiously* give.

“It seems to be taken for granted by those churchmen who assume the principle of the Oxford Tracts, that, in the event of their throwing off their connection with the state—as would be practically the case when they proceeded to reverse the decree of the legislature” [the thing above supposed by Dr. Burton], “and to act as a body with whom king, lords, and commons could not interfere—that the property now enjoyed by the established church of England and Ireland would, as a matter of course, be continued in their possession. We ask nothing, it is said, of the state, but to let us alone. We will be contented with our own endowments, our lands, our tithes, our offerings and fees; and we will have a synod to regulate these matters as we judge best. But do not our friends see that if they thus withdraw from the state, they are not likely, in fact (for we are not at present arguing the principle), to be allowed to retain those revenues which public men, *let us churchmen say what we may*, will consider as connected with the national *Establishment*, and not with the Prayer-book and Thirty-nine Articles. These revenues, when popery was established, were allotted to the Roman Catholic priesthood; when reformed episcopacy was established, they followed the new state church; when Presbyterianism, in the days of Cromwell, prevailed, they were appropriated to the Presbyterian incumbents; and, when reformed episcopacy came back again, glebe and tithes came back with it. But does Mr. Keble suppose that, if what is now the National Established Church

95

of England were to throw off its connection with the State, as he advises, and to become only, what Mr. Bentham called it, “the sect of the thirty-nine articles,” it would be allowed to enjoy the tithe, glebe, and other revenues, which have always been appropriated to the

NATIONAL CHURCH? We should be prepared to follow it, upon religious principles, in its adversity; we could not in conscience be papists in doctrine, or presbyterians or congregationalists in discipline; but we should find it difficult to persuade statesmen that any parish was bound to pay tithes to the episcopal minister any more than to the independent, when episcopacy ceased to be the nationally recognised religion." *Christian Observer*, Feb. 1834, p. 125.

"Previous to the year 1688, episcopacy was the established form of church government in Scotland as well as in England; but THE SAME CONVENTION OF ESTATES which transferred the crown to William and Mary, *abolished episcopacy as the established form of church government in Scotland and established presbytery*; and this has remained to the present day. At that time the episcopal church in Scotland consisted of fourteen bishops, including the archbishops, and about nine hundred clergy. Both descriptions of clergy were ordered *by Act of Parliament* either to conform to the new government or to quit their livings. All the bishops, and by far the greater number of the inferior clergy, refusing to take the oaths to the new government, were compelled to relinquish their livings, in which presbyterian ministers were, in general, placed.

"Although the episcopal clergy were thus expelled from their parochial cures, they almost universally continued to officiate privately to such as were disposed to attend their ministrations (those consisting of almost all the higher orders of society), notwithstanding severe penal laws were made to prevent them; and the bishops,

96

although their order was abolished *as a constituent part of the STATE*, still retaining *that spiritual authority in the church which is inherent in the nature of their office*, took care, as vacancies happened, to preserve the succession by new and regular consecrations."

“Appendix, No. VI. of Skinner’s Annals of Scottish Episcopacy.” Quoted by Mr. Hooke in the preface to his sermon mentioned in the note, p. 78.

Page 50, line 8 from the bottom, “the punishment is the *wrath of God:*” From “The Sword Unsheathed;” by the Rev. J. Stevenson. It will be obvious to the reader, from various passages in the discourse, that I by no means charge these atrocious sentiments on the great body of episcopalians. I believe them to be as much opposed to the views of many of them, as ultra-dissenterism is to mine, though many who know nothing about the matter will wonder at such a statement from me. I do not even believe that the bishop of London himself would go all the length of these sentiments, though, from having “recommended” the “sound reasoning” of a book, the “reasoning” of which is mainly directed to their support, he appears before the public as sanctioning them. Separating, then, the bishop of London as recommender of the book, from the bishop of London as the Rev. C. J. Blomfield, let me do the latter the justice of inserting the following passage, which occurs in his Charge, p. 15:—“The Wesleyan Methodists, I fear, cannot be considered, at the present day, as directly or intentionally being subsidiary to the church; but I know not why we should hesitate to acknowledge the good which they have done to the cause which the church has in hand, by their zealous and laborious exertions, as teachers of gospel truth, in many parts of the kingdom, where the church afforded no sufficient provision for the spiritual wants of a rapidly accumulated population. *It was necessary that Christ should be preached there; and if*

97

we did not possess the means of doing so within ourselves, we have reason to rejoice that it was faithfully, though irregularly, done by others. It is but an act of justice to that religious body to state that, with but few exceptions, they have not joined in the clamour which has been raised against the establishment: and that, in many instances, they have openly declared their respect

and attachment." In spite of, I must say, the sore and bitter feeling which his lordship every where discovers towards the dissenters, I have great pleasure in transcribing the above. It illustrates the sentiments advocated in pp. 65 and 66 of this sermon, in opposition to the *general tenour* of those of the book of which his lordship himself had given his approval.

With respect to the close of the above passage, in which the bishop speaks of the "clamour" "against the establishment," I would remark, without pretending to go into the subject, that his lordship himself has, in his charge (p. 7), reduced the controversy to a single question, viz. "whether an establishment be fitted to advance the great objects for which the scriptures have been given to mankind?"—Keeping to this, and saying that *any thing* is best by which most souls can be saved, and "*mankind*" universally, soonest converted, I submit whether an answer to his lordship's question would not involve two things, a question of fact, and a question of principle:—of fact, in relation to a single country; of principle, in relation to the world. Applying the subject to our own land, the first question will be answered differently by churchmen and dissenters; many of the most spiritual and holy of the latter, from the very circumstance of their feelings leading them to look at the working of the establishment in relation to "the great objects for which the scriptures have been given to mankind," are persuaded that the question of fact is

98

against it. I refer his lordship on this subject to the opinion of Dr. Smith, as it is contained in pages 78 and 79 of his answer to Dr. Lee, appended to his sermon "on the Temper to be cultivated by Christians of different Denominations towards each other."—The second question I look at in this way:—The principle of an establishment is, that it is a national institution for the support of the recognised religion of the country. Almost all nations have such institutions, and none willingly forward their reform even by themselves, much

less would they suffer their subversion by foreigners. The Christian church, however, is for “mankind;” it has “to preach the gospel to every creature,” and to subvert every non-christian establishment under heaven. Suppose, then, that the English church, *our* national institution, were, *as a church*, to awake to the church’s duty, and to send forth its recognised agents into Turkey and China, and if those governments, instead of doing any thing to them themselves, were to make a complaint to ours, through their representatives resident here, and to require that, as the national institution of one country has no right to interfere with the national institution of another, command should be given for their agents to be withdrawn; supposing this, I ask two questions: first, Would it not be fair political justice for our government to issue such command? and, second would it not be the bounden duty of the national church to obey it? Let these questions be answered, without equivocation, “yes” or “no,” and some light will be cast upon the second part of the dissenters’ reply to his lordship’s enquiry, the question of *principle*, arising from the nature of the gospel as intended for “*mankind*,” and the duty of God’s church as being put in trust with it.

Thorns, Printer, Warwick-Square.

By the same Author,

I.

TWO LETTERS, by FIAT JUSTITIA, Author of a Letter to the Hon. and Rev. B. W. Noel; in Reply, the First to a Churchman, who condemns him for going too far; the Second, to a Dissenter, who expostulates with him for not going far enough. 8vo. Price 2s. 6d. sewed.

II.

The ULTIMATE OBJECT of the EVANGELICAL DISSENTERS AVOWED and ADVOCATED; a Sermon, preached at the King's Weigh-House, London, previous to notice being given that Petitions to Parliament for the removal of Dissenters' Grievances would lie for signature in the Vestry during the week. 8vo. Price 1s. sewed.

"According to the Scriptures, the Church of God ought to be united—to be perfectly joined together, having the same mind, the same judgment, and speaking the same words. There ought to be no divisions (or schisms); no: not under the authoritative names of Paul, Cephas, Apollos, or even Christ; and ministers, in particular, ought to be God's fellow-labourers. ... Now, I must affirm, that every opinion and doctrine, setting forth any thing, no matter how plausible or how wise soever it may be, or seem to be, originating only in human authority, but tending to destroy this union and communion among believers, is directly opposed to the injunctions of Holy Scripture, and therefore sinful and dangerous in the extreme." PROFESSOR LEE.

III.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED ON LAYING THE FIRST STONE OF THE NEW KING'S WEIGH-HOUSE, a Place of Worship intended for the use of a Congregational Church. Fifth Edition. With brief Prefatory Remarks on the Nature of certain animadversions on the Publication and its Author. Price 1s.

IV.

THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—TO PRESENT EVERY MAN PERFECT IN CHRIST JESUS:

A DISCOURSE, delivered at Petersfield, April 15, 1827.

Second Edition. Price 2s.