

**THE NONCONFORMIST'S
SKETCH-BOOK;**

A SERIES OF VIEWS
OF A
STATE-CHURCH AND ITS ATTENDANT EVILS.

BY EDWARD MIALL.

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PREFACE.

THE following sketches of a state-church were originally published in successive numbers of the *Nonconformist* newspaper. They were intended to be a popular exhibition of the multiform evils inflicted upon this country by a national establishment of religion. This must serve as an apology for the character of style which has been adopted. Sensible as the writer is of its numerous deficiencies, he yet ventures to think that, taking into consideration the fact that he is conducting a grave argument, not for the benefit of a select circle of readers, but for the perusal of

all classes indiscriminately, the vehicle which he has chosen for his thoughts is not altogether inappropriate. The question of a separation of the church from the state, is not one interesting to the theologian only—it deeply concerns all ranks and orders of men in the kingdom. It is, consequently, a matter of importance that it

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should be treated of in such manner as to bring it within the range of all minds, and this could only be done by addressing the common sense of men, and by discarding, as far as possible, the mere technicalities of the divine. The writer has endeavoured to imagine himself addressing a mixed audience, with whom to gain his end it was necessary to be serious without prosing, and to be lively without exposing himself to the charge of levity. The arguments are therefore brief, and must be looked upon rather as suggestions to the thoughtful than as complete trains of reasoning. They are bare outlines which the reader is left to fill up.

It may be thought necessary by some that the writer should apologise for the freedom with which he has remarked upon the conduct of classes of men whose failings have usually secured the utmost lenity of treatment. In the writer's opinion no such apology is due. For man he has a high reverence—for distinct orders of men, considered as such, he has none. Never is office perverted to more pernicious ends than when it is made to shield from censure those who are justly chargeable with inconsistency. That is altogether a blind courtesy, which consults the feelings of any class at the expense of truth. The

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main question is, whether the charges brought against the clergy of the Establishment, or against

dissenting ministers, can be borne out. If they can, silence would be criminal; if they cannot, they are to be objected to for their falsehood, and for that only.

Nor has the writer the slightest sympathy with those who think that Christianity demands that the worst evils should be rebuked in honied sentences. He finds no warrant for this in the sacred Scriptures. Things are called by their right names there. The periphrastic mode of exhibiting truth, which takes off all angularity, and makes the worst of evils appear almost as harmless as innocence itself, is but a special mode of deception by which men fancy that they are exercising charity, when, in truth, they are but indulging a particular order of selfishness. The inspired writers never speak of a lie as "a deviation from the strict line of truth," nor of drunkenness as "an inordinate attachment to the pleasures of the table." The refinement of the present age is the refinement of aristocracy, not of Christianity. Plain speaking may, in truth, exhibit far less bitterness of spirit than the most roundabout and polite terms. He who would hurt the feelings of another further than the cause of truth

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requires, is unquestionably bitter; but he who pretends to expose a sinful system, without hurting the feelings of its abettors, is doing but little for the advantage of Christianity.

The writer of these sketches can sincerely say that he is utterly unconscious of ill-feeling towards any party, or any class of individuals. He would not wantonly wound a single heart. As far as he knows himself, he would not willingly inflict pain upon the meanest of the brute creation; but he sees no reason why an indisposition to annoy others should be a bar to his presenting important truth to the notice of his

readers just as it is, or rather just as it appears to his own mind, without circumlocution and without false colouring. He does not insist upon the necessary correctness of his opinion of men and things, but such as his opinion is, he thinks it right to give it fairly to the world. The reader will find nothing in these sketches which the writer does not sincerely think, and he has aimed not to conceal his thoughts, but to make them understood. If occasionally he has employed strong language, he has done so because weaker would not so well have expressed his views. His object has been, not to exhibit a specimen of polite controversy, but to leave upon the read-

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er's mind a true, distinct, and abiding impression of what he believes to be a terrible evil. Let his language be judged of by that end. Men thoroughly in earnest are seldom adepts in mincing their terms.

To the earnest consideration of the public he now commends these light and imperfect sketches. Whatever may be the faults of the writer, the subject-matter of his thoughts is well worthy of attention. He could have wished to have approached nearer to his own idea of what this volume ought to be. As it is, he sends it forth to the world in its present shape with mingled diffidence and hope; and if his thoughts meet with but fair attention, he neither asks nor expects quarter for himself. He would rather convince ten men than please a thousand.

Stoke Newington,

June 20th, 1842.

GROUP THE FIRST.

A STATE CHURCH VIEWED FROM THE GROUND OF
CONSISTENT DISSENT.

IT will be seen that in this group of views the state-church only appears in the distance. The reader is made acquainted with the relative bearings of a national establishment and dissent. The mistaken position taken up by modern nonconformists is pointed out. The obstructions which have stood in the way of a clearer view of the question are exposed. The necessity of regarding a state-church from the high ground of religious principle is insisted upon. The whole series is designed to be preliminary to a closer inspection of the evils political, philosophical, and religious, resulting from the alliance between Church and State.

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I.

THE "GRIEVANCE" ERROR.

How does it happen that in looking over the records of our legislature, we find every reference now made to dissenters by men of all parties, marked by a tone so different from that which formerly prevailed? Whence comes the seemingly mysterious change that has passed upon them since the great campaigns which terminated in the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the emancipation of our Roman-catholic fellow-countrymen? Ten years since their voice commanded a respectful attention; their movements were bold, vigorous, and successful. Now, although they have gained in numbers, are possessed

of equal wealth, and superior intelligence, they are despised, and, what is worse, despised with impunity.

A Registration Act and a Marriage Bill have been ceded to them, it is true, by a reformed parliament. But setting these aside, to what quarter can they look

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for self-gratulation. The continuation of church-rates, ecclesiastical imprisonments, workhouse chaplains, colonial bishoprics, and demands for church extension, prove that they are no longer formidable. Their own movements are not what they once were, well planned and skilfully conducted enterprises. They are more like insurrections,—fitful, sudden, partial in extent, easily suppressed, productive of no beneficial result. Dissenters are without union; they have lost heart, the *prestige* of their power is gone.

When, however, they are taunted by whigs, tories, and radicals, with their mutual disagreements, and sectarian jealousies, whilst there may be some truth in the reproach, it does nothing to lay open the true cause of their present weakness. Differences of opinion, strong and even bigoted attachment to theological creeds are not things of yesterday's growth. They always have existed, always will exist. With men not wholly indifferent to truth, there is a natural and invariable tendency, in the absence of higher and more commanding motives, to fall apart into distinct bodies, and become sectarian, both in spirit and in aim. Nor is this law of our nature to be torn up and flung aside by the railings of politicians. To fuse minds of different original construction, of different habits and modes of thought, of different tastes and affections, into unity of purpose, requires the presence and energy of some broad intelligible principle, in which all can unite, the realization of which all can regard as worthy of a struggle, and in the working out

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of which all will be content to merge their minor differences, and deliberate, and speak, and act, as one man.

The secret of the present humiliating position of dissenters is, that their proceedings have, of late, been based on no intelligible principle at all. They put forward the redress of "practical grievances" as their bond of union. We have no disposition to quarrel with the gentlemen who decided upon this policy, to impugn their motives or to depreciate their judgment. We know how easy it is, after the event, to point out the certain cause of failure. Their mistake was, perhaps, natural, but it was fatal. From the moment this system of tactics was adopted, energy began to decline, zeal to grow cold, and disunion to appear. The timidity, the selfishness, the petty character of the proposed enterprise, quickly produced their baneful results. One unsuccessful contest decided the matter. Then came languor, indifference, mutual recriminations and disastrous defeat. Dissenters are now like a disbanded army. The materials of strength exist among them in abundance, but without the discipline which once combined them and rendered their strength available, against the foes of religious freedom. Why should dissenters conceal from themselves what is known to all the world? They are no longer respected—they are feared by none.

In tracing their present weakness to its right source, we indicate the only efficient remedy. They must begin again the struggle with intolerance. Let them begin wisely. Ultimate success will require union,

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patience, persevering energy, and considerable self-sacrifice. Their aim must therefore be a worthy one. It must involve a noble principle. It must be honest, direct, and final. THE ENTIRE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE is really their object. It becomes dissenters fairly to avow it, soberly to set about

it, and in all earnestness to gird and discipline themselves for a final grapple with ecclesiastical tyranny.

II.

THE INDEX OF WEAKNESS.

Cant phrases are not wholly to be despised. Worthless as they are in themselves, they have their uses. They are the straws in the air—the chips in the stream, which serve to show the current of opinion. They are the crannies and chinks in the professions put forward by party, through which we may look and discover the hidden principles by which it is swayed. They express little, but they often indicate much. Like the stratum which lies immediately over a seam of coal, they may be regarded as mere rubbish; but then it is rubbish we are delighted to find, inasmuch as it is in certain contact with a mine of wealth. What a vein of truth, for instance, lies buried beneath the “No Popery” cry, in whatever region of history it is found to have prevailed! The philosopher, when he meets with it, may close his books, and, without their aid, lay down with unerring accuracy, a general

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outline of the events to be met with in its immediate neighbourhood.

“The practical grievances of dissenters,” is a cant phrase of this description. It matters not a rush by whom it was coined—its circulation was once extensive. Every one knew what it meant, and what it did not mean. It meant church-rates, exclusion from the universities, the compulsory celebration of marriage rites at the established church, &c. It did not mean the union of church and state. It was invented purposely to throw that question into the dark. At first glance it appears nothing more than an ordinary string of words. But let it be subjected to fair analysis, and

we mistake if it does not contain within it the key to our recent history, the secret to our present weakness.

“The practical grievances,” forsooth! as though the union of church and state were a mere theory—a speculation, an abstract unembodied principle about which it would be foolish to contend! As though the assumption by the legislature of authority to deal with the religious faith and exercises of its subjects were no faith at all! As though it injured no one, perpetrated no real mischief, and might be safely left for discussion as a matter of opinion when the practical grievances of dissenters shall have been redressed!

The very cast of the phrase speaks volumes. Men, whose principles are in direct antagonism to an establishment of religion, would not be startled from their propriety at the bare idea of bringing the alliance now

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subsisting between church and state to a close, but that they have not habituated themselves to regard the evil as a practical one. They could not have left the question where it is, had they not looked upon it as a kind of remote error, which must be left for time alone to rectify. The conduct of English dissenters has been tantamount to this—“Relieve *us*—redress *our* wrongs—give us what, as citizens, we may demand—and we will let truth and religion shift for themselves.”

Now, it is very far from our intention to charge dissenters with the deliberate entertainment of this selfish design. We know them better. No body of men have given more costly or more numerous pledges of their anxiety to advance the cause of truth. We maintain, however, that as far as their great distinctive principle is concerned, their proceedings have presented to the minds of shrewd penetrating politicians an aspect of meanness which has excited their contempt. No great wonder if they are looked upon as

mere quacks, raising a great clamour, which, after all, means nothing.

All great questions have been settled by men in *earnest*—by men who have bound a principle about their hearts which they come to regard as “part and parcel” of their being. Little, peddling, temporising policy, never yet conferred a lasting benefit upon the world. Dissenters have found their punishment in their mistake. Their “practical grievances” remain much where they did. High-churchism has been em-

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boldened, and is becoming every day more arrogant and more rapacious. To the catalogue of “grievances” others have been since added, and more are in preparation. Priestcraft stalks through the land in undisguised triumph—and Christianity, betrayed and forsaken by those whose principles bound them to stand by her, is made an instrument to work out the designs of a selfish aristocracy. *Dissenters see it and are silent.*

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III.

THE MISSION EVADED.

A nobler mission than that with which dissenters are charged, it is difficult to conceive. If, when truth beckons, men are bound to attend—if, when truth is heard, they are under obligation to give utterance to the revelation she has vouchsafed to them, duties more weighty or more honourable than those devolving upon the nonconformists of this country, were never laid upon any religious body. A more splendid career of usefulness was not opened to the army of martyrs, who with incredible labours and rivers of blood, worked out the Reformation, than that which invites the onward march of protestant dissenters.

We speak advisedly. Those principles which, under the wise arrangements of Providence, were gradually evolved out of the sufferings, the consuming anxieties, the tortures, the death of so many great and good men, could not be trivial ones. Means so costly were not

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designed to accomplish an end of small importance. The mantle which our forefathers let fall upon their descendants, was never meant to be folded up and laid aside. If *we* have nothing to do for the furtherance of our principles, *their* sacrifice of themselves was an egregious error.

But now, how stands the case? Christianity, “cribbed, cabined, confined” by the State, by a body of aristocracy—forced, as John Milton expresses it, “to grind in the prison-house of their sinister designs and practices”—degraded into a tool with which to mend their fortunes, and prolong their ascendancy—tricked out with meretricious ornaments that conceal or deface her native loveliness—rendered hateful to the people by the tyranny and rapacity practised in her name—Christianity appeals to dissenters who profess to be better acquainted with her nature and her claims, to rescue her from this humiliating bondage, and persevere in generous, self-denying effort to deliver her out of the hands of men who are ignorant of her worth.

Coldly have the dissenters of this country listened to this appeal. The case, they confess, is a grievous one. They cannot shut their eyes to that. Every day events force that upon their conviction. Would heaven put an end to the evil, they would be devoutly thankful,—supremely happy. But what are *they* to do? For them to meddle with the question would give serious offence. Besides it is political. They prefer, therefore, to do good in their own quiet way—to let alone

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the disease which preys upon the very vitals of society, and busy themselves in attempts to cure a finger or a hand—to work out effects in detail, and allow a state-church to destroy them by wholesale—in one word, to evade their high mission, and thrust into obscurity their great principles.

Alas! that good men should be scared from a service so honourable, by a silly taunt flung at them by crafty men who laugh among themselves at the effect it produces. Political! Is there any thing so criminal in being political, that sacred duties must be abandoned, rather than expose ourselves to the charge? Is the christian church to be left weltering in corruption, because men cannot drag it forth without defiling their hands with politics? Is every law of religion to be for ever subverted by those who assume to be its only authorised guardians, until the evil can be remedied by other than civil agency? Is, then, the understanding of protestant dissenters to be paralysed, and their spirits cowed, by an unmeaning, worthless, ridiculous charge like this? In very sooth, we blush for the folly of it.

But dissenters, it will be urged, are unjustly reproached with an indifference to, or a betrayal of, the great cause committed to their hands. They are heartily attached to it, although difference of opinion may exist as to the best mode of seeking its advancement. Well! how do they show their attachment? What do they *do*? If they have not brought their power to bear upon the legislature, from a settled con-

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viction that opinion is not ripe for such an effort, have they laboured to ripen opinion? Are their children imbued with a knowledge of their principles, or duly impressed with a sense of their importance? Do their ministers, usually, make it any part of their duty, to instruct their people on this subject? Are

they forward to countenance and encourage those who stand forth to promote the spread of voluntaryism? Do they not ordinarily stand aloof from all such efforts? In strict candour, in open, day-light honesty—have dissenters fulfilled their mission, or done what they could?

From our inmost soul we wish we could answer, "Yes." We cannot—they know full well, we cannot. No! degraded, insulted Christianity, has made her appeal to them in vain, and their posterity, if not themselves, will have to deplore the fatal mistake. Priestcraft is not inactive, if dissenters are. They who brand consistent nonconformists with the epithet, "political," are political enough themselves. They are "wise in their generation." They know what weapons to handle, and how to use them most effectively. They are gaining ground upon passive dissent. They have this advantage—*they are not ashamed of their principles.*

What then is to be done? We answer at once, we must begin at home—must reform ourselves. With unfeigned sorrow, not unmingled with sincere respect—with a hearty and thankful appreciation of the good they do, in other directions—with a full knowledge

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that many noble exceptions must be made—not in bitterness, but in simple, earnest faithfulness, we are compelled to proclaim our conviction, that the principal cause of our present weakness and humiliation, is the conduct, on this question, of DISSENTING MINISTERS.

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IV.

THE REMONSTRANCE.

We solemnly arraign the body of dissenting ministers in England at the bar of truth. The time for

trifling has gone by. The Establishment, a life-destroying upas, deep-rooted in our soil, undisturbed, drinks up fresh vigour. It sprouts again. It puts forth fresh branches. It sheds its noxious seeds in our colonies. If there be evil in it, that evil is daily becoming confirmed, augmented, perpetuated. The curse is going down to our posterity, abroad to our emigrants, aggravated in its intensity. For our part, we are resolved to wash our hands of the guilt. In the name of myriads, victims of an impious pretence—when they lean upon it, fatally deluded, when they discern its hollowness, rendered infidels for life—in the name of unborn generations, of the untold millions that shall one day populate the distant dependencies of Britain—in the name of Christianity, misrepresented,

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disgraced, downcast, trodden under foot, by aristocratic legislation, we charge the body of dissenting ministers with unfaithfulness to sacred principles, evasion of a noble mission, and *seeming* recklessness of all the mighty interests at issue.

A state-church! Have they never pondered upon the practical meaning of that word? Have they never looked into that dark, polluted, inner chamber of which it is the door? Have they never caught a glimpse of the loathsome things that live, and crawl, and gender there? Did they never hear of simony—light-hating simony, too hideous of form for the day to look upon—burrowing and nestling within that same state-church? Has patronage never come across their path, to make them start arid pause, and look at its disgusting features? Did no one instance, out of those daily occurring, of advertising the sale of next presentations, ever happen to meet their eye? Or, to get away from details, has their thought never rested upon the fact that their own liberty to worship God as He has commanded them, is graciously *allowed* them, *permitted* as a necessary evil, an infraction of the rule which places the spiritual interests of a great and intelligent people

in the hands of the Cardigans and Waterfords, the Palmerstons and Sibthorpes, the soldiers and the lawyers, the gamesters, duellists, and black-legs of the upper and lower houses of parliament? In the face of this monstrous absurdity and impiety, what have they done? We repeat the question with emphasis, "*What have dissenting ministers done?*"

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Had Paul—earnest, truthful, lion-hearted Paul, or Knox, or Luther, kindred souls—fallen upon these days of time-serving and expediency, we can well imagine with what words of burning indignation they would have denounced the hoary imposture. To them the offence, whether of the half-instructed, but well-meaning dissenters, or of the rich and influential few who, having gained the outermost verge of aristocratical society, pocket their principles lest they should compromise their *respectability*, would have been but as the chaff before the blast. We think we see these men offering their incense to lawn sleeves, and, in furtherance of great Christian objects, inviting the condescending patronage of the titled foes of voluntary Christianity. They were men of right another stamp than that—these rough, yet withal, deep-souled reformers. The bench, the senate, the throne itself, and this broad land from end to end would have heard their stern protest, and quailed before their fearless rebuke. "Though it should rain Prince Georges," as Luther said, "for nine days successively," they would have uncloaked the system of money gathering which has dared to hide itself under the mantle of religion, and would have laid bare to the scorn and reprobation of the world its true character, its unmitigated deformity.

If this matter concern not dissenting ministers, whom should it concern? We had always supposed the promotion of the church's welfare to be their peculiar duty. They are bound to know, and consequently it may be supposed, they *do* know the blight-

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ing, withering effect of an Establishment upon religion. Nay! they have not left this matter in doubt—for, when one of their number declared his solemn conviction that “the Church of England destroys more souls than it saves,” they ratified the declaration with their approval. If opinion, therefore, is not ripe for demanding from our legislature the cession for ever of its claims to manage Christianity, whose fault is that? The taunt hurled against the clergy, that protestantism could not have been in danger, had they done their duty in imparting instruction to the people, may be hurled back with fearful violence upon dissenting ministers. Flocks ignorant of the first principles of dissent—disposed to regard them as things of little importance, not to be obstinately held at the sacrifice of a rich customer—upon whom does that reflect disgrace? Who has instructed them? Who has awakened their indignation, by faithfully laying open the festering evil? If they are ignorant and apathetic, who is answerable for that?

We beg, however, on behalf of thousands, to question the extent of this ignorance, and express doubts as to the reality of this seeming indifference. There is an under-current of earnestness on this subject which escapes the observation of the superficial. The energies of dissenters are not *drawn out*—rather repressed. Were dissenting ministers to sound the key-note, myriads of hearts would joyfully respond. The mass is only unenlightened, not unwilling to learn.

'Tis gold impedes our march.

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The leading men in our congregations, churchmen too often in their sympathies, dissenters only in their profession and connections—these are the men that stand between us and the sun. Had dissenting ministers declared themselves, and sworn upon the altar of truth and duty that they would never rest until the

abomination was swept away, these would no doubt in crowds have gone over to the church—the most fitting refuge for wealthy worldliness. The seeming loss, however, would have been real gain. The dissenting body might have shrunk in dimensions, but it would have become sounder at heart. Its shows and sinews would have been only the more vigorous for having been relieved of redundant fat.

The various pleas urged by dissenting ministers in defence of their inactivity in this matter have not escaped our notice, nor is it our intention to pass them by without comment. We shall examine them hereafter. We have spoken out, and we mean to speak out. We respect truth more than any body of men, however deservedly respected. We believe that dissenting ministers have swerved into dishonesty—we do *not* believe that dishonesty constitutes their character. There is rightness in them although they have got wrong. Else would we not expose ourselves to the obloquy and reproach which we clearly foresee as the result of plain dealing. Their true power lies in being right. That they will be, and that at no distant period, we are as confident as that the globe turns upon its axle. Necessity is laid upon them. They

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must ere long be right or they will cease to *be*. They stand in relation to the Establishment precisely as the ministers in America stood, but a few years since, in relation to slavery. Faithful remonstrance must either rouse them to fearless action, or push them down into universal contempt. We have no misgivings as to the issue.

V.

THE PLEA EXAMINED.

An admitted evil—an evil of frightful magnitude—an evil affecting not the honour only, but the very vitality of Christian truth—an evil which converts a living, beautiful, gentle, life-giving reality, into a dead, offensive, peace-destroying form—which commits a system of means, appointed to work out spiritual renovation, to the management and superintendence of men, the greater part of whom bitterly repudiate the very ends those means were designed to subserve—an evil which in all high senses, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, works like a pestilence, spreading abroad over the whole land, abomination and desolation—not merely exists in our country, but nourishes, extends itself, and is taking hold upon our colonial dependencies. The body of dissenting ministers, with numerous individual exceptions we admit, make no direct effort to stay the plague, refuse to take

the purifying censor into their own hands, and look coldly, nay, frowningly, upon any members of their own body, who feel themselves bound in duty so to do. Such conduct ought to be based upon reasons of unyielding solidity. We propose to examine them. We promise we shall

“Nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice.”

Our simple desire is to see things *at they are*—not to look upon them through any distorting medium, whether of predilection or prejudice. On our part we ask no mercy—nor shall we hesitate to make any statement, which we believe to be the truth.

First in order, and certainly most potential in argument, is the plea, that direct effort is not the best mode of curing the evil—at all events, not the most

suitable for the adoption of dissenting ministers. Their business is to promulgate Christian truth, and by confining themselves singly and exclusively to this main end of their office, they are slowly, but certainly sapping the foundations of a citadel, which no direct efforts can batter down.

Cheerfully, and with our whole heart, we offer our tribute of respect and admiration, to the zeal, the energy, the perseverance, the success, with which their labours, in this direction, are performed. We not only admit, but we are proud to proclaim our conviction, that the body of dissenting ministers is about the most valuable, the most useful, which our country can boast of—for the most part, good men, able expositors of scripture, attentive pastors, true philanthropists. Scantily paid,

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they are content with, frugal fare, and strive by self-denial, not only to “owe no man anything,” but out of their narrow incomes, to set their flocks an example of liberality. No body of men, despite all the charges brought against them of sectarianism, more habitually exercise Christian charity. No men more cordially rejoice when good is done, by the instrumentality of any sect. Whatever there is in this kingdom of active benevolence, of high toned morality, of Christian virtue, is mainly to be traced to their unostentatious labours. We have no end to answer in offering them this sincere token of our respect. We would not stoop to flatter them. We are not about to retract one iota of the charge we brought against them. We speak thus because thus we think and believe.

With this admission, we record our deliberate conviction, that the apology above adverted to, for silence and inactivity in reference to the crying evil of church and state alliance, is unsatisfactory—not good in reason—not borne out by experience—not sanctioned by the highest examples.

Here is a divinely appointed system of means, intended to work out an end of paramount importance.

Our legislators, usually men who care nothing about the end, claim the exclusive right to order and regulate the employment of those means—pervert them into a piece of machinery to further their own political or pecuniary advantage—but, constrained by the spirit of the age, *tolerate* the use of the same means by dissenters. The evil is, their assumption of power which

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does not belong to them, and their use of it, for selfish, worldly purposes, to the serious impediment of voluntary religion. Such an evil is not to be met by the more honest and truthful employment of the same set of means by other men. The absurdity and impiety of a state church, is not a whit more clear to common apprehension after we have made men christians, than it was before, unless indeed such men feel themselves bound, which ordinarily they do not, thoroughly to investigate the merits of this particular question.

Were the deadly error so directly antagonistic to the truths dissenting ministers are labouring to disseminate, that the reception of such truths and the maintenance of such error, could not by possibility co-exist, the reason assigned would be strong, perhaps unanswerable. But this is not the case. Dissenting ministers adhering to their present plan, may do much good, but ages upon ages must elapse before the church, on this system, will work itself clear of the secularity which now mixes up with, and defiles it.

The apology is not borne out by experience. A state-church is not in *fact*, rendered less secure by the policy adopted by dissenting ministers. The voluntary principle is not in reality advanced by it. The adherence of churchmen to the nationality of the church is *not* loosened by their hearty love of Christian truth—the dislike of dissenters to the union is *not* augmented by it. Why! dissenting ministers have laboured, and laboured diligently, for upwards of a century on this system, and yet, at this day, the question generally is neither understood by their people

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nor greatly cared for; and were a poll taken of the whole nonconforming community, not a fiftieth part of them would be found to know what the separation of church and state means. How absurd to pretend that theirs is the surest method of remedying the evil!

That it is not sanctioned by precedents of any worth, must be admitted when we mention Paul in connection with Judaism, John with Gnosticism, Luther with Catholicism, Bunyan, Owen and others with Laudism and ultra-churchism. All church history to which men are wont to look with an ardent glow of exultation, is against the convenient but ill-chosen ground taken up on this question by dissenting ministers.

Again we call upon them to look into this matter. It has been neglected. Excuses have been urged without any serious examination of their validity—picked up hastily—employed somewhat pettishly—scarcely ever thought upon after they had answered their end. Their present position has not been taken up by ministers after anxious and impartial discussion. They have slidden into it from inattention to, and distaste for, the whole question at issue. They have committed themselves very much to the principles of expediency—and just now they feel it to be inexpedient to bind themselves to a great principle. They have not deliberately gone wrong—they have not gone wrong from a mistaken but conscientious conviction that they were going right. They have gone wrong, chiefly, for want of sincere thought at all about the matter.

VI.

DUTY AND THE MEANS TO ITS PERFORMANCE.

An image carved with marvellous cunning, tricked out in solemn vestments, a part woven by human fancy, a part stolen from the chest of truth—an image, we repeat, an outside semblance, a counterfeit of life, not God-created, but made by the hands of man, empty, without heart, destitute of any well-spring of vitality—has been placed by aristocratic legislation in the throne of Christianity. The living, simple, beauteous truth, the rightful queen to whom all spiritual homage, of due, belongs—too sincere, too earnest, too unbending for the purposes of men in power, was long since deposed, thrust out, compelled to wander in obscurity and to witness the fealty of her voluntary adherents treated as an offence against the good order of society. Great men—kings, nobles, bishops, stand round about the image their own sagacity has fashioned, bow to it and pay it court, proclaim it the only true church of

Christ, pass laws, professedly to maintain its state, and share the proceeds among themselves. All men are bid to acknowledge it, in humble thankfulness that they are permitted to hold any conversation at all with her whose throne is usurped by this creature of the state. Meanwhile, these great ones, under the sanction and on the behalf of their church, perpetrate a thousand enormities, violate every maxim of religion, degrade, insult, harass, imprison—regard nor justice nor mercy in their pursuit of pelf, until half this nation, disgusted with the imposture and ignorant of the claims and worth of heavenly truth, declare that there is no such thing, that it is all a hollow pretence, and that Christianity itself is a mere scheme of priestcraft. Christianity! What kind of Christianity is our

state-church upheld to subserve? An attention to rites for the performance of which fees may be exacted—heartless formality—a blind, unreasoning, ignorant, superstitious obedience to the priesthood—payment of tithes, and easter-offerings, and church rates—these are the great objects of our Establishment. The interest taken in it by our rulers is just an interest in property. What concern can the vast majority of them be supposed to feel for the spread of religion? The whole thing is a stupendous money-scheme, carried on under false pretences—a bundle of vested rights, stamped, for the greater security, with the sacred name of Christianity—an affair of livings, and benefices, and baronial bishoprics to the aggregate amount of 5,000,000*l.* a year.

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To shatter this image, and give the dust of it to the four winds of heaven—to re-conduct Christianity to her throne—to vindicate her rights—to restore her legitimate influence—is the sacred mission of protestant dissenting ministers. They are appointed by Providence to this great work—their principles open up to them this glorious career—they are equal to the mighty undertaking—the time is come for them to decide and to act. With earnest longings of heart, with trembling solicitude largely intermingled with hope, we wait—the country waits, to hear their determination. We entreat them by all that is good and great to come forward. Let them but say, “the work shall be done,” and the doom of the Establishment is pronounced.

For they know not their own power. They seem scarcely to be sensible of the vast things they can accomplish. They have the hearts of millions in their keeping—they enjoy the confidence of the great body of virtuous intelligence in this country. In one year they might change the whole aspect of this momentous question. The train is laid—the match is put into their hands—let them dauntlessly apply it, and

the flame of enthusiasm they will kindle will astound even themselves. Such an opportunity is now before them as never man had. Luther himself might have coveted their position. The resources of which they can avail themselves, the might they can wield, the object they are yet destined to effect, lay them under a tremendous weight of responsibility. They have

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only to snap the cords which a wealthy and a worldly few have bound around them, to rise up in their might and shake off all obstructions, and they will re-assure the vast body of dissenters, unite them in one firm, compact, irresistible phalanx, call up the spirit of earlier days, and lead on religious liberty to its ultimate triumph.

If there were one mode of appealing to them which we had reason to believe would be successful, that mode we would adopt. We have spoken roughly to them, not, however, in unkindness. The blow might be unwelcome—let them not regard it as the blow of an enemy. To see them manfully, and with religious determination, occupy the honourable post which Providence has assigned them, there is no sacrifice consistent with truth we would not gladly make. 'Tis no pleasure to us to wound—from our inmost souls we aver that we would much rather commend and cheer them forward. Our object is single. We hesitate not to stake everything upon it—character, station, existence itself. Our joy, our gratitude, our respect, our confidence would scarcely know a limit did we but hear them give the signal to march onward—march towards the actualisation of the voluntary principle.

VII.

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

“Onward! Onward!”—all events as, in rapid succession, they pass by, speak to the patriotic and the good with increasing emphasis, “on ward—move on.” It is the spring-time of mind. Winter with its darkness and its desolation is over. Society, for ages ice-bound, feels the influence of a general thaw. The sun of truth rises high above the mountain tops, and all things that love the light peep forth to welcome his genial beams. Through every pore of the nation, the sap is rising. All interests that root themselves in justice bud and put forth promise of future fruit. Nothing born of truth stands still. The seeds cast into the human heart midst many tears and much labour, by men of other times, begin at last to germinate, and quickened into life will push up through every incrustation which prejudice and pride may have formed

above them, into air and light, their proper element. No class can stay for long the universal bursting forth of intellectual nature. The body that ministers no adequate nourishment to the growing mind of the people, will presently be pushed aside as useless.

Onward! art, science, civilization, morals, civil polity—all are moving onward. If dissent, or rather the voluntary system of christian faith and worship, seems to be an exception, it is but in appearance. Like our own hardy oak, the pride of Britain, it may be late in vegetation, but like it too, it will be the last to fall “into the sear and yellow leaf.” There is a vitality in it which defies extinction. We have no misgivings. Be the influence what it may, natural or artificial and conventional, that checks its full development, it can

have power only for a time, and that time, we rejoice to believe, is hastening to a close.

Men talk of the amazing—the all but irresistible power of the aristocracy, as though it were a vain attempt to cope with that. These idle fears might be excused, when night overshadowed the soul of this great nation. They are contemptible now, indicating strong prejudice or strange misconception. The power of the aristocracy! Let dissenters dare to look it in the face, and it will cease to be frightful. There resides, may we not rather say, there sleeps within their own body a might which, fairly aroused and put forth, would shake aristocratic strong-holds down to their very foundations. This is no empty flourish. With their principles, with their numbers, with their re-

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sources, with their position in society, with their sobriety of habits, their capacity for organization, their wide-spread intelligence, their religious zeal, the hardest conventionalities, though it were adamant, must give way before their well-directed strokes.

The Establishment, be it borne in mind, is linked with the affections of few but those directly or remotely interested in its wealth. Upon the great mass of the people it has no hold. The rapacity and the tyranny of the clergy have severed the feeble tie which bound them to the church. The millions would hail separation as an act of justice towards themselves. The power of the aristocracy would find no fulcrum there.

The middle classes, our tradesmen, manufacturers, merchants and gentlemen of moderate property, may be equally divided between churchmen and dissenters. Of the churchmen, few indeed are affectionately attached to the state-church. The greater part, by far, are only nominally of its communion. They rank among its members, because it is the so-called religion of the country. They sometimes attend its services—they know little, and care less of its

doctrines—they are well nigh indifferent as to its fate. Energy is not to be expected from them in support of the Establishment. They would show themselves in its favour in the first brush, but they have not the heart for a persevering earnest struggle.

Thinking men, however circumstances may render certain professions expedient, have long since settled

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the question, considered simply as question of opinion. Priestcraft, rampant of late, as Puseyism, neither blinds their judgment nor charms their affections. Nineteen out of twenty will admit, in confidence, that the thing is a nuisance, the removal of which it is a desideratum peacefully to accomplish.

The case then stands thus. Here are two millions of dissenters in this country, even setting aside Scotland, where a powerful and well-trained band waits impatiently for action—two millions of England's most virtuous, most intelligent, most truth-loving inhabitants, whom our dissenting ministers, in one year, might array in determined opposition to mammon in the garb of Christianity—men capable of understanding a principle when fairly stated, of loving it when understood, of working it out when truly loved. Here is a principle, the worth of which cannot be over-estimated—cognizable by every man of common sense—loveable and lovely to all virtuous and unprejudiced minds—identified with all that is characteristic of Christianity itself. By these men this principle is to be wielded against a great aristocratic imposture—a disgusting pretence, the hollowness of which may be easily exposed—a falsehood cloaked in truth, which levies fearful imposts, produces bitter dissensions, stands in the way of all national progress, engenders infidelity to a most alarming extent, misrepresents and dishonours true religion. The sympathies of the masses are with them. In the middle ranks of society they have little to encounter but indifference, no deep-

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rooted, affectionate, energetic feeling which ages only of toil and conflict can subdue. Thinking men of all professions inwardly wish them success. What is the power of the aristocracy against this? What their resources, should we once come to close quarters? Intimidation and oppression. But these are weapons which when employed most vigorously most signally fail.

If dissenting ministers hesitate to break ground against this enormity, we earnestly implore them to read the signs of the times, and ponder seriously the almost certain results of their indecision. The work will be done—no human power can prevent that. The hours of priestcraft in this country are numbered. A spirit of hostility to it is rising and spreading through all ranks which must ere long overwhelm it. There are elements at work in the bosom of society, of frightful virulence and force, which the most trivial and unexpected event may presently be the flash to ignite and explode. The Establishment will be destroyed by revolutionary and infidel fury, unless it be first peaceably put an end to by enlightened and religious men. Let not dissenting ministers be deceived. The storm that is gathering, and which they alone can avert, will be indiscriminate in its ravages. Not the Establishment only, but Christianity, which in the minds of the many is identified with it, will be exposed to its pitiless violence. Let them look around them whilst there is yet time.

The vast body of working men, the physical power of the nation—is it not almost wholly possessed by in-

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fidelity? Mark, we say,—mark the intense bitterness of their hatred against the priesthood as a class—hatred excited and inflamed by the oppression practised upon them in the name of religion. Are dissenting ministers prepared to withstand its outburst? Do they intend to await the coming storm? Is it fair to

religion, fair to the church of Christ, that they should do so? By taking their stand now, they may imbue the minds of the labouring classes with the truth, that Christianity is not oppression, does not sanction it—that far from standing in the way of freedom, it gladly lends a hand to help it forward. They may open the people's eyes to the fact, that a state-church is not to be confounded with the lovely emanation from the divine mind—the gospel of peace. They will, at all events, have done their part, to rescue them from error. They will not gain the masses by inaction. No reverence towards the truth is like to be begotten in their hearts by the silence of dissenting ministers on this matter.

Priestcraft must fall. That truth is written in light. With them it remains to decide whether it shall fall by the hands of religion or of infidelity—whether they will ride and control, or perish in the storm.

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VIII.

THE POWER OF VOLUNTARY CHRISTIANITY.

“England! with all thy faults I love thee still.” Yes! our country takes a firm hold upon our affections—challenges and secures our honest and exulting admiration. The recluse, whose soul makes antiquity its home, and whose converse with the modern world is limited to its wants and its annoyances, may boast, if he please, of Greece and Rome; and, carefully shutting one eye to prevent distraction, and looking intently with the other through the telescope of time upon the far distant past, may aver, if he will, that the present age furnishes no parallel to ages long since gone by. Right the contrary is our judgment of the matter. With pride, we look upon the wondrous embodiments, material, intellectual, and moral, of the human mind, with which our country is thickly studded. If in other

days intellect built for itself more splendid shrines than now, and dwelt in a cloud of glory more effulgent

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—which we dispute—we look in vain into dusky anti-quity for the more magnificent creations of the moral man—the concretions (if we may so speak) of justice and benevolence—the bright and beauteous forms into which the social world is moulded by the plastic power of religion. These, less showy, but more noble developments of mind, constitute the distinguishing glory of this country and of our age. We have just looked upon them in the loveliness of their efflorescence—for in May they blossom;* and we step into another month, thankful that we are permitted to tread a soil, capable of producing after this sort.

And yet, what are these? Of what new element of power are these the substantial type? Of what invisible but mighty principle are these the fruit, the practical result? What are these combinations of men to bless our earth, and make wealth minister to the elevation of mankind—these variously titled, variously efficient, but all beneficent societies which are actively engaged in penetrating, in different directions, the dense jungle of the moral world, the growth of ages of neglect, the natural lair of every ravenous and unclean thing, and which, with energetic enterprize and self-denying perseverance, are clearing a broad space for future civilisation, order, and religion—what are they all, but just the actings and the goings forth of the mistrusted, despised, ill-understood voluntary prin-

* The reference was made to the May meetings which had just terminated.

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ciple? Where are the moral triumphs of coercion? What things does it cast up from its inmost depths upon the shore of history, for after times to pick up and examine? Racks, thumbscrews, and bootikins—the sword and the faggot—squabbles for money—

scrambles for place—a population escaping from brutal superstition, only to rush into the bosom of daring and profligate infidelity—these are the results and the trophies of coercion—of a state-church. What else could be looked for? How long will men doat upon the expectation that revealed truth, systematically converted by secular powers into an instrument to work out secular objects, should produce a blessing? How long will they spare a system which, whatever good there may be mixed up with it, is not only foreign to it, but is invariably spoiled by its association? which is powerful only for mischief, and where it most triumphs, does most harm?

If the voluntary principle—if Christianity working out its own sacred impulses, is less conspicuous in its triumphs at home than abroad—is less felt here, and tells with greater force upon systems more corrupt, it is time, surely, to investigate the cause of that difference, and vigorously set about its removal. We respectfully request our dissenting ministers to observe the honesty and freedom with which the principle is worked by missionaries among the heathen. It goes directly to its main object. It comes unswervingly into collision with whatever stands between it and its great end. Every pretence which has been foisted by

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a crafty priesthood upon an ignorant people, it exposes without scruple. It labours to shake down existing systems to the dust. It levels against them wit, satire, persuasion, argument. It heeds not, in this matter, the decisions of the powers that be. It is not afraid of being taunted as political. Truth is its aim; error is in its way; and with a view to the one, it cannot afford to be delicate towards the other. A lie is called a lie, shown to be a lie, denounced as a lie, and men are told to reject it or perish.

But is the principle thus honestly and faithfully worked out at home? Let the facts of the case be noted. Christianity in earnest, seeking, in obedience

to its own benevolent yearnings, the spiritual welfare of our countrymen, finds its chief obstruction, not in them, but in its nationally authorised guardians and ministers, our aristocracy and clergy. The appointed exponents of a creed which practically degrades the gospel into an *opus operatum*, and has reached its purpose when it has induced attention to formal rites, in well nigh every parish of the kingdom bristle up indignantly against all voluntary efforts of benevolence, and bring to bear upon their trembling and half-deluded parishioners, in prevention of success, all the worldly powers which an aristocracy can wield and which the poor are least able to resist. Is there a dissenting minister in London, or out of it, who has been happy enough never to have come across a case like this? Is not this beneficed net-work spread over the whole empire? Are there not vested rights planted in every

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square mile of the country to nip and extinguish Christianity in earnest? And this overbearing, truth-obstructing system which calls itself the will of the Supreme—how is it dealt with? Assaulted with bold heart and unshrinking fidelity, as in other lands? No! not so! The semblance remains untouched to this day. The lie continues unexposed. No hand has been put forth to pull down this barrier to usefulness; and behind it, the working classes have been driven along a course commencing with superstition and terminating with infidelity.

That a serious and determined attempt to force this barrier will be attended with much inconvenience, with an immediate desertion from our ranks, possibly with some loss of civil advantages, it were vain to deny. But until, for the truth's sake, we are prepared to welcome sacrifice, we are unfitted for the work. We know not what Christianity is worth, if its emancipation be not worth all the suffering it may require from us. Equally ignoble and vain is the plea that time will accomplish the momentous change. Time will not ac-

comply with it. Men will. Men—either men of violence who know the truth only as distorted and disfigured by a state-church—or men of a hardier, more sincere, less calculating religion than that which we possess. But since the work must be done, and trials must be endured, why not now? why not by us?

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IX.

ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES.

John Foster, one of those men whom Providence sends into the world about once in a century, to do the work of thinking for the age in which they live, to sift the particles of truth from the heap of rubbish with which they had for generations been mixed up, and fuse them into a consistent whole, and give them universal currency—John Foster, in his essay, “On the Application of the Epithet Romantic,” makes the following admirable remarks. “The weakest or most uncultivated mind may gratify its vanity, laziness, and malice, all at once, by a prompt application of vague condemnatory words, where a wise and liberal man would not feel himself warranted to pronounce without the most deliberate consideration, and where such consideration might, perhaps, terminate in applause. Thus the most excellent performances, whether in the department of thinking or of action, might be consigned to contempt,

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if there were no better judges, on the authority of those who could not even understand them. A man who wishes some decency and sense to prevail in the circulation of opinions, will do well, when he hears these decisions of ignorant arrogance, to call for a precise explication of the manner in which the terms apply to the subject.”

We recommend this sentence to the study of that little knot of men who characterise the separation of

church and state as a “pure abstraction,” and whose accommodating consciences can allow them to take a liberal retaining fee in the service of religious freedom, and at the same time cast contempt upon voluntarism as “an abstract principle.” In all ages there have been flies who blow on that which feeds them, and who succeed in making offensive, what, until they pitched upon it, was sound and wholesome!

An abstract principle! Why, this is just an equivalent for the epithet “romantic,” applied to truth instead of persons. It is used by the same class of men. It indicates the same feebleness and arrogance of mind in those who resort to it. It displays the same assumption of superior wisdom as a coverlet to the same indolence of thought. It is the readiest stone with which to hit every project which demands sincerity and earnestness of effort. It renders reasoning unnecessary. It supplies the lack of wit. It may be properly entitled “The art of demolishing truth made easy to the meanest capacity.” It is just as available for the parrot and the starling as it is for men who have been

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endowed with intellect, and five times out of six would be just as correctly employed. We seldom hear it, but we conclude that the party using it is desirous of concealing the scantiness of his furniture, and therefore cuts short all colloquy by slamming the door of his understanding in our face.

We wish however, to discriminate between the few who use this phrase to strangle inquiry, and the much more considerable class who having had it buzzed in their ears with untiring pertinacity, have at last come to confound it with the legitimate decisions of their own reason. The preceding remarks are applicable and are intended to be applied only to the former. With the latter we are disposed to deal in a far different tone.

If the separation of church and state be “an abstract principle,” what then is Christianity? Is this dark world to be regenerated by a “pure abstraction?”

When Carey left his stall and went forth amidst the sneers of the philosophers of expediency to assail the towering structure of Brahminical superstition—when Williams, fired with a spirit of lofty enterprise, conceived the idea of visiting the remotest islands of the Pacific, and taming their rude inhabitants by “the foolishness of preaching”—when Luther deliberately resolved to snap the massive chains which bound his country to the foot of the papal throne—when Paul set out for Athens, to level the simple truth of the gospel at the mythology which gigantic intellects had built up and entrenched—were they in pursuit of an abstraction or a solid reality? Is there anything so vague,

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anything so wild and visionary, anything so utterly impracticable, in replacing religion upon the pedestal upon which its Author first set it, that every serious attempt to effect the glorious work should be scouted without a moment’s consideration, as a quixotic enterprise in search of an “abstract principle?” If so, then farewell Christianity! We had thought it was a reality—but if this be true, it is nothing more than “a pure abstraction.”

It is not true! No! The application of the cant phrase in this direction is at once an aspersion on the character of the religion we profess and an insult to our understandings. The separation of church and state is an object not only intelligible to men who will give themselves the trouble to think, but to men of honest hearts it is also practicable. That this is a work of difficulty we admit. That its accomplishment will require arduous labour, unshrinking self-sacrifice, indomitable resolution, great wisdom, and courage which only the love of truth can inspire, is sufficiently plain. But we have not yet learned to regard these qualities as extinct. We see them successfully engaged in coping with heathenism. It is the fortunate lot of the present generation to behold them shaking down to the dust far stronger holds of error than this same state-

church. Is our aristocracy omnipotent? Have we not wrestled with them one throw, and measured their strength? And shall the men who can dare to assault delusion abroad, quail before a feebler type of it at home.

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We beg our readers to look at the principle wrapped up in this unvarying use of the phrase in question. What does it mean? Nothing more nor less than this—that voluntary Christianity is a good thing intrinsically, considered apart from all circumstances, but a very silly thing to be constituted a rule of conduct—very fine to look at, but exceedingly foolish to attempt. Here is the old doctrine of expediency dressed up in a new suit. It is just another way of saying that men are to gauge their duty by the line of probable success—that principles are given to amuse and not to govern us—that to see what is right argues a sound understanding, to strive in sincerity of heart to do it, is the plainest evidence of a fond and feeble mind. Never until this pernicious doctrine is deposed from authority, as well as those who uphold it, can any great and lasting good be looked for. Far different was the faith of our puritan forefathers. Results they left to Him who governs them. Right was their canon of practice. What prospect had they of success? Their way was dark—danger flashed across their path—before them was nothing visible but sufferings, tears, and blood—ruin yawned at their very feet. What was all this to them? Christianity bid them go forward—and forward they went through death to victory.

Are we now to be instructed by men who cannot comprehend the moral dignity of a great principle—who cannot appreciate the power of truth, that life is to be a series of shifts; and conduct, like a bark at the mercy of every gust, to be guided by no helm and to keep its

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head to no port? Where will these sailors-before-the-wind, these weather-trimmers and breeze-catchers land us? Anywhere we suspect, but on what they term "an abstract principle"—anywhere but on truth.

In justice to dissenting ministers we must say, that so far as our observation has extended, they have not, in terms at least, stigmatised the separation question as "a pure abstraction." They may have objected to certain times or certain modes of working out the voluntary principle. But to hold it up to ridicule as "abstract," has not been their mistake. Had they done so they might as well at once have abjured their vocation. To preach truth and then to unpreach it—to bid men look at its beauty and then caution them not to love it to excess—to exhort them to listen to its voice and whisper in their ear 'twere foolish to obey it—this they would have done had they professed dissent, and then branded the voluntary principle as "an abstract principle." They have been wiser and better men than this.

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X.

THE HELMSMAN.

"Port your helm," shouts the captain. "Port your helm, it is," responds the man at the wheel, and round goes the ship. In moral and religious affairs, we are but men at the wheel. Truth is our captain. 'Tis not for us to gaze distractedly upon the wild and ever-tossing main of circumstances—to shift our course at sight of every crested billow—to consult the winds—to calculate chances—and, presuming on our superior skill, to take the vessel into our own hands. Happily this duty is not imposed upon us. Inextricable perplexity would else paralyse our efforts. We are not bound to foresee. We are not allowed to dispute.

We are just to obey—nothing less, nothing more. Where our obedience may take us is no proper concern of ours. We are not responsible for consequences—they belong to the Author of truth.

If there be aught in Christianity which takes it out

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of the region of mere fable—anything true—anything divine, of one thing we may be sure, that whatever principle we find within the sacred enclosure, that principle is worthy of being trusted to the uttermost. It is no “abstraction.” It is not there to be treated as a visionary—a wild, dreaming, fanciful thing, unsafe to listen to for practical guidance. It is there to command—there to be revered, loved, obeyed. To question its capabilities, argues great presumption conjoined with extreme littleness of mind. To imagine that on the whole we can do better, is a palpable proof that we are ignorant of ourselves. To be alarmed about consequences, is to pretend that we can foresee more clearly what is to follow, than He who gave us the principle for guidance. Though earth should be riven to its centre—we have no choice but to obey. Meanwhile we may very quietly leave earth in the keeping of a much wiser than ourselves.

This is one of the great advantages of following out a true principle. One may always be calm and unmoved in view of that which is to come—is not tormented with self-reflection when the very worst does come. We may always find our way—always know where we are—always be understood—and if we remain faithful, must eventually be triumphant.

Such a principle is voluntarism. Scoffed at by the high-priests of the Establishment—thrust aside without the smallest ceremony to give place to an axiom they have originated, which, if true, proves the Founder of the christian system, to have erred in laying down the

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constitution of His own kingdom, and for the permanence and stability of His church, to have been indebted to the kind and wise suggestions of many-titled churchmen—taunted as plebeian by aristocratic statesmen, who take it for granted, that gentlemen can only listen to the truth as it issues from the lips of gentlemanly instructors, and that the nation is bound to furnish prizes to tempt that class of teachers into the office, which of all others they are least qualified to fill—misrepresented, vilified, branded as a pestilent heresy—the voluntary principle yet traces its origin to heaven, and authenticates its commission by an appeal to the scriptures. It is there, as part and parcel of Christianity. The homage due to it is prompt, unhesitating obedience.

If this be true, it furnishes a short answer to those, who fear that the direct abolition of an establishment in an old country like ours, where things civil and sacred have intertwined for ages, and modes of thought and habits of acting have accommodated themselves to existing institutions, could not be attempted without endangering the peace of society, and would leave a vacuum in religious instructions, which the voluntary principle would be found incompetent as yet to fill. All this is plausible enough. But then it would have been equally plausible, with slight change of terms 1800 years ago. What have they to do with the peace of society? Where in the volume they profess to believe, do they find themselves charged with that responsibility? It is their business to obey, not to

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cavil. Is compulsory religion sanctioned by Christianity? If not, put an end to it. Is the management of the church by secular powers consonant with the genius of heaven-born truth? If not, put an end to it. The evil deprecated may follow or it may not. You have nothing whatever to do with it. If you

cannot trust your principle, give it up—give up the whole system with which it is identified—but in the name of all that's decent, don't acknowledge a captain and then wrangle with him, as to who should have the conduct of the ship.

"Port your helm." "Port your helm, it is, Sir." Oh! for a deep, unquestioning, tranquil, loving faith like this, in regard to the great question now at issue between the advocates of the voluntary and compulsory principles—an eye fixed intently upon the eye of the commander, that it might catch his slightest glance—an ear, deaf to the roar of conflicting elements, and open only to the commands of truth—a heart beating only with intense anxiety to do exactly and at once, what we are bidden to do, leaving the safety of the Bhip in those hands to which it has been committed—a foot planted firmly upon deck, and a hand upon the wheel—and a voice ever ready to respond "it is, Sir," to the orders we receive! Then if we go down, we go down at all events like men.

This must be our spirit before we shall make way. And with this spirit nothing can hinder our progress. Our gallant vessel is tight and sea-worthy—and her captain right competent to take her into port. The

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crew is at fault. Transports, that do not properly belong to her, are aboard—and go about whispering mutiny, and wishing truth were confined in chains, as being "abstract" and unfit to be trusted with the management of the ship. We shall never prosper until these men are sent down to their proper berths.

"Well! what are we to do?" is the question we hear on all sides. Do! Why let dissenters just do what principle bids them—act like men. They believe in the voluntary principle as part of Christianity. They believe establishments to be antagonistic to that principle. They believe consequently that they ought to be abolished. These are their orders. Are they prepared to obey—at all risks? Then let them do as

men in other circumstances do—take steps to make themselves masters of the evil in all its bearings—to measure their work—then sit down and deliberately calculate their own means, and how they may be brought to bear most efficiently—and lastly set about working out their plan at once, and in earnest. “Where there is a will there is a way.” Sincerity will either find instruments or make them.

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GROUP THE SECOND.

POLITICAL VIEW OF A STATE-CHURCH.

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AFTER a brief explanation of what is meant by a separation of Church and State, the political evils resulting from the alliance, are lightly sketched. The whole system is looked at as an engine admirably adapted to work out the purposes of the aristocracy. The church establishment is then viewed as it affects party feeling, war, monopoly, the throne, public political opinion, and education; and the series concludes with an address to liberal statesmen on the conduct they commonly adopt in reference to this question. A few controversial articles on church property, have been detached from this group, in which they originally appeared, and will be found without alteration in the Appendix.

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I.

SEPARATION DEFINED.

When we speak of a separation of church and state, we speak of a result respecting which we find no difficulty in forming a distinct conception. Others may term it “an abstraction”—to our minds it presents itself as an eminently practical affair. We think we know what we mean by the phrase—we shall try, moreover, to make our meaning clear to our readers.

A state church necessarily supposes the payment by the nation of a body of ministers to instruct the entire people in the religion authorised by the rulers of the land. The separation of church and state includes the resumption, for civil purposes, of all national funds now set apart for the religious instruction of the people, the abolition of all privileges now connected with the profession of the authorised creed, and the repeal of all statutes, or portions of statutes, which empower the civil magistrate to wield his authority in support of any religious opinions whatever.

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A remark or two in explanation of these general statements will place our meaning in a clearer light. We shall not be guilty of the absurdity of submitting in this place a detailed plan for effecting the object—but we may properly indicate two or three leading principles, which in our judgment any plan ought to include.

A prominent idea involved in the separation of church and state, is the resumption by the latter, for civil purposes, of all national funds at present appropriated to the former. We take it for granted that church property is, in the fullest sense of the term, national property.* From the reformation downwards, parliament has so dealt with it. The power that handed over in trust to the Anglican church, her present temporalities, can surely resume them, whenever it is believed, that their present application is detrimental to the best interests of the empire.

We are no advocates, however, for spoliation. Public good is never in the long run promoted by private injustice. Rights have grown up under the present system which must be respected—vested interests, which, whatever face of absurdity or even impiety they present to us, must not be disturbed without equitable compensation. The Establishment is a national institution—it is not a thing connived at simply, or tacitly

sanctioned, as was slavery—it was created and it is at present upheld by law. Every legal right, therefore,

* See Appendix.

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which under this system has become property, has, upon its abolition, a reasonable claim upon the state, for a fair equivalent.

The appropriation of church temporalities to civil purposes may be effected without real injury to any parties. The rights of present incumbents would of course remain undisturbed, and it will not be pretended that a clergyman is injured because he will have no successor to his living. Our view of the separation of the church and state does not imply the necessity of a sudden and violent change. The full realisation of it would run over the term of at least one generation. Funds would be withdrawn from the church only as incumbents die off, thus leaving time and opportunity for the voluntary principle gradually to occupy the ground so vacated.

The right of presentation is undoubtedly recognised as property. Originating probably in natural and even laudable causes, it is now simply an instrument of the worst species of power in the hands of the aristocracy. But to extinguish it, without compensating the possessors of it, would, in our judgment, be reaching a public benefit through the medium of a private wrong. The right is now frequently transferred from one hand to the other on well understood terms. It has in short an average market price—and to such sum, in every case, we think the present holders of it, in the event of separation, would be equitably entitled.

Considerable property, belongs of right, to the episcopalian sect, as a distinct religious body. En-

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dowments have been made, and property bequeathed, for the especial object of promulgating the doctrines of the book of common prayer. Separation, as we

understand it, would not affect the application of these funds.

We notice these instances only for the purpose of indicating a general principle. The object we aim at involves the destruction of no property whatever. It only detaches it from the church. Wherever rights are interfered with, it awards compensation. The clergy would not be injured—the patrons would receive an equivalent for what they lost—and the state, even in a pecuniary point of view, would be greatly relieved. This, then, is what we mean by a resumption for civil purposes of ecclesiastical funds. Satisfy all just claims which individuals, or even the sect as such, have upon these temporalities—and let the surplus be devoted, in such way as parliament may deem most fitting, to the legitimate objects of civil government.

The other general ideas involved in the separation of church and state, scarcely need explanation. The abolition of all temporal privileges now connected with the profession of the authorised creed, implies also the converse—the extinction of all disabilities affecting those who refuse to conform to a national faith. It would put an end to episcopal baronies, and dismiss to exclusive spiritual duties, the titled churchmen whose presence in the upper house seems to have answered no earthly purpose, but to keep alive bigotry and embitter strife.

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Such in general terms, is what we have in view, when urging the importance of separating the church from the state. We say it is an object worthy of a determined and protracted struggle. To prove this assertion, will now be the main goal of our efforts. The present ecclesiastical system is a thorn in the sides of the state—rankling, festering, impeding all free movement. It is a wen upon the otherwise vigorous frame of Christianity, diverting into an unnatural and unsightly excrescence the vital fluids which would else impart bloom to the countenance, strength to the

muscle, and vivacity to the spirits of the church of Christ. The state would be no less benefited by separation than the church—the church would be equally a gainer with the state. Their union is an ill-assorted one—they were joined together in defiance of reason and religion. A perpetual divorce would be a happy arrangement for both.

And now, with the reader's permission, at the risk of exposing ourselves to the charge of iteration and prolixity, we venture, before entering upon a detailed examination of the evils entailed upon the country by the state-church, to call the attention of our readers to some of the prominent characteristics of this general plan for effecting a separation. Many considerations press upon us the propriety of this course. In pursuing the great object to which we have especially devoted ourselves, we have to encounter not only the misrepresentations of the interested, but the fears of the timid. We are anxious to secure ourselves against

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mistake. We wish it to be distinctly understood what it is we are "driving at." Firmly convinced that distaste for the whole question, if it does not originate in, is at all events aggravated by, the notion that it is a dreamy abstraction, we think we cannot better prepare the way for any future efforts we may deem it our duty to make, than to prove that the end we have in view is intelligible, practical, and, in every point of view, immensely important.

The resumption for civil purposes of all funds now devoted by the state to the maintenance of the church—the abolition of all privileges connected with the profession of the authorised creed—and the repeal of all statutes empowering the magistrate to interpose his aid in religious affairs, is what we mean by the separation of church and state. In dealing with church property, we have given it as our opinion, that the rights of present incumbents, the vested interests of

patrons, and the fair claims of the episcopalian sect, ought to be respected.

We beg to remark, then, that the separation of church and state, thus understood, is not a wild impracticable scheme. That many men will call it so, we can readily believe. But this is not at all uncommon. The repeal of the corn-laws was not long since denounced by one in high authority, as nothing better than madness—and yet he has seen good reason for proposing what he then denounced. Every great political change has been so branded in the earlier stages of its history. Thus men were wont to speak

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of catholic emancipation—thus they designated parliamentary reform—thus they laboured to throw contempt upon the abolition of slavery—and yet all these measures have been realised. Why then is the separation of church and state to be regarded as a question *in nubibus*? Does it involve any thing, in the nature of things, impossible? Is there aught belonging to it, as we have explained it, which lifts it right out of the reach of mortal effort? Admitting the object to be a desirable one, why should it not be soberly pursued, as well as the extinction of church-rates, or the destruction of ecclesiastical courts? Why must those who seriously devote themselves to it be set down as moon-stricken fanatics? They have before them a well-defined end—they are in possession of a good apparatus of means. Opinion is largely with them, and only needs to be quickened into feeling—feeling will settle down into determination, and determination will embody itself in action.

We must be allowed to observe further that the difficulties to be encountered in working out this principle, are just of the same kind as, and very little, if any, greater than, the difficulties which have been surmounted over and over again. There is nothing in the thing itself which interposes an insuperable obstacle. Doubtless the adjustment of details would

require great wisdom combined with caution—but surely wisdom equal to the task may be found. The real “lion in the way” is the aristocracy. The state-church is peculiarly theirs—a convenient and pleasant

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pasture-ground upon which younger sons and dependent relatives may feed in quiet—a luxuriant prairie offering abundance to those who would else be supernumeraries on the estate. But then, we see no reason why men who dare to attack high rents, should tremble at the bare prospect of attacking tithes. In the latter case they would not stir up more indignant opposition than in the former. In both they wrestle with the same antagonist.

Let it be noted, moreover, that the separation of church and state, inflicts no individual injustice, destroys no vested interests. For all that it takes away it renders back a fair equivalent. It gives an average market price for every right which it destroys. It despoils none—it extinguishes no property. On the contrary, such property as it deals with, it places upon a firmer basis. The temper of the times, the deep-rooted alienation from the national church evinced by the working classes, the progress of dissent, and the infatuated arrogance of the clergy, strike at the security of ecclesiastical possessions. What the nation has given in trust, the nation may be disposed ere long to resume; and but a little time will elapse, we presume to think, after the question is once resolutely taken up, before many of the aristocratic body would be too happy to see any plan carried into effect which would award them fair compensation for the threatened rights they hold.

Lastly, the settlement would be a final one. Unlike other measures of reform, it leaves nothing of the

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same kind to be effected by succeeding generations. It is to be done once for all. It clears away a thou-

sand difficulties—it solves innumerable perplexities. Legislation would flow on smoothly, this *questio vexata* having been removed. There is a completeness about the object which might well commend it to our energetic pursuit. Aiming at this we occupy a position argumentatively strong. We place ourselves under the guidance of a great principle. We lift the subject out of the region of mere selfishness. We enlist the sympathies of far-seeing statesmen—we unite with them the energies of enlightened christians. However few we may be, we are no longer contemptible. We handle a fearful weapon—truth. We cannot be convicted of inconsistencies—we cannot be driven into corners. We stand upon unassailable ground—and, by our readiness to satisfy every individual claim, we afford a demonstration of being actuated by patriotic motives.

We trust, then, we have explained the object we have in view beyond the possibility of any but wilful misapprehension. The thing to be dealt with is a particular species of property—and as such it must be regarded. To mystify the subject by language implying that we have to do with a church (meaning by the term a congregation of faithful men) would be absurd. Five-sixths of the money pocketed by the clergy, are as far removed from any connection with the religious instruction of the people as landlords' rents, or queen's taxes. The working clergy—the

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curates, who would fare much better, and escape a wretched bondage under the voluntary system—these are the men who do the work, such as it is. And they would do it were the compulsory system extinguished to-morrow—those of them we mean who love the work to which they are set apart. No! we are not dealing with a church—but with an aristocratic self-elect corporation, possessed of vast wealth and special privileges—a monopoly, which is more baneful than any under which the country groans. Abolish it, we

say, but let no member of it suffer. Relieve Christianity from the reproach of being subject to the management of a secular aristocracy. Let them claim what they will—but suffer them no longer to be lords in the church of Jesus Christ.

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II.

THE CHURCH AND THE ARISTOCRACY.

That the state church in this country is maintained for political rather than spiritual purposes, the strong attachment to it, cherished and evinced by the aristocratic section of society, might be taken as sufficient argument. Of Christianity apart from an establishment—of that system of truth which enforces self-government, love to men, and piety to God, simplicity itself will not suspect them, as a class, of being much enamoured. Religion they eschew, whilst, without exception, they are devoted advocates of the church. They are wise in their generation. Not less necessary is the Establishment to them than they to the Establishment. For the perpetuation of their exclusive power, their class privileges, their multiform monopolies, a more efficient engine than the state-church, wit of man could not devise. It constitutes the solid buttress of aristocratic influence.

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Whether the maintenance of a privileged order in the state be or be not conducive to the well-being of the country, or whether, granting that it were, Christianity may be legitimately converted into an instrument for working out the design, are points we have no intention, in this place, to attempt to settle. Our present object is simply to exhibit the church as a piece of political machinery, plied by the aristocracy for their selfish purposes—to point out its exquisite adaptation to answer this its primary end—that our

readers may understand what it is really upheld to effect, and how completely it realises the intention.

An exclusive class—a class lifted far above the great bulk of society—claiming a right to all political power, and making the various interests of the many subservient to their own—could not, it is evident, long maintain its standing in this country without possessing a firm hold upon every grade of society beneath it. This the state-church enables the aristocracy to secure. It is to them an extensively ramified system of nerves distributed over the whole body politic, by which their volitions may be communicated to the various muscles. Through it they can make their influence felt with the utmost ease at the very extremities of the social system. They have but to will, and instantly there is put in motion an apparatus which brings that will to bear upon all orders throughout the empire.

We examine the structure of a machine—we see the relation of part to part—we observe how aptly

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certain contrivances secure certain movements—and how the combination of the whole uniformly produces one great result—and we pronounce without hesitation upon the design of the machine. If, then, we find every arrangement in a state-church ill-adapted to answer a spiritual purpose, but fitted with special nicety to maintain the ascendancy of a party—if, in point of fact, it impedes rather than promotes religion, and is found invariably prompt to advance the interests of the aristocracy, be those interests based on right or on injustice—what reason is their for dealing with it as a sacred institution, instead of treating it, as in truth it is, as a political engine having for its object the perpetuation of exclusive privilege and power?

Upwards of five millions sterling per annum divided into about eleven thousand unequal portions, a considerable number of them so small as barely to provide

subsistence, whilst others are so large as to furnish a suitable income to younger sons, and dependent relations of noble families—the duties attaching to the enjoyment of which sums, in all the last-mentioned cases, are performed by curates for a miserable stipend, whilst they who pocket the fees indulge in every gentlemanly recreation—the distribution of which is committed, chiefly, to the care of landed proprietors, and is regulated without the smallest reference to the religious qualifications of the parties receiving them—may constitute a very efficient arrangement for promoting aristocratic ends, but how it is adapted to

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serve Christianity, requires more ingenuity than we possess to discover. As a system for pensioning off supernumerary members of lordly houses, it may be considered perfect—as a means of supporting religion, it is destitute of even the semblance of fitness.

This, however, is the smallest part of the advantage secured to the aristocracy, the smallest part of the injury inflicted upon the country by our state-church. It gives to the exclusives, not pelf merely, but power. It is not simply a monopoly in itself, it is the shield of all other monopolies.

Fifteen thousand clergy trained in the most exclusive spirit at universities where subserviency to rank is not only taught but practised—receiving, each his appointment to a living, from the hands of a land-owning patron, or what is much to the same purpose, from those of a bishop or the crown—looking to the same source for future preferment—dependent, for intercourse with aristocratic society, upon the good will of the neighbouring squire—sympathising with all the sectional feelings of the order, as being themselves members of a privileged class—wielding, to appearance, the dreadful sanctions of religion—almoners, usually, of parochial funds and the great man's bounty—conduits through which may flow to bowing tradesmen the custom of the rich—having access to every

house, able to assume an air of authority, and, in virtue of their office, to work upon religious fears and affections—fifteen thousand clergy thus dependent on the one hand, and powerful on the other—to the aris-

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ocracy pledged servants, to their own flocks supreme dictators—stationed at convenient intervals over the length and breadth of the land, and thus coming in contact with society at all points—could mechanism more fatal to religion, or more serviceable to the interests of the upper class, be framed and put together?

All the movements of this tremendous engine are under the complete control of the class for whose advantage it exists. The appointment of bishops, to whom is entrusted the superintendence of this well-organised *corps*, who dispense no small portion of its patronage, and whose requests, in consequence, have all the force of law, is vested in the crown, that is, in the ministry for the time being. That they are selected for their spiritual aptitude for the office, none will pretend. Their elevation is in most instances owing to their connection with, or their former subserviency to, the aristocracy. They thereupon become members of “the order.” They breathe exclusive atmosphere. They are thoroughly imbued with the aristocratic spirit. Is any inroad upon sectional privileges threatened?—they have but to nod the head, to give the well-understood sign, and on the instant, tenants, tradesmen, parish officers, paupers, small gentlemen who occasionally dine at the squire’s, matrons who tremble for religion, and young ladies who are looking up to respectable connections, send forth a cry of disapprobation, and send up a shoal of petitions, at which the boldest statesman may be excused for standing appalled.

The intimate dependency of the one class upon the

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other is sufficiently illustrated by daily facts. If any one instance can be pointed out in which the clergy and the aristocracy have taken different sides, we would be content to give up the whole argument. But in truth it cannot be. The hands must obey the mandates of the head.

We beg our readers to look at this state-church, first as a means of religious instruction, and afterwards as an instrument of political power. In the former case all is perplexed, anomalous, suicidal—in the latter every thing is well arranged, easily managed, certain of accomplishing the end. It is upheld by the aristocracy—it is subservient to their designs—it shields and secures their interests. It is a political organ brought to bear against the liberties of the people. It is no more a sacred institution than the House of Lords. Whatever religion is mixed up with it, is there by accident, is frowned on as intrusive, is not only not necessary to the system, but, in so far as it is consistent, is antagonistic to it. It is, as we say, a political organ—and for the public it is a bad one—useless for good, but powerful for evil. It desecrates religion—it obstructs popular freedom—it perplexes every question of civil government—it is a confirmed rheumatism to the state, contracting its tendons, crippling its limbs, enfeebling its constitution, and threatening, at no distant period, a painful death. It becomes every lover of his country, as well as every Christian, to denounce it. No man can be regarded as a sound-hearted patriot who advocates the maintenance of a state-church.

III.

THE NATIONAL DRAG-CHAIN.

A dominant clergy chained to an authorised creed constitutes about as effectual a bar to national progress, as it is possible to imagine. Were society stationary, or had it reached perfection, it might be wise to raise up and support a large and influential body of men deeply interested in maintaining "things as they are," in perpetuating existing institutions, and resisting all change. Those who imagine that we have arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of good government, may well advocate an ecclesiastical corps.

This is not our notion of things—we have no idea of himng yet reached the maturity of national greatness. No! Intelligence will go on expanding. New powers will be perpetually in the course of development. New wants will be engendered. Better principles for the regulation of social bodies will be discovered and embraced. The mind of the nation will grow. There

will, there must be a steady movement onward—fresh lessons gathered from experience—more enlarged views gained by occupying more favourable positions for observation—profounder acquaintance with the mysteries of nature followed by vast and unimaginable accessions of power.

We hold, then, that to band together, for whatever ostensible purpose, a numerous body of men—men who of necessity are inimical to all reform, abettors of every abuse, united, organised, and therefore formidable opponents of progressive improvement—to give them vast influence for the management of which they are not held responsible by the state, and so to dispose of and arrange them as to enable them to inclose in the meshes of their power, the whole population,—is a

terrible mistake, an awful blunder, an egregious specimen of political absurdity. As well might the strippling, rising into manhood, be still under the authority of the pedagogue, and be compelled to wear amid the laughter of all his companions, his school-boy jacket and outgrown corduroys, lest the master's salary should be endangered. Are we always, we ask, to be kept in the dunce's class, lest we should become too knowing to remain at school and pay our weekly fees? Is it altogether necessary to encourage and foster a party in the state, whose welfare can only be promoted by obstructing general improvement, crippling intelligence, stunting the national mind, and keeping people fools in order that they may be slaves.

That such is the effect of the Establishment we have

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too sufficient evidence. The clergy can no more advance with the nation in its career of improvement, than if the fates had fixed them where they are. In what age of the world have men been known voluntarily to descend from a station of superiority, to sacrifice influence, to give up power, to lay down emoluments for the public good? It cannot be expected. The system which makes the clergy what they are, however ill-adapted to answer its professed ends, will of course be nevertheless most zealously upheld. Its abuses will be pertinaciously defended. Its errors will be obstinately maintained. Light, which would expose their pretensions, come from what quarter it may, will be carefully obstructed. Every effort to make people thoughtful, vigilant of their own interests, self-confiding and independent, will be regarded as a covert attack upon their privileges. Every change which may by possibility modify or destroy their exclusiveness, will be vigorously opposed. The church cannot move forward, and so the nation must stand still.

We blame not the men. They are only what their system makes them. The larger portion of them are probably under the influence of the same spell which

they would fix upon others. Their judgment is blinded by their interests. They have a beam in their eye, and cannot be expected to see clearly. But what political folly is it to place and keep men in a position which makes them of necessity the natural enemies of all improvement, the pensioned opponents of all beneficial change!

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The history of this country affords perhaps the strongest argument which can be employed, in proof of the evils which the commonwealth suffers from an establishment. What a study does it present us of clerical selfishness, ambition, intolerance, and hypocrisy! What deeds of darkness have been too foul, what malignant attacks upon the rights of man have been too infernal, to be perpetrated by ecclesiastics in the name of Christianity? In what page of our national records are we to look for the disinterestedness, the liberality, or the gentleness of the clergy? When do we find them struggling with the people for freedom and independence, or displaying that magnanimity which would prefer their country's welfare to the preservation of their own paltry emoluments? We boldly answer, "Never!"

No! They have been invariably the deadliest foes of liberty, civil and religious. Despotism and tyranny always found in them the ready tools to enslave the people. Their talents and their sacred calling were sure to be prostituted at the beck of the most infamous courts, in preaching up the divine right of kings, and in enforcing the duties of passive obedience and non-resistance. They may claim the honour of having wreaked a spite peculiar to an incensed priesthood, upon such of their countrymen as dared to think independently or dared not play the hypocrite, by subscribing to dogmas, which they did not believe. Aye! ear-cropping, nose-slitting, thumb-screwing, maiming, disfiguring, burning—these are the historical honours of

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the clergy—these the fine results of a religious establishment!

Their hatred of improvement, their scorching intolerance, remain just what they were, modified only by the spirit of the age. They protested against the repeal of the test and corporation acts. They raised a yell of horror at the prospect of catholic emancipation, so dismal and foreboding, that a poor, deluded, and ignorant peasantry trembled in hourly expectation of blood, and fire, and smoke. The education of the people owes nothing to them. They checked it as long as decency would permit, and when nothing could effectually stay its progress, they advertised and puffed off an article of their own, steeped in the bigotry of their religious system. At the present moment, we shall find them, almost without exception, ranged as the bitterest foes of cheap food and free trade. The body has been a political curse. They have uniformly stood in the way of their country's improvement. They have taken active part against the people in every great political struggle from the reformation downwards. They have on all such occasions allied themselves with the tyrant, unless perchance their own temporalities or exclusive privileges were threatened. We charge all this upon the established clergy, and we confidently appeal to history in support of our charge.

We admit, with all cheerfulness, that the charge we have preferred against the clergy of the church of England, applies with equal force against the clergy of every established church, in all times, and in every

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country. In Scotland the presbyterians; in Germany the Lutherans; in England, previous to the reformation, the Roman catholics; in the American states, whatever sect happened to be in alliance with the civil power, have manifested the same intolerance, have presented the same obstruction to national progress, have

sympathised with. oppression, and opposed the freedom and independence of the human mind. We blame not the men but the system. The position in which an establishment places the clergy whom it patronises, no matter what their creed, is both anomalous and false, destructive of their religion, and propitious only for the development of the worst of passions of human nature.

We admit further, and that with no reluctance, that there are amongst the clergy of the established church of England many very good men—men of sound learning, of liberal principles, of eminent piety; men whose motives are pure, whose devotedness to the cause of true religion is exemplary; men who would be ornaments to any denomination, useful in any sphere, respected by any party, stedfast amidst every change; laborious ministers, christian gentlemen, true patriots, zealous philanthropists. We hail them with acclamation. We admire, we honour, we love them. But that must be a charity which “believeth all things “with a vengeance, which is not compelled to confess that such men are exceptions—splendid, but too few; “*rari nantes in gurgite vasto.*” They serve rather to illustrate than to disprove the rule. Their

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light only renders the surrounding darkness more palpable.

We call upon churchmen, then, to look the charge steadily in the face. It is unmanly to blink it. Let them disprove it by historical evidence, and they will do more to elevate the clergy in popular estimation, than they will ever do by the most fulsome panegyrics. By this means they will produce a deeper impression upon the minds of dissenters, than by fifty years of the most scurrilous abuse. The charge is either true or false. If false, let its falsehood be thoroughly exposed. If true, the interests of all parties demand that it should receive the gravest deliberation.

IV.

GALL IN THE POLITICAL WORLD.

A national church embitters the waters of political strife—inflames rather than soothes difference of opinion—and adds difficulty to the settlement of every great question affecting the temporal welfare of the country. Difference of opinion on all the important topics of legislation is, of course, unavoidable; but then it is quite compatible with social harmony. There can be no valid reason why discordant judgments should necessarily be accompanied by angry and malevolent passions. If, indeed, the deep interest taken by men in the success of their political principles compels them to resent all opposition to them—if party spirit must be engendered, and “offences” of this character must needs come, surely it is the part of a wise legislature to mitigate the evil to the full extent of its power, but especially to guard against fanning into fierceness the fire which smoulders in the bosom of the community.

But what is the state of things in this kingdom? Civil and religious affairs are so blended, so interwoven by an establishment, that it would appear impossible to touch upon any subject connected with the public interests, however apparently remote, without hurting some tender part of our mother church. Every question is, on her account, made a religious one. Into the discussion of every leading topic of civil policy she infuses the acrid and cauterising ingredient of ecclesiastical intolerance. The church, which should be an emollient to allay the irritation produced by difference of opinion, becomes, when allied with the state, a blister to increase inflammation. Measures, accordingly, are not viewed in reference to their own intrinsic

sic merits, but in reference to their probable bearing on the establishment. Our senators are in perpetual danger of committing sacrilege. If they should attempt to wash away the corruption which cleaves about most of the institutions of our land, by turning into them the stream of public opinion, ten to one but they find themselves convicted of infidelity. Their votes upon a turnpike-act may unexpectedly subject them to the charge of atheism. Electoral bodies are canvassed in the name of holy truth, and are admonished, by their love of God, to support this or that line of political sentiment. Indeed, so glaring has this evil become, that politics are made the test of religious character; and the wretch who is wheeled up to the poll in a state of beastly intoxication, is an infidel, or

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a pillar of the church, according as he may happen to give his vote.

Mutual good-will, cordial intercourse, and even intimate friendship between parties differing in their religious sentiments, are not uncommon amongst dissenters. But between dissenters and churchmen they are rare indeed. The phenomenon, however, much as it is to be deplored, is easily explained. The state, by patronising a particular sect, produces, as might reasonably be expected, in the one party arrogance, in all others discontent. In the one case pride is fostered; in the other a sense of injustice, and a consciousness of degradation. The result is, personal hostility, exasperated feeling, mutual suspicion, and, in a large number of instances, the extinction of all the kindlier tendencies of our nature.

The unnumbered evils of *caste* are inseparable from the establishment of religion. Men's respectability is measured by their theological creed, and their station in society determined by their views of divine truth. Hence, cordial co-operation for the attainment of objects, the value of which both sides admit, is in most cases prevented. Every village has two distinct

sets of apparatus for doing good—the one worked by churchmen, the other by dissenters. Every town has its exclusive circles of social enjoyment—the one appropriated to churchmen, the other to dissenters—Every section of society is thus split up into incoherent parts. Many are the schemes of usefulness which

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have been abandoned, owing to the absence of good feeling between the favoured and degraded sects. Still more numerous are those which from the same cause are worked inefficiently. Into every corner of the kingdom the state has thrown the torch of discord by its injudicious meddlings with religious opinion, and has transmuted difference of belief into personal alienation of feeling.

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V.

A STATE-CHURCH THE NURSE AND PATRONESS OF WAR.

“Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands
His blood-red tresses deepening in the sun;
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands
And eye that scorches all it glares upon.”

Here is the poet's impersonation of war—and even thus arrayed in gorgeous words and figures it is hateful. But war, to be seen aright, must be presented to the mind in plain, unsophisticated prose—or, more properly, stripped down to a naked definition. Is not the whole philosophy of war summed up in a few words? A sword is an instrument constructed and employed to hack in pieces that exquisite piece of mechanism, through the medium of which man sustains his relationship to the natural world, and gathers such happiness as he may out of the material universe of God; and war is the trial of any question by the issue, whether, say, ten thousand swords shall destroy

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the Creator's noblest handiwork more swiftly and more effectually than other ten thousand. We have heard men talk in quivering indignation of machine-breakers. The poor misguided Luddites, however, against whom every man took up his parable, and vented his execration, simply knocked to pieces certain cunning combinations of iron and wood—kings, courtiers, and the aristocracy have out-done them in the work of machine-breaking; and have taken delight in gashing, perforating, rending and battering to shreds and atoms, the wondrous and divinely constructed engine by which life works out its great results, and the movements of which are regulated by thought.

What says Christianity of the sword? What could she say—she whose Master declared with emphasis that he came into the world not to destroy but to save men's lives? What, but declare that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword? What, but renounce its proffered aid and assert that the weapons of her warfare are not carnal but spiritual?

And yet this same sword, this instrument for spilling life and reducing to dust the shrine of man's spirit, does the state-church stoop to pick up—baptises it and calls it christian—says to it, "Be thou my guardian, and subdue people to the purpose of my will"—Bends it forth to collect her wealth—and even now exhibits it as the ultimate arbiter of her claims.

Sophisticate and mystify as we will, what is a state-church but a priesthood carving their way to temporalities by the power of the sword? The system has

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its basis in physical force. The germ and essential principle of war is the inmost core of it. It takes the art of destruction into its bosom, and avowedly weds it—separates it to its own especial purpose, and thus sanctifies it in the estimation of the world. Analyse the ideas involved in the notion of a religious esta-

blishment—and what, stripped of all ornament, is the elementary principle it involves? Just this—power lent to the church to blow a man's brains out of his head for the sake of Christianity. We defy any man to make aught else of it.

We say then of a state-church that she is the nurse and patroness of war. Necessarily so. She adopts compulsion, which is the abstract of which the sword is the concrete, and of which the destruction of God's best and most exquisitely skilful mechanism is the result. She clothes force—the force which breaks in pieces, but not builds—with the seeming sanction of heaven; she links religion arm in arm with the madness against which the command of the Highest is levelled, and which real Christianity repudiates with unwonted scorn—the madness which tramples upon God's image in his own creatures.

Trace the history of this, or any other state-church, and almost every footstep plashes in the blood of man. How many brave and beautiful edifices of humanity have been shattered and left in ruins at the behest of this sword-allied church j formerly, in assertion of her right to prescribe the faith—latterly, in maintenance of her determination to fleece the wealth, of

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quiet, unoffending men! Directly or indirectly, for her own especial purposes, or for purposes which she sanctioned, as nearly affecting her worldly privileges, what havoc has she not made of a nation's peace? Unnumbered have been the souls which at her bidding have been sent prematurely into the presence of the great Judge—altogether incalculable the social ties which she has hewn asunder with cold steel! And even now, does she not until this day, by her union with sword-power, practically assert that the doctrine "killing is no murder" is part and parcel of the law of Christ.

That the state-church can effectually denounce the art of man-slaying is impossible. Must she not, to all

intents and purposes, patronise that by which she lives? This is no speculation, the question is answered by facts. Where are the great proficient in the science of war? those who have been most successful in mangling and defacing wretched humanity? Where, but in the councils of the nation, made hereditary legislators for the church, mingling with bishops, and receiving tokens of their admiration? In what places are deposited the coloured rags about which nations fought, and which were secured only by the most determined defiance of the command "Thou shalt not kill?" Are not the trophies of slaughter hung up in our churches? Men are encouraged to blow other men whom they have never seen, and between whom and themselves there exists not a particle of enmity, to atoms, by exhortations to stand by the

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altar and the throne;—and, by thanksgivings and prayers for victory, by priestly addresses and priestly benedictions, they have been taught to believe that in cutting throats they were serving God, and in firing musket-balls through other men's hearts and heads they were laying up for themselves a reward in heaven.

Should it be objected that this same war spirit is found among dissenters, and has been fostered by dissenting divines, we reply, the fact only proves the terrible extent to which the national conscience has been seared, and the fatal success which has followed the association of religion with the power of the sword. All men, even the best, have come to look upon bloodshed with but little horror. All classes and all sects have been educated to regard it as a stern necessity which Christianity itself must recognise. From generation to generation the coloured glass which a state-church first put into the hands of men, through which to look at the grim and ghastly features of war, has been handed down, so that it is small matter of surprise if even now the monster is not seen in its own light—a thing of which the gospel is abhorrent.

In early ages, history informs us, the church of Christ stood aloof from the sword—power—would hold no communion with it, lend it no sanction. True to her glorious end, she laboured everywhere to construct, and refused to be any party to destroy. Had she retained her noble and godlike position, who can doubt that ere this the sword had been beaten into the ploughshare? By resorting to the sword, partly

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to enforce the claims of priestly ambition, partly to guard the hoards of priestly wealth, she gave to it a new long lease of power, and threw a veil of sanctity over the hideous countenance of war which she had once turned from with inexpressible loathing. What is the result? Man-slaying is, even in these days of boasted enlightenment, the most honourable profession; and he who-with most address and skill lets out streams of life, is lauded as the hero whom it best becomes the country to exalt.

So long as there is an alliance between religion and physical force it must be so. Thus is the sword sanctified, and all the seeds of war preserved in the crypts and coffers of the church. How can a deep and universal disapprobation of the science of man-destroying be diffused whilst what is called the visible and authorised Christianity of our land employs it as a body-guard, and enlists it for possible service by solemn compact with such as have the management of it? Why should we deceive ourselves? Either this world must be subdued by the sword or by the bible. They cannot reign conjointly. One or the other must give way. The attempt to connect the one with the other only prolongs the dominion of physical force. The advocate of a state-church, is, unconsciously but very effectually, the advocate of the sword.

VI.

MONOPOLY SANCTIONED AND ABETTED BY A STATE-CHURCH

An invasion of the rights of all for the special advantage of a favoured few, whilst it may be speciously defended by reasons grounded upon temporary expediency, has never, so far as we are aware, been justified by any reference to the immutable principles of Christian morality. The fruits of monopoly, however, have not hitherto been such as to recommend the cultivation of the tree. That which begins in robbery can hardly be expected to work out a blessing. Infractions of the eternal rules of justice, whether perpetrated by individuals or by states, have always in the long run proved to be impolitic—so that even experience gives judgment against monopoly. But just in proportion as we apply higher standards of right and wrong, and test monopolies by the decisions of our moral sense and the dictates of revealed truth, just in the same proportion doubts and uncertainties

clear off; and the thing which was known to be barely tolerable stands out before us in hideous deformity. Of all principles of policy, monopoly can the least afford to bear the light.

Monopoly is the conversion of *tuum* into *meum* by a legal act of simple unmixed injustice. It is essentially privative. It confers nothing—it only takes away. It gives no right—it merely places right in abeyance. It would be well if this feature of it were thoroughly understood. Too commonly it is regarded as somewhat given to a few, which in fairness should be given to all. It is nothing of the sort. It is a somewhat which all possess of natural right taken away from the mass, that the right left in the hands

of a few may have a factitious value. It is not a crop raised on a certain spot whilst all the rest of the field is left bare, but a crop previously existing mowed down in all parts of the field except a little circle capriciously marked out. Monopoly is defined “the exclusive right of selling a thing;” but the right to sell that which is mine—in other words to exchange it for that which is yours, both parties consenting—is possessed antecedently to government; and, to render it exclusive, either my right or yours must be taken away. The power which creates monopoly must do so by practising injustice. There is no way to privilege but over the mangled remains of right.

The whole spirit, the direct precepts, and, we may add, the early practice of Christianity, are dead against monopoly. “Do unto others as you would they should

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do unto you,” and “Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others,” constitute a two-edged sword which cuts asunder all exclusive pretensions. And if in the morning purity of the church, men voluntarily held all things in common, and no man called aught that he possessed his own, one can hardly see how the same system could sanction the destruction of a common right with a view to individual advantage.

A state-church is a monopoly—a monopoly of the worst kind, the abettor of all other monopolies, how abominable soever.

The history of the church of England is one of the most curious, one of the most instructive, and one of the most humiliating illustrations of the hateful principle we have attempted briefly to describe. It is the history of a conflict between monopoly and light, in which the former sorely against its nature, has been compelled by the latter to surrender several of its most preposterous pretensions. In the palmy days of her power, the church arrogated to herself the exclusive right of determining what should be the nation’s

faith, and denied the exercise of private judgment. This usurpation having been wrested from her—not without a deadly struggle—she still claimed as her sole prerogative, the privilege of teaching. Losing this, she strenuously laboured, and laboured successfully for upwards of a century, to withhold from persons not of her communion civil enjoyments to which they were entitled. And until this day, she assumes

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power to tax directly or indirectly every subject of the realm for her maintenance and support. Every step here tramples upon some right common to all men—and, whatever may be the ostensible purpose, the real one is to destroy what belongs to the many, in order that the value of that which remains with the few may be enhanced.

Like sympathises with like. The church which set the example of cutting down the rights of others, with a view to a selfish advantage, could never pretend to condemn monopoly in principle. She sees in it nothing but a reflection of her own features, and she is not likely to start back with affright. Others may deem the thing a monster, but the church cannot. Hatred of monopoly would be hatred of herself. This were unnatural. This or that modification of the principle she may condemn—but against the principle itself she cannot lift her voice, for

“*Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione quærentes?*”

And what the likelihood of the thing would lead us to anticipate, facts abundantly confirm. The monopolies of James and Charles, cruel as they were, the state-church was forward enough to abet, by licking the feet of the tyrants, and furnishing some pretended divine prescription for all their fooleries and all their crimes. The monopoly of legislation is mainly upheld by the influence of the Establishment. She shakes hands with the food-monopoly, and openly avows the

intimate connection between restrictive corn-laws and her own prosperity. Against slavery, the monopoly

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of human thews and sinews, of human hearts and heads, she never protested, but sullenly stood aloof from agitation, and everywhere whispered calumny against the chief agitators.

This, indeed, is one of the gravest political objections which lie against a civil establishment of religion—that by a natural law, a law springing out of its very constitution, its influence has been, and always will be exerted on the side of whatever is narrow and exclusive, whatever trespasses upon the common and inalienable rights of human nature. In all ages of our country's history the state-church has proved the most powerful bulwark of monopoly—never, perhaps, more offensively so than in the present day. No considerations of danger, no promptings of humanity, no compassion for pining myriads can avail to draw from her a single word in disapprobation of our existing corn-laws. She is still found the active friend of those who range themselves against the liberties and the happiness of the people. The large majority of determined monopolists returned to parliament at the last election has been ascribed, and we think justly, to the overwhelming influence of the church. Any advance to a more liberal system of government must be effected in the face of her active, organised, and powerful opposition. So long as she remains, monopoly will not want an earnest and too efficient ally. Herself an embodiment of injustice she can always sympathise with injustice. In the fall of secular monopolies she reads her own approaching doom.

VII.

THE CHURCH AND THE THRONE.

Some of the political evils flowing from a state-church, and those not trivial in character, we have attempted to bring under the notice of our readers. Its influence for mischief is indeed felt in almost every department of public affairs; and, but that we fear to become wearisome, we might subject, one by one, our institutions to examination, and observe how all are crippled, enervated, neutralised, or completely perverted by an established church. It is a parasitical weed in a garden of flowering and fruit-bearing plants—it is everywhere present, overruns every species of useful vegetation—interlaces itself with, and seriously injures, even if it does not destroy, all that we would cultivate with most anxious care—and converts what might otherwise have yielded us wholesome food into a mere framework of props, around and upon which to hang its flaunting and worthless self.

By the very constitution of the country the church has associated itself with the throne—and for most of the purposes which the latter properly contemplates, and which, if disposed and able to effect, would command for it unbounded respect, and engage to it the affections of all hearts, the throne is spoiled by the association. We speak not of the individual monarch who may happen to occupy the seat of sovereignty—but of the power of which that individual is, in this country, the representative—the supreme executive—the fountain of judicial and magisterial authority. We speak, therefore, of the throne rather than of the king or queen—we include in the term all the officers of its appointment and all the high functions pertaining to the crown—and we aver, and shall endeavour to

substantiate the averment, that whatever of good we might fairly expect to derive from the institution is immensely deteriorated, and in some cases wholly destroyed, whilst a vast amount of the mischief inflicted by it upon society is produced and encouraged, by the clinging around it of a parasitical state-church.

This view of the subject is no new one. In Milton's time events brought it out into high relief, and gave to it a prominence and distinctness which fixed the attention of every man who loved the liberty of his country. The following magnificent passage is from the bard's *Treatise on Church Government*:—

“I cannot better liken the state and person of a king than to that mighty Nazarite, Sampson, who being disciplined in the practice of temperance and sobriety, and without the strong drink of excessive and injurious de-

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sires, grows up to a noble strength and perfection, with those his illustrious and sunny locks, the laws, waving and curling about his godlike shoulders. And while he keeps them about him undiminished and unshorn, he may, with the jaw-bone of an ass, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, suppress and put to confusion thousands of those that rise up against his just power. But, laying down his head amongst the strumpet flatteries of prelates, whilst he sleeps and thinks no harm, they wickedly shaving off all those bright and weighty tresses of his laws and just prerogatives which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels, which, as those Philistines, put out the clear and far-sighted eyes of his natural discerning, and make him grind in the prison-house of their sinister ends and practices upon him. Till he, knowing this prelatical razor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again his puissant hair, the golden beams of law and right; and sternly shook thunder with ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself.”

Our country's history is a continuous illustration of this passage. It would not be difficult to go *seriatim* through the reigns of our monarchs from the reformation downwards, and mark how all the prerogatives of royalty have been perverted to base tyrannical purposes by the influence of the state-church. The mitred barons and dignified churchmen have in all past times, with a view to their own sordid welfare, crept up the

steps of the throne, and planting themselves about the person of the monarch have instilled into his ears and heart narrow and bigoted counsels mingled with fulsome flattery. The throne, instituted for the protection of all rights, is bound, and pinioned, and deprived of the free exercise of its power by a clerical corporation, whose main objects may be gathered from the oath which it imposes upon the king at his coronation, to “preserve unto the bishops and clergy of England

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and Ireland, and to the united church committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them.”

Descending, however, from general statements to particular instances, we propose to point out the influence exerted for evil by the church upon the throne, in respect of the business of legislation, the distribution of honours, the administration of law, and the discharge of magisterial functions.

The initiation of all great national legislative measures, although not the exclusive right of the throne, is in the great majority of cases undertaken by or conceded to the ministers of the crown. No one can be insensible to the weight with which they thereby tell upon the mind of the legislature. The moral influence possessed by the throne, available for carrying such measures, is incalculable; and, consequently, it is a matter of vast moment that such influence should be studiously kept free from sinister bias. But when the measures emanating from this high quarter, must be squared to coincide with the interests of a privileged class—when plans of polity, recommended by the most enlarged views of what is demanded by the exigencies of the state, must be pared down lest they should jostle against ecclesiastical prejudices—when sound principles must be rejected because their adoption would seem to threaten clerical exclusiveness, or would certainly arouse clerical alarm—in a word, when it is obviously unsafe for official statesmen to

introduce needed reforms in the institutions of the

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country, unless such reforms are deeply tinged with church of Englandism, we say, that the wholesome influence of the crown is perverted, and its authority brought into unnecessary contempt by being thus pinned down to one-sided legislation. Hence our statute-book is filled with laws which savour of church intolerance, and indulge priestly cupidity and pride. Hence the minds of all our statesmen are swathed and bandaged, and all their measures are paltry compromises between right and expediency. Their range of thought is limited by ecclesiastical walls—their efforts for the national welfare confined within a narrow circle by the ignorance or bigotry of a state-paid clergy. The church allows them but little room to do good.

The crown is regarded as the well-spring of honour—and the church taints it with its own exclusiveness. We say nothing about the worth of the baubles thus distributed to please grown-up children. Inasmuch as they are objects of very common ambition, it is obviously politic and just, that they should be bestowed with an impartial hand. And yet who does not know that the way to dignity, in what department soever, is open only to such as profess attachment to the church. The most curious anomalies arise out of this state of things. Public men whose private opinions are known to be in bitter hostility to all religion—adventurers whose lives would disgrace any creed—soldiers who have seldom seen the interior of a church—lawyers utterly indifferent to the rules of christian

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morality—men who identify themselves with political principles which cannot by any possibility be made to coalesce with a state-church—all feel themselves compelled to utter hypocritical professions of attachment to the Establishment, and, as they struggle up to the

throne, degrade themselves by doing insincere homage to an institution they despise. Probably there is nothing parallel to this in any country under the sun. In no other land, we believe, do men who aim at public distinction so invariably belie their reason and their manhood, by offering incense to a priesthood in whose sanctity they have no faith. Poets, philosophers, statesmen—physicians, lawyers, soldiers—the bankrupt in character, the abandoned in morals, the infidel in creed—all stoop to flatter the church when they wish to gain the favourable notice of the crown.

The administration of law in this country has been the subject of much and not undeserved eulogy. The ermine of justice has been thought to be unsullied. But here again the sinister influence of a state-church begins to show itself. Renegades from early principles scruple not to mingle the gall of bitterness with unjust judgments. In matters ecclesiastical the bench itself can travel out of the record to suggest to grasping churchmen how they may possibly carry their most oppressive plans into effect without entangling themselves in the meshes of law. Statutes are twisted from their obvious intent, and strained beyond all precedent to meet the wants of the Establishment. This is but the beginning of evil—but “if these things

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are done in a green tree what will be done in a dry one?”

Over the whole system of the unpaid magistracy the weed has run in rankest luxuriance, and converted it into a mere pest to the liberties of Englishmen. Impartiality in these officers of the crown, especially the vast numbers of them who sustain the clerical office, we have ceased even to expect. To carry out the designs of aristocratic insolence—to brow-beat timid poverty—to enforce with harshest severity the laws which harass our humble peasantry—to break down all independence of spirit still lingering amidst our labouring population—seem now to be the main objects of

the magisterial bench. It is charged to the full with ecclesiastical malignity. It is ever a ready instrument to uphold ecclesiastical pretensions and abet ecclesiastical encroachments.

The advocates of the compulsory system contend that the church and the throne must stand or fall together. We hope not—for the doom of the first is sealed. The ivy will certainly come down—the oak may stand and flourish all the more vigorously when the creeper shall have been removed.

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VIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE STATE-CHUECH UPON PUBLIC POLITICAL OPINION.

They who have chanced to witness the effect produced by a London atmosphere upon some ill-starred shrub—to see the dingy, stunted, shrivelled, poverty-stricken condition of the miserable plant—to observe how, during the first few sunny days of spring, as though fresh vigour had been infused into it, new shoots peep forth to drink the air, and then, as if disgusted with the murky world without, curl in upon themselves, seemingly in search of that comfort which they cannot find abroad—they who have looked upon such a specimen of “a noble nature spoil’d,” have seen a fair type of public political opinion in this country under the blighting influence of a church establishment. Hastily and by the way we have already glanced at it. It deserves, however, separate consideration. The evil is one of such magnitude, is so little noticed, and yet so baneful in its effects, that to

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assign it any but a prominent place in the catalogue of mischiefs inflicted upon the state by a national church, would be a representation of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out.

Government, in this country, is ultimately controlled by public opinion. We say ultimately, for it is by a process of development, of the slowest and most difficult, that public opinion finally establishes its influence over our institutions. It is, therefore, of the last importance that the minds of our leading public men, of whatever party, should be free—practically as well as theoretically free. If by conventional laws, which are usually more binding than positive enactments, they are restricted to the selection of unsound principles, and are compelled by inveterate and tyrant custom to work up base metal in their forges of thought—the greater their ability and the more eminent their seeming success, the deeper is the regret which must be felt that their labour was bestowed upon intrinsically worthless materials. The country may have an elaborate system of laws, which, even when it shows the skill of the workmen who fashioned it, proves totally unfit for the wants and exigencies of the people.

Great men have been undoubtedly produced by this nation in the department of politics—our history sparkles with the names of illustrious statesmen. Public opinion, such as it is, must be regarded as the combined result of their labours—the growth of those seeds of thought which they sowed broad-cast upon

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the mind of society. An ungenial spot, however, have they invariably chosen, upon which to labour; and the germs of truth, as they have sprung up, have been exposed to a nipping atmosphere. Owing to a fatal perversity, the result of previous education and inveterate habit, they have never freely exposed their opinions to the open breath and gladdening light of heaven—but systematically they have planted them in the shade cast upon them by the surrounding walls of a state-church. And the poor shrivelled things, which elsewhere would have become vigorous and have borne pleasant fruit, remain miserable and sickly dwarfs pro-

ducing nothing bigger than a berry, and that making up for its loss in size by the intensity of its bitterness.

We are aware how easy it is to seem to make out a case by the help of figurative language, when not a particle of substantial truth is stated, and through the stained glass of tropes and metaphors to let in light upon—nothing. Lest, therefore, we should be guilty of this error, and mislead some into the supposition that our sole object is to induce them to stare at a painted window, we shall submit to their notice a few unadorned but grave considerations upon which the preceding paragraphs are intended simply to throw a tempered and favourable light.

No tolerably informed person can be ignorant of the intellectual bondage to which Europe submitted during the dark ages, under the iron rule of Aristotelian dogmas—none can have failed to observe how the

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human mind was distorted and crippled by the manacles which tyrant custom then imposed upon it. Philosophy worked in gyves to perform the bests of an inexorable despot—all its movements were awkward—all its results comparatively worthless. Just such is the condition of the political world at the present moment. Our statesmen wear the chains of a dogma—and in every department of their labours exhibit the pitiable effects of the self-imposed slavery.

One of the first axioms in politics to which our public men subscribe is, “that it is the duty of the state to provide for the religious instruction of its subjects;” and this axiom having been assumed, without inquiry and quite irrespectively of argument, the conclusion is easily arrived at—that our present Establishment is a fair embodiment of this truth, and consequently must be maintained at all hazards. Henceforth reason, knowledge, sagacity, can only work up to the limit of this dogma—all reforms must be squared to coincide with it—all principles are held to be practically true

up to this mark—beyond it what was wisdom becomes folly, what was despicable, highly to be esteemed.

Take, for example, any one fundamental principle of sound government—that representation should be co-equal with taxation—that opinion should be free—that every suspected delinquent should be tried by a jury of his peers—that public officers should be responsible to public authority—and which of them, maintained though it be with eloquence within a certain range, is not surrendered, trampled upon, de-

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spised, at the bidding of a state-church? No sooner do ecclesiastical politics become the theme of discussion than our most vigorous statesmen become drivellers—our boldest, trembling bondsmen—eating up their own principles, retailing thoughts with which their reason never made acquaintance, and uttering “in whispering humbleness” eulogies upon an institution which they know to constitute the insuperable obstacle to the success of all their most fondly-cherished schemes. Oh! it is a pitiable spectacle to see our Broughams and Durhams, our Greys and Morpeths, fling down their understandings at the feet of priestcraft, and offer up noble truths as a sacrifice to propitiate sanctimonious churchmen. Who ever heard these men, within the range of ecclesiastical affairs, enounce those broad maxims of universal truth which formed the very bone and sinew of their efforts in other departments? With burning shame have we beheld them bowing their otherwise manly reason before a senseless and unexamined dogma; and allowing a state-church to command back the advancing tide of their thought with its imperious “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.”

Coming down from the mountain-tops to the secluded vales of society—from eminent statesmen to ordinary politicians, we may observe the influence which a state-church exerts upon public opinion on a yet broader scale. The numerous small fry of legis-

lators, in the midst of which Mr. Wakley swims, in all matters pertaining to conscience are the merest spawn

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of prejudice. Upon the bearings of our religious establishment upon the freedom, the independence, the happiness of the people, they have never even thought to think. The church is—consequently it ought to be—and therefore it must be. This is the sum of their logic. Forthwith they give expression to some political opinion which they have picked up in Jeremy Bentham, or have received from some of his disciples, and then, as though they could not comprehend it, launch out into panegyric upon a church based upon the very subversion of the principles they have just enounced. “Religion must not be left to the caprice of the voluntary principle,” says Lord John Russell—“but for an establishment,” says Lord Brougham, “it would be torn to pieces by discordant sects;” and these and such-like crumbs and scraps, without even a semblance of reason to season them, are greedily swallowed by the minnows of the party, who thereupon wag their tails and think they have been fed with solid political wisdom. Of all the humiliating exhibitions of the mind of man, stuffed up to the chin with crudities, and perfectly besotted with prejudice, we defy any person to point out one more humiliating than a House of Commons engaged upon some church question.

How is it likely that society in general should not be affected by the same influence? Talk with any half-dozen men, no matter what their creed, and you will observe at least five out of the six to be in similar bondage. On all other topics they are ready to assign

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some intelligible, if not sufficient, reason for their opinions—on the question of an establishment they do not inquire for one. “A christian country *must* have a national church.” This they take to be self-evident.

What follows? Why that every principle which would clearly go to the overthrow of priestcraft must *ipso facto* be little better than madness—and that every species of injustice required for its maintenance must be not only tolerated, but zealously upheld. Under the influence of this tyrannous system you will see men holding the most liberal political opinions, and displaying in all other relations the most kindly dispositions, go to parochial meetings and mouth the maxims of the purest despotism, and deliberately vote to give effect to intolerable cruelty.

Is all this surprising? An established church is built upon the ruins of mental freedom—and the public opinion that suffers and sanctions a state-church, has locked itself up within the doors of prejudice and put the key in its pocket. Within that little space the understanding may exercise itself—but abroad into the wide world it cannot go. A nation thus governed is a self-guarded prisoner. It may talk of liberty, but practically it is a slave.

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IX.

A STATE-CHURCH UNFRIENDLY TO POPULAR EDUCATION.

When we spoke of government in this country as being ultimately controlled by public opinion, the reader would hardly fail of discovering another height, from which to view the political mischief resulting from a religious establishment. If our national institutions are but so many concretions of the national will—if they are correctly regarded as the bodyings forth of that intelligence which is contained in the public mind, as the mere thoughts of the people assuming “a local habitation and a name,” then must popular education and good government be so intimately associated as to become well-nigh identical. To inspire a universal taste for knowledge, to impart, and foster the habit

of diligence in acquiring the information requisite for an enlightened exercise of the judgment, and above all to encourage that mental independence without which cultivated faculties even of the highest order

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are but tools for prejudice to work with, must surely be the readiest and most feasible method of securing rational legislation and sound political institutions. For, public opinion is the total amount of which the opinions of individuals constitute the items. Every facility, therefore, afforded to individuals for arriving at just conclusions on public affairs, is *pro tanto* a guarantee for the soundness of public opinion, and, ultimately, for the promotion of good government.

To “national education” in the sense in which the phrase is usually understood—to the principle which would delegate to “the powers that be” the functions of the schoolmaster, we must here proclaim our objection. It is a task for the performance of which we believe government to be wholly incompetent—which, however sincerely attempted, would in the long run result in the defeat of the very object it was undertaken to advance. But, in perfect consistency with this opinion, we hold that no creature of the state ought to be an impediment in the way of popular education; and that the institution, be it what it may, which systematically obstructs the growth of the public mind, ought to be denounced with emphasis and earnestness by every enlightened statesman.

We should like to put the question to some of our eminent liberal politicians, how far in their judgment the state-church has displayed a friendly feeling towards general education? Can the fact be denied—has it not been asserted by these very men in every

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variety of language, that, but for the efforts of dissenters, the population of this country would have

been at this moment a mere mass of brutal ignorance? What plans for the intellectual cultivation of the poor originated with the clergy, when in the zenith of their power? Has not their bitter hostility uniformly stood in the way of the patriotism and philanthropy of others, whenever the object has been to diffuse knowledge and to convert the mere animal into intelligent and reflecting man? Did they command the "march of intellect," of which the last thirty years have been the witness? We shall not insult the reader's memory by continuing such interrogations. The fact stands recorded in history, and no effrontery can efface it, no sophistry can wrench it out of its place, that up to a very recent period the church not only neglected the education of the masses, but discouraged it, frowned upon it, pointed ridicule and hurled anathemas at those who entered upon the glorious work, and stood the grand bulwark and fortress of national ignorance. If she has not succeeded, it is not for want of will. She has done her best to shut out the light—she has tried to stuff her own prejudice and bigotry into every chink through which the rays of truth might shine in upon the popular mind. To a terrible extent she has prevailed. Our rural districts offer proof at once of her abhorrence of general education and the magnitude of her power.

"Let bygones be bygones." In pity let us leave the past, in candour let us come to the present. We

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will consent to forget history—we have no occasion for it to make out our case. All we ask is that men will look at things as they are. What is the present aspect of affairs in relation to this subject? The clergy have been aroused. Feelings of rivalry have fairly overcome their dislike of popular knowledge. Schools, facetiously called "national," in which small modicums of learning done up in the bitterest sectarianism are dealt out to youthful minds, spring up in every direction—and the "successors of the

apostles" have passed from the extreme of apathy to the opposite one of zeal; insomuch as to covet the labours of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day, and to demand that the whole undivided charge of instructing the ignorant shall be imposed upon them. Does not this state of things give the lie to our assertion that a state-church is unfriendly to the education of the people?

We remember being told in our youthful days, that dog-fanciers succeeded in producing the race of tiny lap-dogs by administering gin to them while puppies, and thus preventing their further growth. We shall not need to insist upon the correctness of our information. True or false it will serve to illustrate our present subject. The main end of the system of education worked by the clergy seems to be, to hinder the free development of the youthful mind, and to produce a race of intellectual dwarfs. With the miserable pittance of instruction, the coarsest rudiments of knowledge imparted in their schools, they mingle slavish

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maxims *usque ad nauseam*. Habits of inquiry constitute just the one thing which they labour to prevent—independence of mind the cardinal sin which the youngsters are taught to shun. To do what they are bid, to think as they are taught, to believe what they are told by clerical authority, to go to church without knowing why, to submit to government as it is without asking wherefore, to be reading and writing machines to subserve the purposes of the powerful and the rich—mere living copies of a primer and a prayer-book—this is what our rising generation are to gain by the generous aid of the Establishment.

Now that the popular mind is beginning to quicken and to sprout, the clergy wish to plant it in the flower-pot of a state-church. Should they unhappily succeed, the fibres of curiosity, which under other circumstances, would strike down into the soil in quest of nutriment, and draw up sap from every quarter,

will be met on all sides by an impenetrable obstruction, curl round and round the state-church pot, become a tangled, matted, hardened cake of mere unreasoning prejudice, which in the end would be incapacitated from drinking up knowledge even if floods of knowledge were poured upon it. We see the effects of this flower-pot system in every direction. One is perpetually meeting with men, the natural growth and expansion of whose minds have been checked by a "national school" education; and it is truly pitiable to observe how they have thereby become disqualified for availing themselves of the vast amount of truth

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which lies outside of the little sphere in which they were first instructed. The man never gets beyond the boy. That he acquires a few more ideas within the same range we do not deny—but the intellect itself never grows—it simply hardens. He has never been taught to think, but to acquiesce without question in the thoughts of others. Just in proportion to his docility in childhood, his intellectual stature becomes fixed precisely at that period when nature has appointed it to expand—and, by the help of creeds and formularies, narrow social maxims and sharp discipline, he becomes a confirmed dwarf—a fit tool for the amusement and service of a selfish aristocracy. This is popular education in the clerical meaning of the words.

Nor must it be forgotten, in the consideration of this subject, that this tendency of religious establishments to stunt and check the growth of popular mind, is not a thing of time and circumstance, but of necessity—a propension springing out of their very nature. The state-church stereotypes a system of faith, and its clergy are paid to teach and maintain it. Alteration becomes next to impossible, for every change would endanger its stability. The church has a vested interest to the amount of some millions annually in suppressing free inquiry. For should people once acquire

the habit of looking upon the institutions of the country in the light of truth rather than of prescription, how many inconvenient questions would thenceforth be mooted. The injustice of endowing a chosen sect

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with national funds, the general inefficiency of a state-paid clergy, their bigotry and intolerance, their subservience to aristocratic designs—a host of subjects, kindred in character with these, would speedily be subjected to searching investigation. Upon the foundations of an establishment it is plainly inexpedient to let the light of intelligence play freely. The less that is thought about this question, the less frequently it is discussed, the better for the recipients of tithes, bequests, and compulsory offerings. For them to encourage free inquiry, would be suicidal policy. An institution must either rest upon reason or prescription. If on reason, it will court inquiry—if on prescription, inquiry must if possible be suppressed. To teach men to think independently on all subjects but one is a pure impossibility. The church knows this—and the education which she would give is that which would prevent the exercise of thought altogether. Wise in their generation are the state-pensioned clergy!

What is the result? It may be stated in a few words. The mind of man will be active, if not in a right direction, then in a wrong one. The education of the people being thus discouraged, they are shut out from most of the sources of rational enjoyment and recreation; they seek them consequently in the indulgence of low and brutal tastes—tastes which the church was forward enough, not many years since, to cherish. This is made a pretext for denying them the franchise. Hence springs class legislation, with its long train of frightful evils—monopoly, oppression,

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unequal taxation, one law for the rich and another for the poor. There are few political evils under which

the country now groans which may not ultimately be traced to the existence of a state-church.

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X.

A WORD TO LIBERAL STATESMEN.

We cannot persuade ourselves to quit the ground we now occupy, and leave the consideration of the political evils resulting from a state-church, without addressing ourselves to those political men whose aims are avowedly patriotic, whose principles are liberal, and who believe the good of a people rather than of a class to be the only legitimate end of government. Such men there are, both in and out of parliament, whom we would fain hope to be yet open to conviction. Whether clothed with office or free from its shackles, whether members of the legislature or volunteers only in their country's service, they are properly the statesmen of the present day. Politics constitute their study. They think for the nation. Our laws are ultimately the expression of their minds—for public opinion is mainly moulded by their influence and chan-

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nelled out by their exertions. To these men, titled and untitled, celebrated and comparatively unknown save in their own immediate neighbourhoods, we address a few concluding observations—asking nothing more, on behalf of our remarks than that they be seriously pondered—rejected if found wanting—recognised and acted upon if imbued with truth.

No intelligent observer can have failed to perceive, that there is at the present moment in process of growth, a new school of politics, one which will eventually, and may soon, supersede all existing parties. The cycle of feudalism has well nigh run out. It commenced with an oligarchy, the nominal head of which was only a puppet in the hands of mailed ba-

rons—it will terminate at the same point, the only difference being that the mailed barons have become silken lords. The feudal system has been tried under every modification which the essential nature of it will admit of—and, as might have been expected, it has failed. The human mind quickened by intelligence has pushed up the incrustation which had formed above it. For a time, held together by its own tenacity, aristocracy has kept its position of superiority; just as we see occasionally a hardened lump of clay lifted clean above the ground by a vigorous plant beneath. But that position it cannot long maintain. It is nothing more than a conventionalism—and as such it will be thrown off. Society is encumbered by its weight—bowed down—forced out of its natural upward tendency, and as the sap rises, and the public

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mind acquires somewhat more of pith and fibre, feudalism, already cracked and crumbling from exposure to air and sunshine, must at last drop off of itself, supposing it be not first displaced by some sudden gust of popular indignation.

It is not a little remarkable that state religion has sympathised with feudalism in all its changes. The established church has been, and is, the creature of oligarchy, receiving sustenance at its hands, and evincing in return a thorough subservience to its will. Correctly speaking, the state-church and aristocracy are one and the same thing—one principle variously developed—privilege above right, embodied in religious and in temporal affairs. Our Establishment is the religious concrete, as aristocracy is the temporal one, of which exclusive privilege is the abstract. They are twin branches of the same root. They have flourished, and but for ignorant intermeddling will decay, together. The only thing to be feared is lest our statesmen of the liberal school should be induced to graft twigs of it upon rising democracy, in which case, if it lives, nothing but bitter fruit can be expected.

And this, we regret to say, they are doing—doing with no small assiduity and pains-taking. Along with the seeds of wholesome political truth which they are sowing in the public mind, they are deliberately mingling those of spiritual exclusiveness.

As though history contained not a single page in illustration of the political mischiefs resulting from a state-church—as though our own time furnished no

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one proof of the obstacles it throws in the way of national progress—as though clear-sighted reason were unable to discern the natural antagonism between the principle of democracy and the principle of a religious establishment, these men, in the senate and on the hustings, by word and by pen, publicly and in private, are strenuously attempting to infuse into the new school that which, if allowed to constitute an element of its faith, will render it wholly unfit for the work of renovating the political institutions of our land. Democracy is a reality—a state-church is a mere conventionalism; reason animates the one—the other can only live in the absence of reason; the former is a sincerity, a vital, glowing, earnest sincerity—the other a semblance only, a form, a disguise, a falsehood, having designs which it dares not avow, and avowing designs which it never had; light is the congenial element of democracy, close investigation its habit—a state-church nourishes best in darkness, is then most perfect when in juxtaposition with the least intelligence, and denounces the prying curiosity which might one day be induced to examine her pretensions. The two things cannot co-exist—cannot run in couples. The one will assuredly strangle the other, and possibly both may perish in the struggle.

We are not foolish enough to expect that the class of statesmen to which we allude will take up a position of direct hostility to the Establishment as now existing. They have been trained in the school of party, and are not likely to become the simple votaries

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of truth. All we ask of them is to take care that the eggs of prejudice be not deposited in the young and rising plant which they have laboured to rear. Intellectually they repudiate the alliance between civil and religious institutions. Profess what they will in conformity with the cant of the day, one cannot but observe a scowl across their minds as they do outward reverence to priestly dogmas, and feel themselves constrained to sanction principles in reference to ecclesiastical affairs which, in all matters pertaining to civil government, they trample upon with disdain. They cannot pronounce the state-church shibboleth without an awkward twist of the mouth. They cannot, to please her, forget history and hoodwink reason without a consciousness of degradation. They touch their hats to intolerance with a hurried and ungraceful air. But we see no reason for their attempts to perpetuate a bondage the galling annoyance of which they feel every day. If they will not lift up a hand against the Establishment, at all events it is not within their legitimate vocation to aid and abet it. They are the parents of democracy—and to them the youth looks up with filial respect. They might well abstain, therefore, from stuffing him with crudities which, under other training, they were themselves compelled to swallow. Let them, if they will, regard the separation of church and state as, under existing circumstances, impracticable—democracy will know hereafter how to deal with that. But to utter state-church maxims as genuine metal, and stamp upon them their own image,

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that they may have currency in succeeding generations, is unworthy of the men. It proves one of two things—a crick in the judgment, or a flaw in the heart.

Shall we be guilty of inexcusable vanity and presumption if we venture to claim that our preceding

remarks on this subject be deliberately read and reflected upon? We have drawn up an indictment, consisting of several counts, against the Establishment, and we ask of liberal politicians a verdict of "guilty," or "not guilty." If we have made out our case, can any man pretending to patriotism lend the sanction of his name and influence to the perpetuation of this evil? For what is the substance of our charge? We have identified the church as the mere tool of aristocracy, which has been in all times past, and is at the present moment, handled with terrible effect against the liberties of the people. That it embitters political strife, patronises war, abets monopoly, exerts a mischievous influence upon the throne in respect of legislation, the distribution of honours, the administration of law, and the discharge of magisterial functions, stunts and distorts public political opinion, and presents an almost insuperable obstacle to popular education—these are matters which we take to be proved. All history proves them.

But if this be true, what unmanliness is it in our statesmen to blink the whole question, and refuse even to re-consider the axiom, that "it is the duty of the state to provide religious instruction for its subjects."

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Can that be a principle philosophically true which, in every instance of its application, here or elsewhere has produced, more or less, the above results? This question demands thorough investigation.

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GROUP THE THIRD.

A STATE-CHURCH VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF COMMON
SENSE.

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THE dogma, that “it is the duty of the state to provide for the religious instruction of its subjects” is first of all subjected to the analysis of reason. A little inquiry into the nature of religion, what is meant by religious instruction, who and what is the state, and what an obligation to attend to the religion of its subjects infers, brings out the meaning of an axiom often uttered but never understood. The necessary results of an alliance between things secular and sacred do not corroborate the truth of the maxim. A state-church cramps the growth of theology, and weakens the authority of truth—converts the most sacred of callings into a matter of property—engenders priestism—encourages religion by proxy—places dissidents in a humiliating position, by which meanness of spirit is fostered—checks the development of willing Christianity—and repels the poor from religion altogether. These evils are not contingent, merely—they are the natural and certain effects of the system.

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I.

WHAT A STATE-CHURCH PROFESSES TO DO.

Religion! Here must our inquiries begin if we are to estimate correctly the philosophy of a state-church—seeing that it is not very easy to pronounce a decision upon the fitness of a given apparatus of means, in entire ignorance of the end such means have been framed to accomplish. Our readers need be under no alarm. We have no design of introducing to their notice thoughts whose proper home lies in the regions

of theology, nor shall we ask them to converse with truth dressed up in the everlasting buckram of technicality and cant. There can be nothing unbecoming in looking with the common intelligence of man upon what is designed for man—or in endeavouring to see under cover of a word, not seldom obtruded upon our notice, a definite and intelligible thing. Religion is the ostensible object of an established church. Statesmen tell us that it is the safeguard of nations, the

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basis of all social and political order, the very breath of our national life. Why then, of course, it is a reality. May we not look at it without offence to their rules of conventional propriety? Are we precluded from asking, "What is this thing, to work out which we have erected machinery so costly?" Must the name suffice us? Is it a mere token—a password—cabalistic letters which shut up a meaning into which none but the initiated may inquire? We are not just of that opinion. "What is it which a state-church professes to do?" seems to us a preliminary question to that other, "Whether it is well adapted to do what it proposes." It takes from us millions annually for the express and avowed object of promoting religion. Spite of all customs, maxims, conventionalities to the contrary, we shall take leave to examine for ourselves, and for our readers, what religion really is.

Strange as it may seem, it is not more strange than true, that the self-appointed, self-authorized guardians of our national religion are the least disposed to hear with patience any remarks tending to the elucidation of the thing. They appear intent upon building for religion a splendid mausoleum into which the heavenly maiden may retire, and trouble them no more. Most of them would blush to be caught conversing with her, and accordingly they seldom expose themselves to the possibility of detection. They love her most enthu-

siastically—indeed she is their pet ward, the protection of whom it would be shocking to leave to the

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capricious offices of her own sincere votaries. But, then, the less they see of her the better. Should she venture to show herself in their assemblies, even when they deliberate upon her well-being, she would be sneered at as an intruder. How many of our christian senators ever deigned to look her in the face, or commune freely and intelligently with the object of their impassioned love? In other words, out of the whole number of gentlemen who legislate for the church, could fifty be found who have the slightest notion of what that thing is, which they regard themselves as commissioned to superintend? Princes in philosophy! Wondrously sagacious statesmen! ever busying themselves about an object which they never tried to comprehend—foremen in a department the main design of which is a mystery as dark and impenetrable to them as the closest secrets of the natural world.

Yet is religion not a name merely, but a thing—a definite, intelligible, infinitely important reality. It is man's loyalty to the Author of his being, or rather a return to loyalty from insubordination and revolt. The word is significant. To be *re-bound* to the Supreme, to be *liegemen*, to come back to *allegiance*, to be in principle and in heart *loyal* (all of them kindred words)—this, we take it, is the meaning of religion. Men are religious when they habitually recognise and obey divine authority.

This being an affair of the will, we have an idea that it must be brought about by persuasion. Loyalty is

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a matter of the heart, be it to a temporal or a spiritual monarch—a deep-seated principle, not an external act—a living power within, of which deeds are only the various modes of development. Blind or constrained

loyalty are simple contradictions in terms. Men must be won to it—cannot be driven into it. To stick a form of compliment upon a man's memory, or make him utter it with his tongue, or force him to show himself in a court-house once a week to hear lectures upon loyalty, is not to make men loyal. They may be desperate traitors after all. Now our object is to ascertain, not whether a state-church can succeed in pasting a creed upon passive minds, or reading homilies in every parish to an assembled audience, but whether it is well adapted to win men back to loyalty to Heaven.

That it is the duty of the state to provide religious instruction for the people, is a political axiom. It is no design of ours in the present place to question its truth. But, in the name of all that's manly, let us understand it. Let the dicta of the Duke of Wellington and the Bishop of Exeter, of Mr. Wakley and Colonel Sibthorpe, suffice for the truth of it. For the nonce we will consent to take it upon their eminently satisfactory authority. We question not the divinity of the oracle, but we would fain know its meaning. These illustrious men are part and parcel of the state—and if their utterances have in them a particle of sense, it amounts to this—that it is the duty of the assembled Wellingtons, Exeters, Wakleys

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and Sibthorpes, to devise in their wisdom suitable means for presenting that truth to the minds of British subjects, and for *to* presenting it as may appear to them best calculated to persuade the people to submit to the authority of Heaven—to convince them that it is their duty, to make them understand that it would be their happiness, to put themselves under divine government, and in all cheerfulness and gladness of heart to serve the Author of their being—in one word, to see to it that there be through all the land, a stated proclamation of such views of the Highest, of His rectitude and clemency, of His power

and love, as may beget reverence, trust, submission, earnest attachment. The axiom means this, or it means just nothing at all. The religious instruction is designed, as a matter of course, to awaken religious sentiment and feeling—in other words, as we have stated, to produce reverence, submission, trust, love. And we are to understand that Wellington, Exeter, Wakley and Sibthorpe, with their co-legislators, are commissioned to attend to these matters—and to take it upon them as a solemn duty, to order such a system of means at the public expense as may result in the realisation of this great and important object.

Now let our readers bear in mind the real question we have to decide. It is not whether loyalty to a heavenly, is or is not the best guarantee for loyalty to an earthly, government. It is not whether religious instruction must or must not precede the formation of

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religious principle. It is just this—whether an order of men, selected and authorised by our Wellingtons and Wakleys, and supported by funds payable at their demand, and payable only because they demand them, is likely to be the most efficient instrumentality to bring men back to their allegiance to God. We now understand what is the end sought—we are pretty well acquainted with the means employed. The point we have to determine is, whether, as a mere matter of philosophy, the means are adapted to secure the end. This we shall proceed to examine.

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II.

THE TWO GREAT VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

THE state piously regards it as a duty to labour on behalf of Heaven, and to persuade its subjects to re-

cognise and obey divine authority—and the state undertakes to do this, as far as it may be done, by providing for all classes religious instruction. This is the chisel with which men's characters are to be hewn into shape by the civil power—the instrument which our christian senators feel bound to purchase at any cost, for fashioning men's hearts to voluntary submission to the will of the Supreme. Well! let us look at it—at the thing itself, we mean, not the mere name of it, for the same words may represent widely different ideas. A thing may be called a spade which is of no use whatever to turn the soil; and men, transferring to the worthless article all the ideas which its stolen name suggests, may argue, with no small show of reason, that every husbandman ought

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to have one—whilst all they mean, and all that they can make intelligible is, that every husbandman ought to possess a *bonâ fide* spade, called by whatever name; and that, although every man in the kingdom agreed by a facetious fiction to call some other thing a spade, that other thing is not the one which his own reasoning proved the husbandman to want. So we may call the working of a certain cumbersome, inefficient, self-defeating apparatus, religious instruction, and thence attach all the importance of the real thing to the miserable substitute for it—and, should we be guilty of the purblind folly, we may urge just those reasons for the adoption of it, which, in point of fact, prove that quite another thing than the misnamed one we have, is what the nation wants and what the state cannot provide.

Now there are two great varieties of religious instruction, which we shall take leave to distinguish by the descriptive adjuncts of “mechanical” and “potential.” Here is a certain truth A., which is to be conveyed into the mind of B., for the purpose of supplying him with sound motives to good conduct. The instrumental medium by which A. comes to be recog-

nised by B., as a simple proposition which he did not previously know, we call "mechanical" instruction. The truth is represented by certain forms or certain sounds—may be addressed either to the eye or the ear—may be printed or pronounced. When B. has seen the letters or heard the words in which the proposition is done up, and through them discerns the

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idea which they were intended to represent—in short, when perception has formed acquaintance with the truth which rides into the mind upon visible or audible symbols, the work of "mechanical" instruction is done. But now, truth of any kind which is designed to move the heart, may acquire point and force from innumerable adventitious circumstances, and may be the representative of a vast deal more than its own intrinsic importance. Coming as a messenger from a deep, sincere, and throbbing heart, it possesses an attribute of power which else did not belong to it. Words are but a channel by which what exists in one mind flows into another—and it makes all the difference whether the streams of instruction running through them be wholly transparent, or tinged with feeling. Light may beget light—but passion only can beget passion. When we see others moved, we are the more readily moved ourselves. It is important, in the last degree, that men should be persuaded practically to own allegiance to the Creator. The question is whether such persuasion is likely to result from the simple mechanical exhibition of truth, apart from the character, motives, and ordinary conduct of those whose business it is to present it; and whether "potential" religious instruction—that is, the religious instruction which is calculated to *do* what it professes to *do*, must not require that the men who provide and who offer it, be in something like harmony with the object they profess to seek.

Enough of dry metaphysical disquisition—let us indulge a moment or two in fancy. Suppose some-

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where out in Cumberland or Cornwall, some trumpery borough had acquired an unenviable notoriety for the lawlessness, ignorance, insubordination, and factious character of its inhabitants. Some one is sent down from Buckingham Palace, to represent the demands of the crown, and to attempt by peaceable means, by reasoning with the men, by an address to all the legitimate motives which prevail with the human heart, to bring them into a state of quiet and cheerful subordination to law, and of social order. His success is so great as to attract notice, and give him considerable influence over the population. Forthwith the aldermen, bailiff, and constables, as fractious rogues as the worst in the borough, assemble and determine that order is a most wholesome thing for society, and without loyalty, how can order be expected?—that it is part of their duty to let every one within the limits of the borough know what a good thing loyalty is, and what obligations all men are under to be loyal—that therefore they appoint so many of their runners to give the needful instruction, and insist upon it that these runners should be paid by the inhabitants. Suppose, now, the shrewd denizens of this borough should perceive, that it was no part of these men's plan to be loyal themselves, and that the runners selected to persuade them to loyalty, were never selected because they were known to be interested about the object at which they professed to aim, but rather with a reference to other and very minor ends—such as family connection, or pliant acquiescence in the will of their employ-

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erg. We say nothing about the lessons of political morality which these runners might or might not enounce from day to day in the hearing of the inhabitants—but we do say, that the whole thing would be very likely to wear the character of a hoax, and that the most perfect working of the system would not pro-

bably do much to restore order. The wonder would be how the sanctimonious aldermen could forbear laughter when they talked at their *sederunt* of the importance of loyalty, and professed to one another in the hearing of the whole borough, the most unbounded confidence in, and most ardent attachment to, that most valuable and loyal body, the runners—while perhaps in the very utterance of the profession, they would make some disrespectful, if not positively seditious, allusion to the crown.

Far be it from us to insinuate that there is the remotest resemblance between these imaginary municipal efforts to produce loyalty, and the efforts of our state-church to promote religion—that the worthy aldermen may be regarded as types of our christian legislators, or that their officious runners bear any likeness to our legislators' clergy. What we wish is to illustrate that which we mean by “mechanical” instruction, and to show that it is just possible to present the purest truth to others, not only in such manner as not to insure success, but under circumstances which are precisely calculated to bring the truth itself into thorough contempt.

Yes! there is a kind of religious instruction which,

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so far from forming the characters of those who are the subjects of it to spiritual loyalty, is sure to awaken just the opposite emotions. It is a skilful process of converting sacred truth into solid gold. Here is the mode in which it works. The land is parceled out into parishes, and the creed into articles. The parishioners having too much by an exact tenth of worldly substance, and too little by a great deal of religious knowledge, it becomes a clear matter of expediency to relieve them of the one and communicate to them the other. A recipient of tithes is therefore appointed, whose duty consists fully as much in taking off the superfluity of temporal goods, as in imparting spiritual instruction. The characters of these *media* of exchange

are of small importance—their chief function being to push that truth into the ear which might quite as advantageously have entered in at the eye—to be oral prayer-books and homilies—patent sermon-speaking machines, whose work is done when creeds and precepts have been made vocal, and who, for any persuasive influence which goes forth with their words, might as well be brass pipes and leather bellows as living men. This kind of religious instruction the state can provide—but then there is not the smallest reason why *men* should be employed in the case, inasmuch as the same truth stamped on paper and posted in a conspicuous part of every parish, might answer the same end and be a much cheaper method. We commend this idea to our pious legislators—it has several advantages. First, every parish might enjoy

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the benefit of the same homily, and thus the utmost uniformity of religious instruction might be ensured—secondly, church-building might be dispensed with. Further, the truth thus exhibited would not be discredited by any incongruities in the medium by which it would be put in contact with men's minds—and lastly, the parishioners might recur to it again and again, and thus revive evanescent impressions. If it be the duty of the state to furnish nothing more than “mechanical” religious instruction, this seems to us to be as likely a plan as can possibly be devised.

If it be objected that this mere mechanical exhibition of religious truth is not the thing meant, when the duty of the state to provide religious instruction for the people is affirmed, then it follows of necessity that the state is bound to furnish religious instruction through the medium of men whose lives will commend it—in other words, to furnish religious instructors whose sincerity, earnestness, contempt of the world, and evident submission to the authority of the Supreme, will imbue their instructions with persuasive influence, and qualify them to win by example those whom they

cannot reach by argument or precept. This, then, is the sense of the oft-uttered maxim—that certain men who make no pretence to religion, in as far at least as it consists in practical obedience to divine authority, and who when the laws of honour and the laws of their Maker come into collision would deem themselves disgraced by submitting to the latter, are no sooner invested with legislative authority, than they come at

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once under an obligation to provide the people with a body of instructors whose uniform behaviour shall be such as to commend the truth which these very senators habitually violate, and win the people to a loyalty which these gentlemen contemn. This is a hopeful proposition to deal with—as curious an one as aristocracy ever uttered—pleasingly suggestive of odd and grotesque associations—full of startling meaning, which if not novel is amazingly piquant—a rich medley pie which contains a little of everything, and which, however nice, is decidedly indigestible—a compound of hurly-burly—the very quintessence of incongruity—the home of full-grown mental confusion. We will look at it again.

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III.

THE STATE-ITS QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROVIDING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

Given, the duty of some association to reduce men to voluntary subjection to divine authority—given, that the only means to induce such subjection is suitable instruction, enforced by suitable men—it is required to find an agency well adapted to superintend the accomplishment of this object by the instrumentality of these means. Suppose, now, we summon into one assembly just six hundred and fifty-eight railroad directors, the qualifications of whom for office consist

in the possession of a certain number of shares, together with the choice, by vote, of a majority of shareholders, to the trust of overlooking railroad interests—suppose, further, we should gather into a second committee every man in the kingdom who can prove himself to have inherited from his father a clear income of a plum a year. Were we then to arrange that every matter affecting the religion of the country should be

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separately submitted to these two bodies, and that some individual who might chance to be born just one minute and a quarter before midnight on the third of September should be invested with power, and bound by oath, to carry the decisions of the two aforementioned committees into effect—we should adopt means for effecting the end proposed about half as absurd as those which the wisdom of our legislators have devised. The arrangement might be open to a few objections—and to these we deem ourselves bound in equity to listen. It might be urged, for instance, that the qualifications of a director for railroad business have no conceivable relation to his fitness for superintending religion—that the possession by inheritance of a hundred thousand a year infers no competency to decide upon what is truth, and can add no emphasis to its authority—that even in cases in which both parties were agreed, negative being added to negative would amount to nothing—and that should both be constituted a board of health, although the interests involved would be immeasurably inferior in importance, the qualifications of the men for office might be more safely presumed. Should it, however, be declared as an incontrovertible axiom never to be questioned, because not susceptible of rational doubt, that it is the duty of railroad directors, and of men in the enjoyment of a hundred thousand a year, to provide religious instruction for the people, there is of course an end of the matter—we must bow in blind obedience to what we cannot comprehend.

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Seriously, what do we mean by the state, and what are its peculiar qualifications for taking under its wing the church of Christ? We are too apt to mystify ourselves with a fiction of our own fancy, and, under the name of "the state," to conjure up some awful power invested with authority in all matters in heaven above and on the earth beneath, and endowed with intelligence capacitating it to deal with all subjects, down from a turnpike trust, up to a solution of the problem "What is truth?" Now we must take leave, in a matter of such vast moment, to dispel these pleasing illusions; to consider the state as certain combined associations of men—not always the best nor yet the wisest of our race—to examine how it comes to pass that they obtain legislative power, and to see whether the process by which they pass out of individual privacy into public office and responsibility is likely to fit them for the management of spiritual affairs. This we will do with the utmost brevity consistent with the clear elucidation of the matter.

A state, then, may be regarded as an organ for the expression of a nation's will, in matters affecting the safety of their property and persons, or, as some would assert (and we shall not stay to dispute upon the propriety of the definition) in all that relates to the temporal welfare of the community. The constitution of it in our own country is mixed, power being vested in the monarch, the peers, and the representatives of the people. The whole machinery is put together for civil purposes, altogether irrespectively of the relation

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which its several parts may bear to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The materials of which it is composed are selected for their supposed fitness to work out certain temporal results, and not at all on account of their accordance with the higher claims of Christianity. It is a purely secular power set up for secular ends—

and the chances that the component members of it shall be competent to superintend religious instruction, are not a whit more numerous than they would be in the supposed case of railroad directors, and heirs to a hundred thousand a year.

To begin with the House of Commons. Each member must possess (with exceptions which it is needless to specify) three hundred pounds a year, at least, in land—must take certain oaths having about as much reference to their fitness for the functions they undertake, as if they swore implicit faith in the doctrine of gravitation—and must be elected to office by the majority of some legal constituency. The result is an aggregate body of gentlemen called honourable, the sons of peers or near relations—lawyers and stockbrokers—country gentlemen and bankers—fortunate speculators and (*rari aves*) successful gamblers—rich manufacturers, Indian nabobs, soldiers and seamen, with here and there a philosopher. All the varieties of creed may find their abettors in this assembly, and every commandment of Heaven, saving that which says “thou shalt not steal,” its violators, without disqualifying them for the exercise of legislative authority. They are chosen without the smallest reference to religion

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—gathered from all classes but the poor—brought together from all quarters, and selected of every shade of character, from the *roué* to the devotee—and being associated together in one body, they forthwith undertake to construct and work an apparatus of means, having for its object, to persuade all the subjects of the realm to revere, love, obey and confide in God. Now, we will not say whether or no these men are duly qualified for what they undertake, but we verily believe that on a comparison of the two bodies, the railroad directors would have the advantage.

We come then to the peers. We are not disposed to gainsay the indisputable testimony of history, that when the Norman conqueror had succeeded by dint of

fire and murder in despoiling, the occupants of this land of their possessions, he gave to his accomplices in the work of destruction the estates which he had seized, and conferred on them most of the privileges of nobility. His successors added to the number of these worthies, and usually promoted to distinction the most successful soldiers. Of late, additions have been made to them from the ranks of civilians, and the eldest male descendants of the body thus created, wear the title and enter upon the functions of their ancestors. These illustrious personages become legislators, for the church of Christ, by birth—and because they can trace descent from this warrior or that diplomatist, they come under obligation to provide religious instruction for the people—and make them pay for it. We shall not presume to scan the cha-

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acters of the members of this body, as they ordinarily appear to the public eye. They may be good or bad, wise or foolish. All that it concerns us to notice is, that the religion of the people is entrusted to their hands, simply forasmuch as they were born under such and such circumstances. What they believe, or what they do, is held to be nothing whatever to the purpose. They may be infidels in creed and profligates in morals, but they are none the less qualified to watch over the religion of the country.

Of royalty we need not speak further than this, that the throne is hereditary, and may be occupied without in the smallest degree affecting the title of its possessor, by the best or the worst of men, the most religious or the most profane—by an Alfred or a Henry the Eighth, by an infant or a George the Fourth.

This, then, is the state. Conjointly, the duty devolves upon these powers to diffuse and promote sound religious instruction—to decide upon articles of faith—to furnish pious teachers, and to induce men to show that loyalty to Heaven which themselves are at liberty to cultivate or to spurn, without affecting their

fitness for office. We shall see now what effects religious instruction thus superintended is likely to produce.

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IV.

THE SELF-IMPOSED DUTY OF THE STATE.

Patience, gentle readers, and we shall presently get under way. We are about to heave up the sheet-anchor, which having been done, we shall hoist sail, and make all possible haste to port. We have seen what religion is—in other words, the end which a state-church is set up to accomplish. We have handled and inspected the instrument by which this important object is to be effected—religious instruction. We have examined the character and pretensions of the state, regarded as the main agent engaged in superintending the work. We have now only to discuss the question of duty—and we shall have arrived at a satisfactory understanding of the theorem, that “it is the duty of the state to provide religious instruction for its subjects.” In all matters of dispute, a clear view of the meaning of terms tends to abridge subsequent

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discussion—and first principles being settled in the outset both parties may proceed without interruption. That parental jurisdiction should be exercised by the state over its subjects—that, convinced itself of the value of religion, it should train up its children to spiritual loyalty—that, stretching in its generosity beyond the direct purposes for which it exists, it should aim to mould the hearts as well as regulate the conduct of the people—and that, in furtherance of so sublime an end it should station the heralds of truth over the land in all its lengths and breadths—is a scheme which carries upon the face of it such a profession of kindness and piety, that it can hardly be wondered

at if it be fondly hailed as an angel of light—and if men unaccustomed to look into the heart of things, imagine they discover in it, all the simplicity of truth, and all the majesty of unmistakable wisdom. But the thunder-cloud charged with the elements of destruction, will sometimes catch and reflect the golden beams of the setting sun; and men gaze with admiration upon that which should awaken their fears.

When the duty of the state to provide religious instruction for its subjects is asserted, another and yet more questionable maxim is involved. For, authority must be vested somewhere, to decide upon the proper articles of faith.

The opinions entertained, as to what is truth and what error, are various and discordant. Some men implicitly believe that “religious instruction” must be confined to the lying impostures of the Arabian he-

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resiarach. Some find their religion in the Shasters. One nation adopts a multitude of deities—another recognises only one. Trinity in unity is a fundamental tenet of this party—whilst that holds the doctrine to be absurd. It being the bounden duty of the magistrate to provide religious instruction for the people, it is evident that some party or other must determine what is to be taught and what is to be withheld. Somebody’s duty it must be to decide upon the national creed. That creed is furnished for us, it may be said, in the word of God. True! but which is the word of God, and what is the true interpretation thereof? On these questions there is a multitude of conflicting opinions. They cannot all be taught. Who shall select the articles of faith? is *that the proper business of the majority of the nation?* Then the proposition may be thus expressed,—“It is the bounden duty of every government to provide for the instruction of its subjects in those articles of faith which shall have been determined upon by a national majority.” Accordingly, in Spain it is the duty of the magistrate to in-

culcate subjection to the Roman pontiff. In Turkey, the government is bound to provide for the instruction of its subjects in the doctrines of the Koran. In England, it might, in one century, be obligatory on the legislature to decree the support of the Calvinistic theology—in the next, of the Armenian. But some of these systems of religion are false—the maintenance of them must in consequence be opposed to the will of God—and thus the proposition conducts us to this

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curious conclusion,—that under certain circumstances it is the duty of the government to oppose itself to the will of the Governor of the Universe.

Or is the power of selecting the credenda of the nation *to be vested in the civil magistrate?* Suppose the delicate task to be intrusted to the superior wisdom of the government. The question then occurs, is it the duty of the people to receive and embrace the religious instruction afforded them by the state? It is or it is not. If it be *not*, then the axiom forces upon us the conclusion,—that under some circumstances it is the duty of the government to exercise a power which it is not the duty of its subjects to obey; or, in other words, which it is the duty of its subjects to resist. If it *be* the duty of the people to embrace the articles of faith determined upon by the government, then in Spain it is the duty of every individual to believe in transubstantiation, penance, purgatory, and the absolute infallibility of the Roman church—which doctrines it is the duty of every individual in England to renounce. What an interesting round of duties may we imagine the inquisitive and adventurous traveler to run—under an obligation to suit his creed to the authorised creed of every government to which in his rambles he may become subject. Such is the precious result of this proposition.

In vain is the assertion qualified by declaring that the religious instruction which it is the duty of the

government to provide for its subjects must be in accordance with the truth of Scripture. The question

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will return again and again,—What is truth? and who is the judge that shall decide the question? Where is the ultimate appeal? Whether it be in the majority of the nation, or in the government itself, we are involved by the axiom in the most ridiculous absurdities. Nor does the toleration of all opinions extricate us from perplexity; for if it be the duty of any government to provide religious instruction for its subjects, its power to determine upon the opinions to be taught, and to maintain a body of clergy to propagate such opinions, must be exercised with a view to the national welfare. But if the national welfare is concerned in the promulgation of such and such opinions, why tolerate those which are destructive of them? “This,” says an able writer in *Tail’s Magazine*, “is first to erect the most stupendous of powers, for the most transcendent of ends, and then to concur in its downfall; as if the motive to its construction were the blindest of impulses, and the frustration of its object a pastime or a triumph. It is the bootless ingenuity of children, all anxiety in building a castle of cards, and the moment it is built all impatience to pull it to pieces again. It is to intend the salvation, and achieve the perdition of souls. It is as the mercy of Heaven and the malice of demons. A purpose all good and a connivance all evil. It is a compound of elaborate contraries, part of iron, and part of clay, combined into one monstrous, impossible, and self-destroying whole. It is in one word, the portentous contradiction of declaring that it is necessary, and yet *not* he-

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cessary, to set up the particular worship in favour with the civil ruler; necessary, as affording the only effectual way to salvation—and not necessary, because there are other effectual ways. Here, then, is our question.

If the former, why tolerate? If the latter, why establish?"

Power, then, to provide for the religious instruction of the people, necessarily supposes power likewise to determine upon the class of doctrines to be taught. This is most assiduously thrown into the shade by the advocates of the proposition now under discussion. The term "religious instruction" is vague and indistinct as term can be. What is the precise signification attached to it? Suppose the government of this country to be Roman-catholic, would it be their bounden duty to support the ministers and diffuse the doctrines of Romanism, in opposition to the national will? If so, what can justify the revolution of 1688? Or are all governments connected with the church of Rome placed beyond the limits of the proposition? It is the duty of every government to make provision for the religious instruction of its subjects. The government of James the Second felt this obligation, and deeming the doctrines and discipline of Rome to be "the truth," they aimed to bring about its establishment in this country. In so doing the chief magistrate was expelled the kingdom. Was this right or was it wrong? If wrong, the advocates of this theory must look upon the line of Brunswick as usurping a throne which a nation had no right to bestow.

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If it was right to compel the abdication of James, what is the ground of the country's justification? According to the proposition under discussion it was the *duty* of James as magistrate to provide religious instruction for his subjects,—thus far they will acquit him of all blame. His fault must then have been that he sought to establish a creed *which the majority of his nation renounced*. But does this justify revolution? Why then these same churchmen would approve of a revolution in Ireland, for there the magistrate is doing that for which James was punished with the loss of his throne—namely, forcing a religion upon an

unwilling nation. We come, then, to the conclusion that what is meant by the proposition, is that it is the bounden duty of every government to provide for the instruction of its subjects in the doctrines and discipline of the church of England. This is a much more intelligible dogma, but surely we cannot be expected to receive it as an axiom.

Such is this jumble of contradictions which ecclesiastical authorities have crammed down a nation's throat as infallible truth. Every aspect of it has now been considered, save one only. It may be contended that the end in view, and admitted to be desirable, can only be efficiently promoted by the agency of the state—and that consequently, the duty of the state springs out of its adaptation to secure this end. This we now propose to discuss;—and we shall attempt to show, that the state never can succeed, by means of its alliance with the church, in promoting the real religion of its subjects.

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V.

THE DISADVANTAGE OF STEREOTYPED DOCTRINE.

National creeds remind us of plaster-of-Paris busts—once cast they remain unchanged and unchangeable until broken to pieces. They may have been originally beautiful or ugly—beautiful we mean in the eyes of those who saw them in all the freshness of their novelty. At best they are but rigid images of divine truth, without life, without expression—but when the dust of ages has settled upon their protuberant features, or the smears of some later workman, anxious to improve upon the original, shade and embrown them in unsightly patches, they answer very indifferently the purpose of presenting at one view the charms of Christianity.

If theology be a science (and who will dispute it), it should grow. Its primary features, it is true, will remain through all time the same—so will those of the infant born but yesterday. But to the eye of

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society, Christianity will, in the lapse of ages, be more fully developed; and if it has hitherto made small progress in this way, the reason must be sought, not in any want of vitality in it, but in the restrictions and old womanish bandages of state-appointed creeds and formularies. The infant was vigorous enough during the first three centuries—nobody was alarmed by any appearances of permanent deformity. But ever since Constantine's day, the nurses of the church have insisted upon forcing upon it pads, supports, and cripple-irons, afraid to leave its own nature to push itself unassisted to maturity, lest its head should be awry, and its limbs twisted out of their proper shape and proportions. There would seem to be no method of displaying this folly in its ridiculous absurdity, but by showing its operation under some imaginary aspect.

Take, then, the following illustration.

Chemical science, it will be readily admitted, is second in utility to none in the whole range of natural philosophy. Agriculture and the manufactures owe their advancement to their present state of perfection, mainly to its discoveries. Our post of superiority in the commercial world could not have been attained without its valuable aid. It has multiplied the conveniences of life. It has furnished us with means for prolonging it. It has beautified our dwellings from the palace to the cottage. It has added incalculably to our resources. Happily it has escaped the meddling interference of statesmen, and has consequently prospered.

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But suppose it had been otherwise. Suppose that upon the explosion of alchemy, and the establishment

of chemistry upon the solid basis of inductive philosophy, certain leading doctrines of the science, agreed upon by the experimentalists of the day, had been honoured with the patronage of government. Suppose a manual of chemistry to have been drawn up and circulated through the land, an unfeigned assent and consent to all and every part of which should have constituted the unalterable condition of admission to our universities, and to every state and corporate office. Add a body of ten thousand men, sworn to maintain the system in which they had been instructed, to teach no other doctrines, to acknowledge no further discovery which might by possibility militate against the authorised creed. Pay them liberally; give them a place in the councils of the nation; make it their interest to keep the science *in staid quo*—and you have the establishment of chemistry.

Could any plan be devised by the skill of man, more effectually to stay the progress of the science? What motive would be left to succeeding philosophers to pursue their inquiries beyond the limits marked out for them by law? What hope of pushing their investigations to a successful issue, compelled as they would be to start from a false principle? What reward could be expected to crown the labours of that man, who by persevering and indefatigable research should acquire a knowledge of laws till then unheard of, but the charge of innovation and heresy, yelped by ten thou-

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sand scientific placemen whose emoluments were in danger? Every avenue, but one, to honourable distinction in this department of philosophy would be closed. Every inducement to independent inquiry would be wanting. Every obstacle would be thrown in its way. Curiosity, with which the Creator has beneficently endowed our race—the germ of all improvement, the mainspring of the mental apparatus, would be a useless and dangerous attribute of man, in the field of chemistry. Disdaining coercion, and pre-

vented by social and legal restraints from indulging, in this direction, its own native tendencies, it would seek another, haply, a less useful sphere, in which it might breathe freely, and disport itself unannoyed by the clamour of paid and interested partisans. The science would be suffocated by the officious embraces of the state.

Now, it clearly belongs to the advocates of a religious Establishment to show why theology alone, in the whole circle of sciences immeasurably the most important, should be thus degraded. Is the field of revelation less extensive than that of nature? Is there less scope here for the vigorous exercise of the intellectual faculties? Are the laws of the spiritual world so much better known than those of the material, so much more easily determined upon, so little liable to be mistaken, as to render patient, assiduous, and independent inquiry useless? Is religion less important than chemistry? Are the interests of men less closely identified with a correct knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity,

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than of the laws of Mechanics? Why is the mind of man, free to roam over all the diversified regions of science, to put on fetters immediately upon entering the domains of divine truth? Why are its aspirations heavenward to be made, like the wings of the chained eagle, a useless incumbrance? Are the tendencies of man to pursue spiritual inquiries so overpowering that they need the whole weight of an Establishment to counteract them? Is there any wisdom, any propriety, any political seeniliness, in preventing the growth of religious knowledge, and the correct formation of religious sentiment, by bandaging up the national mind with creeds and formularies? We pause for a reply—We ask what peculiarity there is in theological science which renders it expedient to hedge it about with articles, when every other science, natural and moral, is left, with the consent of all parties, to stand or fall by its own merits.

The study of truth revealed in Scripture, constitutes the noblest exercise of our intellectual powers. A world is therein thrown open to our research teeming with the richest, the fullest, the most varied and impressive illustrations of the divine character. The phenomena of that world, so far as they come under our inspection, require in their investigation the nicest care, the utmost simplicity of spirit, the cordial love of truth for its own sake, and the most determined resolution to follow where it leads. If ever, in the pursuit of knowledge, it be necessary to divest the mind of prejudice, to remove from the judgment every pos-

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sible temptation to be led astray by passion, and to cultivate that childlike meekness of spirit which listens only to understand, which understands only to obey, most assuredly it is here. And can anything be more monstrous than for statesmen to prescribe, to interpret, to patronise here—and chain down the mind to authorised creeds, and offer bribes to conscience, and attempt to sway, by appealing to interested motives, the decisions of mankind? Is it not appalling, that in religion the interference of governments should be tolerated with indifference, and even vociferously applauded, when in natural science it would be scouted with indignation? Are we to be slaves of system where we ought to be most free? tempted to take our knowledge at second hand, where anxious examination and diligent inquiry constitute our most sacred obligation? degraded for our independence, where implicit faith is at once dangerous and criminal? What could we expect from such a daring violation of the freedom of mind but ignorant and servile credulity on the one hand, or empty formality and loathsome hypocrisy on the other?

VI.

COMPOUND SUBTRACTION BY SIMPLE
ADDITION.

“Go to, sirrah,” said Jack Cade to Stafford, “go to, sirrah: tell the king from me that for his father’s sake, Henry the Fifth, in whose time boys went to span-counter for French crowns, I am content, he shall reign; but I’ll be protector over him.” This is rich enough, in all conscience—but our legislators outdo this a long way. They are content that the Bible should be the supreme authority in matters ecclesiastical, but then they will be protectors over it—stamp it with their sanction—cover its weakness with their strength—hide its defects with the mantle of their patronage—and condescendingly give it importance in the eyes of the people by declaring it to be their *protegi*. They are the veritable Jack Cades of the church—uttering the same boast, and acting the same part in religious affairs, which the Kentish rebel did, in Richard the Second’s time, in affairs

purely civil. The effect, too, is much the same—it is just of a piece with that which would result from the testimony of one of the swell mob in favour of an honest man—it brings under suspicion what, until they meddled with it, could appeal to its own character and secure an honourable verdict.

We have an authorised translation of the Bible, and authorised articles of faith; we have authorised sacraments, and an authorised system of discipline—and we have in addition to all an authorised clergy. Upon every matter involved in religion government has put its mark, and affixed its label “none others are genuine.” Now the doctrines and ceremonies thus honoured may be true or false

—about that we do not contend. Our inquiry touches the wisdom of giving to them a practical influence by such means. We wish to ascertain whether what is authoritative in itself acquires additional authority, whether what is venerable secures additional veneration, by this legislative patronage—and whether the custom is not

“More honoured in the breach than the observance.”

A system of truth designed to shape the character, may be presented to the mind in two ways—it may be gently insinuated, or it may be directly commanded. The first method calls attention to the truth—the last awakens inquiry into the authority imposing it. A man wishes to dispose of his daughter in marriage. Does he modestly remark upon her virtues, and mildly hint his wishes, the party ad-

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dressed forgets the speaker and begins to observe the fair one spoken of. But should he, imitating our wise and philosophic rulers, insist in a tone of command that his friend shall wed her, her charms would be overlooked, and the first question in reply would be “Who are *you*, Sir?” Our legislators burning with natural and pious zeal to marry Christianity to the people, at least, a certain form of Christianity which they declare to be apostolical, have adopted the latter mode; and to commend their wisdom still more highly, have likewise fixed the dowry which the people shall in this case give—and the consequence is, that Christianity bears the reproach which belongs to her professed guardian—is neglected, abused, and treated with contempt—while by far the greatest earnestness evinced by the people in the matter is to obtain from parliament a satisfactory answer to the question: “Who are you—and by what authority doest thou these things?”

As no information on this point can be elicited from the ruling powers, save such as may be gleaned from

pompous inanities, and ridiculous assumptions, it is but natural that the people should proceed to judge for themselves. They are not without ample materials. The personal habits, the social laws, and the public deeds, of the men composing our legislative bodies are matters which almost every newspaper thrusts before their observation. Their intellectual calibre, taking the class as a whole, is found to be not so great as to inspire all other classes with reve-

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rential awe. The code of honour by which they are ruled, visits dishonesty with no penalty, brands a violation of domestic ties with no disgrace, upholds and sanctions murder. They are men tolerably well known to be addicted to pleasure—not remarkably careful in regard to morals—often profane—generally inattentive to the claims and duties of the Sabbath—almost universally contemners of that kind of Christianity which a Paul or a John explained and exemplified. All this is perfectly well understood. To do the men justice they pretend to no higher character. There is no mistaking them, therefore, and perhaps there is no man in the kingdom who, if asked in what quarter of society the best specimens of religion are to be found, would dream, in his wildest moments, of pointing to our Houses of Parliament. Well! these gentlemen, out of pure regard for the people, and acting out implicitly the dictates of conscience, take “the purest form of Christianity” under their protection, and authorise it as genuine, and command the people to revere it.

What is the natural consequence? The *protégé*, if looked at at all, is looked at through its self-constituted protectors—its benevolence is seen through the stained glass of their selfishness—its importance, of their negligence—its purity, of their licentiousness. Christianity in their hands becomes like the maxims of wisdom in the mouth of a fool—like lessons of

chastity when uttered by an immodest woman. The disrespect entertained towards the speaker is trans-

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ferred to the thing spoken. If what they thus commend, or rather enforce, upon the consciences of the people, be received, it is received with the comment of their lives as the interpretation—if rejected, it is rejected on the ground of the worthlessness of their authority. They daub religion with their dirty patronage—and having, in the estimation of the multitude, assimilated it to themselves, they lower its pretensions and debase its character, until it is embraced as a thing of easy virtue, or repelled as an imposture and a lie. There can be but one philosophical explanation of their conduct. They may imagine religion to be best administered on the homoeopathic system, in doses infinitesimally small—and that it acts most potently upon vulgar hearts when given with a large admixture of their own worldliness—one drop of pure Christianity with a wine-glass full of parliament water, “before taken, to be well shaken.”

History proves that our legislators thrust their hateful services upon religion, not from any concern to her, but simply from an eager desire to obtain through the use of her name an ample dowry. Within a few years they legislatively, to save the property, repudiated Romanism, then turned off Protestantism, and took back the creature they had denounced as “a withered and filthy hag,” then divorced her again and associated themselves with Prelacy, her daughter. We see no sort of reason why they should not establish the religion of the false prophet of Mecca—and, we dare to say, no more do they, if by adopting it as the na-

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tional faith they could make it pay more handsomely. The whole thing is a grand humbug, to use their own most elegant phraseology—and the nauseous hypocrisy with which some of them talk of their fears that

Christianity could never be sustained by the voluntary principle, must surely disgust even themselves.

If wit of man were taxed to devise means by which what is majestic in religion should be made to appear contemptible—what is lovely, odious—what is sweet, sour and offensive—we know nothing which could be hit upon so certain of answering the end, as putting it under the special patronage of our civil rulers. In their own sphere, in temporal matters, they have no superfluous respect to lose—but in spiritual things their friendship and patronage are the surest pledges of ruin—and whatever they touch, they invariably defile.

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VII.

THE CURE OF SOULS-PROPERTY.

“Misery makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows,” is a proverb not more trite than true. Equally indisputable is the fact that custom reconciles us to strange inconsistencies. We, whose lot is cast in these times, have been so schooled in modern ecclesiastical phraseology that we cease to regard it as singular; we use it, as we do most other conventional modes of speech, without taking note of its significant import. But should some illustrious saint of the apostolic age revisit our world in these days of enlightenment, it would be interesting to speculate upon the train of reflection to which many of our church terms would probably give rise in his mind. Were he to take up some book on ecclesiastical polity, or glance his eye over an ordinary visitation charge, there can be but little doubt that the first result of his reading would be perplexity. Much that he met with would be to

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him unintelligible. He would find terms employed, and well understood by most modern readers, so pecu-

liar, so widely differing from those used in primitive times, to express the same meaning, that there is Borne probability they might conduct him to amusing conclusions.

In his day, they who exercised the pastoral functions over a specific church, were said to be *overseen of the flock*—in the ecclesiastical phraseology of the Establishment, such men are said to be the incumbents of a *benefice*, to have a *living*. The meaning of these terms we shall suppose our ancient Christian to have, with some labour, at last made out. The contrast between the two modes of expression would naturally open to him a fair field of speculation. “There must be some meaning in this,” we may imagine our apostolic friend to surmise: “such singular phraseology must be significant. An eminent lawyer, or a successful physician (no matter how he came by the information), is said to have extensive *practice*—a tradesman to have a large *business*, or plenty *to do*—a minister of the church to have a *living*. In the one case, the idea of *labour* is suggested; in the other case, of *enjoyment*. Whence this application of terms so apparently incongruous?” He finds, as he proceeds, that this relation between a pastor and his flock, which is termed a *living*, is spoken of as *in the gift* of individuals called *patrons*, and that the man entering into this relation is said to have been *presented to a living*, “What then,” we may suppose him to ex-

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claim, “is it possible that the church, which used to be considered a field of labour, is now regarded as a portion to be enjoyed? Can it be, that in selecting a term descriptive of the most important and responsible of connections, regard was had solely to the temporal benefits resulting to the pastor from such a connection? Must I understand that the most prominent feature of the value of the pastoral relation is the *living* of the minister? The souls of men are perishing for lack of knowledge—the bread of life is committed, for distri-

bution, to a large number of agents set apart for this benevolent purpose—and when the duties of these agents are to be condensed into one single expression, for the sake of avoiding circumlocution, we are told that they have ‘*a living*,’ a term suggesting not a single idea respecting the flock which is to be fed, nor the exertions to be made, nor the responsibility to be borne, but simply of worldly goods to be received. And such are the various cognate terms. Surely these expressions, ‘*benefice, living*,’ and the like, are not intended to denote *the end* to be accomplished by a tie so sacred as that which links the people with their minister. Clergymen who insist upon their ‘*rights*’ and their ‘*interest*’ cannot be referring to ‘filthy lucre.’ ‘To be presented to a living,’ never could be intended to mean being helped to an income. ‘To have the gift of a living,’ was never meant to be understood in the carnal and the worldly sense which such phraseology would seem to render necessary.”

Here we may imagine the good man to pause,

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frightened at the conclusions to which his speculations are hurrying him forward. He looks about him for a more pleasing explanation of this mysterious choice of terms by the church. “I have it,” we may suppose him to exclaim at last, transported as the philosopher when he solved the problem of specific gravity—“I have it; my eyes are opened, and a glorious prospect bursts upon me! These terms, I doubt not, are metaphorical—are intended to show the value which men set upon the work of the ministry, and the cheerful zeal with which the clergy pursue the salvation of men. They enter upon a sphere of arduous exertion and solemn responsibility. More worldly men than they might call it the post of labour. But such is *their* love for the work, that the idea of labour is forgotten—their duty is their delight; and as in our day we identified the two ideas of martyrdom and victory, which at first glance appear irreconcilably op-

posed, so, doubtless, these good men consider a life set apart entirely to God in the work of the ministry, as that which alone deserves the name of a *living*; and what more groveling minds would speak of as entering upon the field of conflict and exertion, the church in the present day elevates into the idea of being the incumbent of a *benefice*. They speak of 'vested rights' and 'interests' in reference to their duties, not their emoluments. The terms which smack of this world are not to be taken in their carnal sense. O, glorious end! O beautiful result of national establishments!"

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Suppose now some such passage as the following from a charge delivered by one of our most respectable bishops, should meet his eye. "You require not to be informed that more than one-half of the parochial benefices of England and Wales are in the gift of private patrons—and that advowsons and next presentations are frequently bought and sold. Whether such purchases and sales ought ever to have been allowed, I shall not now inquire. They do take place, and are recognised by law. *An advowson is property.*" "Methinks," our visitant might properly reflect, "these people go too far in their love of metaphor—their figures are too bold. To have the right of presenting a pastor to a flock—to have acquired, by what means I cannot even guess at, the advantage over others, of power to satisfy the wants of the people by introducing among them a faithful shepherd, may *perhaps* be esteemed a *privilege*—but surely it is out of taste to call it *property*. 'An advowson' is 'right to present to a benefice,' and 'property' is 'right of possession,' or 'possession held in one's own right,' and the genuine meaning of this sentence 'An advowson is property,' may be thus stated—'Every man may do what he will with his own.' In a medical establishment, should people ever be sufficiently befooled to tolerate one, an advowson would mean the right of disposing of an

hospital of invalids to the highest bidder, to be experimented upon in that which relates to their health, just as his ignorance or caprice may dictate. In a religious establishment, it must be a right to deliver over the

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spiritual and eternal welfare of, possibly, five or ten thousand souls, to the watchful care of some aristocratical booby, or gay sporting and swearing Lothario, if such be the patron's good pleasure. 'Have you an advowson to part with, or a next presentation? I wish to buy my son a congregation.' Can this be the way in which bargains of this kind are effected? Here are men, meeting in the market-place, and under the protection of law are buying and selling the spiritual interests of a whole parish, and we are gravely informed that 'an advowson is property,'—in other words, the religious concerns of some hundreds of souls are as much a man's *own*, may belong to the infidel and the worldly, just on the same footing as his sheep and bullocks. 'Get thee behind me Satan, for thou savourest not of the things which be of God but of those which be of men.'" Thus saying, our imaginary friend disappears in a sunbeam.

The reader, we trust, will bear with us. The supposed adventure we have above described, contains a moral of no trifling significance. We are considering the ends which a state-church has a natural and necessary tendency to subserve. We believe it will ever be found, that a legal pecuniary provision for the performance of certain duties, irrespectively of the fitness for office of the party receiving it, will in no lengthened period of time, insure the attachment of higher importance to the good to be enjoyed, than the labour to be done. That such has been the case in our own Establishment, the very phraseology to which we have

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adverted, is ample proof. Through this crack, the truth undesignedly leaks out, that the main object

thought of in our national church, is not due provision for the flock, but for the clergy. And they being in most instances nominees of the aristocracy, we are taught to account for the extraordinary zeal exhibited by our legislators in all ecclesiastical affairs. They obtain a substantial *quid pro quo*.

There is a vast difference between giving pay to duty, and giving duty to pay. The first arrangement involves the necessity of obtaining as large an amount of labour as the salary will admit of—the last, as little labour as the salary will require. The one puts duty first—the other, pay. The former may sometimes unreasonably contract the stipend—the latter invariably cuts down employment to the lowest amount demanded by law. The history of our Establishment is but a continuous series of illustrations of this last remark. Its tendency has ever been to seek an augmentation of revenues, and silently to reconcile with law a diminution of responsibilities. Upon the pecuniary side there is a perpetual encroachment—upon the labour side, as regular a falling away. The zeal of the clergy seldom adds to what they have *to do*—always adds to what they have *to gain*.

And it is not a little curious that in the storms and troubles of the church, when danger impends over her, and alarm for her safety smites the hearts of her children—it is very curious that *that* is always considered the proper time “to speak out” on the question of

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property. “*The church is in danger!*” The watchword flies through the kingdom, and up start her sons in her defence. Their zeal is inflamed—their courage is excited—invincible determination begins to manifest itself in the camp of the Christians militant; and it is right that it should be so. But then, when, according to their representation, truth and religion are ready to expire, they are counting their gold, and amusing us with histories of ecclesiastical revenues. “The church! they shout, and we see them defending

nothing but their *income*. "A crisis is arrived—a crisis in the spiritual interests of the world"—and they occupy themselves in proving that their *property* is sacred. This is a singular chapter in church history, and might lead some arrogant upstarts, who will be wise above what is written, to infer that "church," translated into vernacular language, means "livings," "golden stalls," "episcopal revenues," and the like. Perhaps, however, the upstarts might not be far from truth.

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VIII.

PRIESTISM.

Few words will suffice to put us in possession of the whole mystery of priestism. It is the first-born child of worldliness and hypocrisy. The end of its being is wealth and power—the means by which it works are religious pretences. It is a natural, perhaps we may add, a necessary ally of aristocracy. It is spiritual machinery constructed to work out temporal ends. It is in exact contrast with true religion. The aim of the latter is to make the present subservient to the future—the former uses the future with a view to the present. The scope of the one is beyond the limits of time—that of the other within them. Religion teaches us to make the world a stepping-stone to heaven—priestism makes heaven a stepping-stone to the world.

Priestism shows itself under three different aspects according to the several stages of its development. Its

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natural growth is after this order—wealth first, then security, and in its matured manhood absolute supremacy.

They whose business it is to interpret to their fellow-men the will of the Creator, whose profession is

supposed to put them in close and frequent contact with the invisible, whose lives are thought to have been spent in exploring the awful *arcana* of another world, and who assume to guide the ignorant to immortality, necessarily acquire an influence over the mind more authoritative than any other which man can wield on earth. This influence, systematically employed to obtain wealth, is priestism in the freshness of its youth. The scene of its operations must of necessity be laid in the darker ages of society. Its plan is to corrupt truth—to invent fables and gild them over with supernal sanctions—to play off these inventions upon man's natural reverence for the unseen—to worry the conscience with superstitions—to fill the mind with high notions of the power possessed by the priesthood to confer, happiness after death—and having by means of human guilt and human credulity established despotic dominion over man's reason and his will, to ply every artifice upon its victims, when near enough to the tomb to catch a glimpse of the horror of darkness which dwells within. This is the auspicious hour of priestism. It waves its wand—exercises its enchantments—despatches sinners to ever, lasting felicity, and picks up the gold which they were compelled to leave behind them. History informs us

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that priestism, in this its youthful period, was not only assiduous, but sagacious. It invariably selected for its purposes those leeches of the human race which had sucked the blood of others until plethora had exhausted the powers of reason—and at the nick of time they sprinkled upon the consciences of the poor wretches the salt of their traditions, when immediately they disgorged their wealth and died.

Priestism growing rich looks about for security. It must entrench itself, its pretensions, its ghostly authority, its enormous wealth behind the lines of civil law. And cunningly has it done its work. We will not attempt in this place, to track its tortuous

path, but rather glance at its present position in our own country. We take the church of England as a fair specimen. What does that church present to us for observation? A system of doctrine stamped with the seal of the civil magistrate, as authoritative and divine. A hierarchical construction which gathers up, through several gradations of office, all the mass of influence which resides in the clergy, and puts it under, the management of one head. An order of men, claiming the sole right of giving instruction in spiritual affairs. A provision for their maintenance, exacted directly or indirectly from every subject of the realm. The throne bound by oath to protect ecclesiastical temporalities. Civil law so intertwined with priestly authority, that the one can hardly exist apart from the other. Through all the pores of government priestism has insinuated itself—rendering the whole framework

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of society rigid and inflexible; a gradual adaptation of our institutions to our wants becomes impossible, and every change endangers the existence of the body politic. This is the inevitable result of a state-church. When the magistrate declares a body of men vested with his own authority to perform spiritual functions, and exact spiritual obedience, and receive the revenues appropriated to this special use, he submits to be handcuffed by his own creature. Priestism has ever discovered an extreme jealousy of the power it has invoked to guard its emoluments and preserve its honours. It has chained civil government to its own-gun. The powers of the law may be turned against invaders—but cannot be turned against the citadel itself. Corporate officers, magistrates, senators, peers, ministers of state, the sovereign—all are shackled with oaths forbidding them to displace from her position of security the established church. Touch the institutions of the land at a point ever so remote, and with delicacy the most refined, and out rushes priestism, like a spider, to protest against your presumption.

Talk about enlarging the liberties of men, civil, commercial, or religious, and priestism takes instant alarm, lest ecclesiastical wealth or ecclesiastical exclusiveness should be laid open to a successful inroad. Worldly substance obtained and preserved by spiritual pretences constitutes the *summum bonum* of priestism—to take the first is sacrilege—to question the last is infidelity. Intelligence is doing much to weaken the law defences of priestism. Time is filling in its moats and

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crumbling its walls. Already men talk aloud of leveling the fortification with the ground. But when did human nature, placed in an artificial position of superiority, ever resign it without a struggle? If the authority of the magistrate is found unequal to the task of guarding the privileges and wealth of the clergy, they are not the men to yield up their post, until every means have been tried to secure it. Why not boldly laugh at the title they enjoy from the hand of the civil power, and forge a higher one—a title from Heaven? There are fools enough in the world to be gulled by impudent pretensions—minds of feeble fibre, which cannot stand upright alone, and which cling to priestism as a support against the doubts which they are not strong enough to resist. This is the last resort of priestism—to assume a divine commission, and place itself above the magistrate who has nursed it into power. The honours, the wealth, the authority of the church must not be given up, at all events—and if law becomes too weak to secure them, another mode of defence must be superadded. Accordingly we have Puseyism—apostolical succession, the supremacy of the church, and all their cognate assumptions and absurdities. It is simply priestism calling down fire from heaven to protect its worldly possessions. It is a very old thing under a new guise. With all the art bestowed upon it to make it look like religion, it smells of the earth, earthy. What now is the end of it? The

gratification of human lust of power. What one benefit is it intended to work out? To raise the clergy

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above the position of humanity and make them demigods. To put understanding, conscience, affections, will—all that makes man, man, into the hands of a body of proud, self-seeking priests, to be moulded and kneaded into the shape found to be most consistent with their designs.

Here, then, we have another phase of evil under which a state-church presents itself to a philosophical inquirer. It is only for the church to set apart for the enjoyment of a spiritual order of men, a mass of property which they may regard as theirs, and not only will the retention of the property become the uppermost consideration with them, but their invention will be put to the rack, to surround it on every hand with barriers which may repel encroachment. They will wrap up the treasure in every fold of religious assumption, be it ever so ridiculous. They will aim to place themselves above law, above reason, above opinion. They will magnify office, to which salary and dignity are annexed, to such gigantic dimensions as to throw character into a seeming of perfect insignificance. There is no blasphemy too daring, no assumption too impious for them to practise in order to this end. The last stage of priestism exhibits its advocates as believing their own lie, and sincerely setting themselves, under the influence of a strong delusion, to "do God service," by trampling upon every principle of revelation, and reversing every dictate of common sense. The evil spirit may seize upon good as well as upon evil men—and the church under their sanction become nothing

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more than the sanctuary of pretensions, which the understanding rejects with scorn, and the depository of wealth which carries with it not a single historical association but that of unmixed depravity.

Such, viewing it philosophically, is the necessary result of setting apart a fixed and ample provision for religious instruction, and authorising an order of men who shall be permitted to enjoy it. The provision becomes the end; priestism, or religious pretence, becomes the means to the end—and he must be little skilled in human nature, who does not expect that the provision will speedily be surrounded by an environment of superstition, arrogance, impiety, and intolerance such as under ordinary circumstances would appear impossible.

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IX.

RELIGION BY PROXY.

To do by the instrumentality of another what is irksome to one's self—to indulge the hopes of religion without incurring the necessity of submitting to its restraints—to be relieved from the obligation of investigating with care the claims of truth, of personally communing with it from day to day, until the mind becomes assimilated to it in loveliness and purity, and of governing the conduct by its spirit and its laws, without being exposed to the risk of forfeiting its rewards—to be possessed of a passport to a happy immortality which allows those who have it to saunter thither through any bye-ways that may suit their pleasure, and in any company that may suit their taste—is what human nature both approves and loves. That species of religion will find most abettors in this world the business of which can be transacted by proxy—and where men can devolve their main duties to Heaven

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upon a paid agent authorised to undertake them on their behalf, they will ordinarily be content to put up with many evils, and bear considerable expense, arising out of an arrangement so convenient to themselves. Hence

the success, in all ages, of priestism, which is a system of mediation between man and his Maker, the purport of which is to reconcile the Supreme Governor to us without laying us under the necessity of reconciling ourselves to Him—by which, in short, rebels may continue rebels, and yet secure for themselves the fruits of obedience.

Religion begins in thought, in consideration. To inquire who He is who made us, what relation He sustains to us, and what are His will and purposes with regard to our conduct here and our destiny hereafter, is the first duty we owe to the Universal Ruler. And that system which professes to ease us from the labour and anxiety of sincere investigation, which places us in a position out of which spring simultaneously a duty and a crime unknown to reason or to revelation—the duty of submitting to be thought for, the crime of thinking for ourselves—must be regarded as a somewhat unphilosophical means to an end. A state-church does this. Wherever national religion exists, wherever there is an establishment, he who moots the question, “What is the truth?” and who essays to exercise his faculties in answering it, becomes *ipso facto* a sinner and an excommunicate. This it is the business of the priesthood to settle—say rather, the business of the state acting on behalf of the priesthood. To in-

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quire is to dissent; and dissent, whether tolerated or not, is an offence, a daring offence, against constituted authorities. They who labour to ascertain what is the divine will are, in fact, superseding that more important inquiry—what is the will of the church. Consistent members of the Establishment are bound to reserve their thinking powers exclusively for worldly purposes—in religion these faculties are to be strings in the hands of the clergy by which the puppet souls of churchmen are to be moved mechanically into the attitude of faith. The state has said, “This is truth.” The state clergy are bound by oath, and receive their

pay, to repeat after the state, "This is truth"—and it becomes the primary duty of every subject of the realm to adopt the declaration without preliminary investigation, and blindly assent to the assertion, "This is truth."

The religion which begins in delegating to others the right of thought, and delivering up reason bound hand and foot into the power of the clergy, will end in transferring also to them the duties to which thought would lead and upon which judgment would decide. Let a mass of property be set apart by authority for the exclusive enjoyment of a certain order of men, and with an ostensible view to the accomplishment of certain purposes, and it is hard if these men do not find out an exclusive title to their possessions, and prove themselves able, and alone able, to answer the design originally contemplated. The end annexed to the pay is to make the country a Christian country. The men

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who receive the pay recognise their obligation to fulfil the conditions of the bargain, and to *do* what the state declares ought to be done. Well! they constitute themselves the sole apostolic church of Christ on earth. They only have a right to be quite certain that they have the body and blood of Christ to give to the people. The members of other churches may perchance find mercy—but the members of their church are sure of it without a shadow of a shade of doubt. The services of the church are valid only as conducted by themselves—the sacraments dispensed by them must be efficacious. Under their mediation it is quite impossible for souls to miscarry. The baptism they administer, the absolution they pronounce, the various offices they perform, are alone valid and successful—and of course *they are* both successful and valid. All this it is necessary to assume and to assert, in order to make out a sole right to the endowment. Not that the state expressly requires thus much—but that public opinion, which exerts an influence over the state, must

be persuaded to this extent, in order to secure the stability of an institution felt to be so onerous. The people would hardly be content to tolerate all the mischiefs, social and political, perpetrated by priestism unless they were satisfied that priestism would carry them safely to heaven. It becomes, consequently, a matter, not of expediency merely, but of necessity, to assert on behalf of priestism that it may confidently be trusted—that it possesses all the qualifications necessary to insure triumphant success.

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But mark the effect which all this must have upon the members of the national church. So long as they are submissive—think nothing but what they are told to think—question nothing which they are taught to believe, and avail themselves without scruple of priestly services, the same having been duly paid for—what more is religion to them? Anything beyond this—any effort to lay open the heart to the purifying influence of right views of the character and government of God, is sheer methodism and cant. Does not a man become a Christian in virtue of his membership of the national church? Is not the notion of fitting one's self for heaven by the cultivation of spiritual virtue an imputation upon the efficacy of sacraments, an impudent intermeddling with what belongs to the clergy, a piece of Pharisaic arrogance which sober-minded men should avoid? The monarch, the nobility, the magistracy, the gentry, and all the respectability and worth of the country—are they not all members of the Establishment? Can any man, not puffed up with intolerable conceit, doubt their Christianity, or affect fears as to their ultimate safety? Have they been encouraged at any time to pay any further personal attention to religion, than a becoming submission to established rites? And has the church ever intimated doubts respecting them? Who are we, that the same passport which franks them through should not suffice for us?

When we are told that but for a settled and authorised provision for the clergy religion would speedily die out of the land, we are constrained to ask, what kind of

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religion lives in it, as the fruit of this provision? Root out from the land all that dissent has done without the pale of the state-church, and by a reflex influence, within it, and what remains? A nation called christian, baptised christian, confirmed christian, be-rited christian—and that is all. The brutality of popular tastes, the dishonesty of trading habits, the licentiousness of aristocratic propensities—what counteracting influence did the church ever bring to bear upon these? How much has she ever done to discountenance war, or to rebuke oppression, or to diffuse intelligence, or to promote social harmony and order? What one great moral principle, once despised but now receiving universal homage, owes its exaltation to the labours of the state-paid clergy? What new sources of pure and refined enjoyment have these men ever opened to the various classes of the empire? The religion which it most conduces to their interest to promote, is a religion by proxy—which leaves them to settle accounts with Heaven, and permits to the laity an indulgence of all the hopes of Christianity, apart from submission to its claims upon their loyalty. A state-church necessitates a grand imposture—upon the members of it, it produces a carelessness about spiritual religion, but one remove from open infidelity. Fashionable Christianity is accommodating to fashionable tastes—and ritualism supersedes both purity of morals and earnestness of faith.

Could we but trace the history of our Establishment, and mark its influence upon national character, we

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should find that against deep, intelligent, self-denying piety, it has always set its face as a flint. Hollow formality, confident reliance upon empty and frivolous

rites, and an exaggerated notion of the prerogatives of the priesthood—all tending the same way, namely, to secure the church in the possession of her revenues, have in all times been the natural fruits growing out of the establishment of religion. Thus it always has been—thus it still is—and thus it will ever continue to be, whilst human nature remains the same. A stated provision for the clergy will insure the diffusion of a spurious Christianity, adapted at once to hold fast the money, and to please the general tastes of the people by whom that money is furnished. All Establishments lag behind the spirit of the times—and attack opinion more fiercely than vice. He who said “dissent was a more heinous crime than drunkenness,” did but speak out what his brethren think, but have not courage to avow. In the eye of a state-church, immorality and general licentiousness of manners are trifles—thoughts, language, and conduct which expose clerical pretensions, or tend to defeat clerical rapacity, constitute the worst of sins. A churchman may have a religion without either morals or piety—a saint in whom both shine pre-eminently, unless he be a churchman, is practically held to have no religion at all. The former is sure of heaven—if the latter ever reach it, it will be peradventure.

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X.

TOLERATION.

“Whereas we, king, lords, and commons, invested with office to manage the civil affairs of this kingdom, have thought fit to assume authority in matters ecclesiastical—and whereas we have decided in three different ways, on three several occasions, what is the only acceptable mode of worshipping the Creator—and whereas all persons, whether persuaded thereto by reason or Scripture, offering to Almighty God sincere homage after such sort as they believe Him to require, and not

after the form prescribed by us, deserve persecution, and have been heretofore exposed to it in every variety of shape—but, whereas public opinion renders it now unsafe so far to indulge the natural yearnings of our authorised priesthood as to hunt, imprison, maim, and slaughter men on account of their religious faith—we, king, lords, and commons, taking into consideration the peril to which our authority is laid open, and being mercifully disposed to bear with the infirmities of the

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weak, of our own clemency permit all subjects of this realm to approach God in worship in such manner as they believe to be prescribed by Him in His own word, all pecuniary dues having been paid to the established clergy, and all dissenting ministers and chapels having been licensed by our authority.”

Such is the toleration act translated out of legal verbosity into the vernacular. Priestism having a large stake dependent upon the suppression of dissent had set upon it civil authority, much after the fashion of experienced dog-fighters—now shouting, then hissing, pinching the animal’s tail to rouse his spirit, rolling in the dust with him, and blowing into his nostrils to preserve his wind—until civil authority, fearful of being worsted in the encounter, left go its hold, and allowed dissent, on certain specified conditions, to walk in the same yard, and breathe the same atmosphere, and pick up his living as best he might. A dissenter, therefore, is a man licensed by law to have a conscience in all things pertaining to religion, save the pecuniary support of a creed he disapproves of—one to whom a ticket of admission has been given by the state into the presence of the Supreme through the door of truth—one whose efforts to spread abroad correct views of Christianity, or views of whose correctness he has an enlightened conviction, the civil magistrate graciously puts up with—winks at—might punish if he would, but will not—in a word, one

chartered by a joint-stock religious company enjoying a patent monopoly, to listen for himself to that mes-

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sage which infinite love has addressed to man in common, and to respond to it in such manner as his judgment and his heart may dictate. Happy dissenter!

If our civil rulers, in the overflowings of their clemency, had proclaimed their consent that Englishmen should breathe the atmosphere which engirdles our globe, or enacted by law that men might walk in the light of God's sun, he would have proved himself an abject and mean-spirited slave who felt not sensible of the degradation, and whose spirit within him was not roused to fling back with contempt and scorn the insulting permission. More monstrous, however, is the assumption implied in the grant of religious toleration. That men, under the protection of laws enacted by themselves through the medium of their representatives, can give utterance in their own language and manner to their inmost thoughts of the Being who made them—that they can look without molestation upon the bright orb of truth, and bow themselves in reverential adoration—they are held indebted to the grace of Queen Victoria, and of the assembled Waterfords and Sibthorpes, who constitute the upper and nether Houses of Parliament. In this country religion is subject to similar restraints as wine and ardent spirits—and no man must dispense spiritual instruction to his neighbours, even *gratis*, without a government permit. Dissenting houses of worship are licensed by law, and dissenters themselves have tacitly and by implication taken out a legal grant to do what God has bidden them.

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It is difficult to characterise this assumption by the state in terms sufficiently expressive of abhorrence. The arrogance and impiety of it are well nigh without parallel in the history of our race. Men, for the

most part profoundly ignorant of Christianity and heedless of its claims upon their obedience, raised by the artificial construction of society a trifling degree above the level of their fellows, take upon themselves to keep the portals of eternal truth. Over mind—bearing the image of the invisible, clothed with immortality, the springs of which lie concealed in depths impenetrable by mortal vision, and all the movements of which are shrouded in silence and in mystery—rude, frivolous, and overbearing statesmen assume the right of dominion—give their permission to thought to roam at large within the regions of the spiritual world, and allow God to receive such homage as human hearts, smitten with fear of his Majesty and with admiration of his character, are prompted to offer him. Yes! they, in their condescension, are pleased to tolerate the approach of worshipers to His throne in forms which themselves have not devised, and not to inflict pains and penalties, as they might do, upon such as proclaim to others, truths respecting Him which have not been stamped with their authority. Doubtless the Master of the spiritual kingdom is under great obligations to these His creatures for so striking a proof of their forbearance; and they to whom this dispensation is granted to comply with his demands, are bound in duty and in gratitude meekly to use

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their liberty, and submissively to kiss the hand which might thrust them back from the divine presence, but does not.

Toleration carries within it the true germ of a state-church. Analyse it, and you will find the first principles of the theory of national religion. Unfold it, and you will discover, wrapped up within, the right of one man to punish another man for presuming to have a conscience of his own. It is a legal claim to the fee simple of persecution. It is a confession that men ought not to be molested in the exercises of their religious faith, conjoined with an assertion that the state ought

to have the power to molest them. It is arrogance blushing to enforce its own demands, and yet reserving to itself authority to make them—professing to allow what it declares it would be wickedness to prevent—assuming the character of a fiend whilst it decries the acts of a fiend—condemning the sin of which it claims the right to be the perpetrator. Toleration is persecution *in posse*—the dead seed, which when quickened grows up to the “holy inquisition.” It is a crystallisation of the cruelty of the star-chamber. Men talk of persecution as though it were legally annihilated in these realms. Simpletons! it has only passed into another shape. Instead of being diffused in act it is solidified into a right, for the purpose of more convenient preservation. Not one essential property of it is changed, for they who permit men to worship God are exercising the self-same authority as they who forbid them; and whether they

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tolerate or persecute, they equally usurp dominion over man's religious faith.

The ultimate substratum, then, upon which a state-church is based is the right of persecution. This is the solid rock upon which the whole superstructure rests. Apart from this it could not exist. It may be, as many of its advocates affirm of the church of England, as though in bitter irony, the most tolerant church on the face of the earth. No matter! Its tolerancy is but the milder modification of the right to persecute, if so it should be inclined. All the ridiculous eulogies upon its sparing exercise of its power are but so many protests against the power itself. What should we think of a man who was perpetually observing of his friend, “He never steals;” or, anxious to extol his generosity, said, wherever he went, “He lets every man remain in quiet possession of his own?” Well! and what then? Is there anything so very remarkable in common honesty that it needs to be thus bespattered with praise? What is a tolerant church? A

church that does not avail itself of its power to torture the bodies of men whose souls it cannot command. O! then, the power is there, and the right is there, and it is the supreme excellence of the church of England that with such power and such right she permits the existence of any other church whatever. We are much obliged to the venerable matron for not being so wicked as she claims the right to be. We now learn from the very commendations of her own sons that she has authority the disuse of which is her chief virtue;

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and we are constrained to remark, that what it is so honourable not to use, it would be equally honourable not to have.

The question now occurs whether, in a philosophical view, that can be the wisest means to promote religion which involves the assumption of a right which religion repudiates. In order to make men Christians, is it or is it not best to begin by making ourselves worse than infidels? Can no better method be found of advancing truth than that of impersonating an imposture and a lie? We are simple enough to believe that like begets like—and that a church which must tolerate is in a false position. A formal alliance between Christianity and persecution, whether *in posse* or *in esse*, is an attempt to amalgamate light and darkness. Where the one is, there the other cannot remain.

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XI.

MORAL EFFECTS OF TOLERATION.

Between domesticated animals and those of the same species who live in a state of nature, a wide difference is clearly discernible. Creatures seen as originally moulded by the hand of the Maker exhibit a fulness and perfection of beauty which we look for in vain when man has modified them to his wants. The wild horse

of the prairie and the gentleman's hack are in all essential features of their being the same—but we should never think of putting the one in comparison with the other. In fleetness, in courage, in freedom of action, in exuberance of spirit and elasticity of tread, the former elicits admiration from all observers, skilled or unskilled in the mysteries of the turf. There is fire in his eye—there is freedom in his flaunting mane—glory is in his nostrils—“his neck is clothed with thunder”—and every feature, limb, pace, movement, habitude, is expressive of the unsubdued, joyous, bound-

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ing spirit which dwells within. Look now at the domesticated animal! Look at him when he feels the hand and the power of his master—when his will is forced upon him from without, instead of springing up spontaneously from within. That he may retain mettle enough to make him a very useful beast, is not denied. But his drooping head and his down-hanging tail, his mechanical regularity of movement and sober straightforwardness of pace, denote the change which has passed upon him, and indicate that he has no great surplus of spirit to waste in gamesomeness. He is under authority and he knows it.

Toleration has domesticated dissenters. Run a line through history at the period of the passing of the toleration act, and you may observe the strange difference there is between man, asserting religious freedom as his birthright, and enjoying it on sufferance. On which side of that line do we find the richest specimens of moral dignity, of high nobility of soul, of unimpeachable integrity of purpose, of solid religious worth? There was about the old nonconformists a frank openness of manner, a calm consciousness of power, an indignant repudiation of artifice, a cool imperturbability of nerve, an unostentatious and matter-of-course devotedness to principle, which those who most hated them could not but admire. They walked about like men who were no strangers to self-respect.

They carried themselves erect—their step was firm—they looked into the faces of their fellow-men with steady gaze, and dared to frown upon wickedness

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however bedizened with this world's pomp. No one mistook them—no man could despise them—none suspected them to be other than they seemed. Soul looked out from their venerable countenances, beamed in their writings, and animated their deeds.

Toleration—accepting permission to worship God—has wonderfully domesticated us. There is a superloyalty about dissenters in the present day, an exuberance—we may say a rankness—of respect to the powers that be—a scrambling forwardness to profess homage—a sensitive reluctance to offend—a little compact ambition to behave as respectable, well-trained, gentlemanly, members of society, which mark them as under conscious obligations for being allowed to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. They shun nothing so much as making a noise about their principles. Theirs is the *ne plus ultra* of passivity of spirit. They lick the hand which smites them, and crouch and whine at the feet of those who kick them. In their own exclusive circles how magnanimously they can talk of their inalienable rights—and yet no sooner does a state dignitary come amongst them than they button up, in all imaginable haste, their rights in their pockets, and look as confused as though they had been guilty of some crime. Should any one of their number venture to speak out and tell truth offensive to ears polite, all the rest look down upon the ground, inwardly approve, and outwardly say, “Fie!” They are just like poor relations living upon the cold charity of a well-off uncle—half obsequiously

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ness, half irritability—in conduct very meek, in disposition somewhat sly—who seldom speak above a

whisper, and interweave with every sentence twice the average number of the usual terms of respect—in whom there is waging incessantly, but unnoticed, a conflict between desire and habit—desire to assert independence, and habit of subservience; who feel that they belong to nobody, not even to themselves—and gradually sink down into a tacit admission that they were born to be snubbed, to eat their victuals on sufferance, and to wear the cast-off clothes of the legitimate members of the family.

Nor is this striking contrast between the nonconformists of the present day, and those who lived anterior to toleration, a mere adventitious result. It is clearly the effect produced upon character by position. Persecution drove our forefathers to take their stand upon the rights of manhood. Hunted, pillaged, pilloried, imprisoned, they hugged those rights more closely to the bosom. They stood up in the native dignity of man, and offered their worship to their Creator, whether the state permitted or forbade—offered, because they *would*, not because they *might*. Every impulse within them was high and honourable—every habit of mind cherished, and every act performed, was but the bodying forth of that inward consciousness of worth and independence, which belongs to man as endowed with immortality. They would have no one stand between them and Heaven. They would enter the spiritual temple by what portal they judged most fitting,

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though the way to it were crowded with perils. They would take counsel of their consciences only, and in their religious capacity acknowledge no superior. Toleration placed dissenters in a different position. The obstacles to their free access to the world of faith were removed, and any man might go up having in his possession a government permit. But to do or to be anything on sufferance is degrading. It involves our own acquiescence in inferiority. We cannot escape from the feeling that our position is one of unmixed little-

ness. We are *endured*, and therefore there is no scope for our assertion of inalienable right—we are *only* endured, and this cannot consist with cheerful self-respect. What is the inevitable consequence? All around us there exists a stagnant and oppressive atmosphere of contempt. The point on which we stand does not lift us above it. We cannot escape it—we breathe it daily. In the primitive age of Christianity, at the reformation, and during the years of puritan persecution, the moral heroism of the devout elevated them far above simple derision. With us, moral heroism is impossible, and we go about the world with a label on our backs, on which nothing more is written than the word “Fool.” Nobody hinders us, we may walk, where we please—but the brand is upon us, and we cannot forget it. We become ashamed of ourselves—ashamed of our principles—and look, and speak, and act as though we were ordained to be despised, and have made our calling sure.

Hence, too, the struggle for religious freedom has

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lost its chief charms. When the ground of contention involved the natural rights of man, considered in his relationship to the Author of his being, there was something noble in it, something which might inspire the heart with enthusiasm. But now our efforts are directed to the “removal of grievances.” The poor relations, mentioned above, might feel and command respect, in claiming to be recognised as branches of the family and treated with becoming honour as such—but if, waiving all notice on this head, they mutinied only for more bread and butter, they would not be likely to awaken much sympathy. This is the case of dissenters. That aggressive policy which aims at the overthrow of assumptions which place them in a position of utter degradation, they eschew. Meanwhile, they carry up to the master and mistress of the house, their beloved and ever honoured hosts, a respectful remonstrance that they are not allowed enough

liberty—and should any one of the family clique but hint that in his judgment their complaint is reasonable, forthwith they commence a series of profound courtesies, which he who receives them cannot but loathe, and they who offer them cannot but feel to be insincere and hollow.

The evil, unfortunately, does not stop here. It penetrates and permeates social and private character. There is amongst dissenters a more general and characteristic absence of manliness than amongst any other great body of British citizens. In reference to their distinctive principles, they too generally sail as

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near the wind as possible—not absolutely denying them, but seldom displaying any generous warmth in their defence. And a habit of evasion once formed, operates in more respects than one—so that it has become a matter of course to designate an act of shuffling as a “presbyterian trick.”

We take no pleasure in thus portraying modern dissenterism. We have no desire to cast reproach upon the men. We say they have been made what they are by toleration; and that any other men in a like position would have inevitably been cast in the same mould. The object we have in view is to illustrate the mischief of a state-church. If it do not persecute, it must tolerate—and toleration, brought to bear upon men in possession of the noblest principles, gradually and insensibly works out a deterioration of character, for which no gain can be held an adequate compensation. Upon dissenters, as well as upon the clergy and the members of the Establishment, the alliance between things secular and religious is productive of the most pernicious results—and this not perchance, but in the chain of natural sequence.

XII.

DRUGGED AND DROWSY VOLUNTARYISM.

Voluntaryism is an ugly and hybrid word, with Latin head and shoulders, and Grecian tail, used in these modern days to denote what in Saxon-English we should call willinghood, in reference to the support of religion. Both the term and the thing have been treated with contempt.. Whatever of reproach may justly attach to the term, one can hardly see why that which it is coined to represent should be regarded with supercilious scorn. There is surely nothing so remarkably peculiar about Christianity, as to render it a despicable thing the moment it becomes associated with a willing heart. What a man does in obedience to the promptings of his own will, he is usually thought to do quite as well, if not better, than what he does upon compulsion. We never heard that freemen in the West Indies, employed in cultivating their own plots of ground, were regarded as mere mischievous

visionaries, because they were not driven to their work by the lash of the cart-whip. In that vast portion of religious work which has already been done in this country to educate, to humanise, and to christianise its inhabitants, by men not obliged thereto by the law of the land, but simply by the higher and stronger law of conscience, we discern small occasion for simpering derision. In the department of spiritual effort, is willinghood nothing but a dream?—and are all the forms of active benevolence in which it has substantialised itself, worthy only of the cold sneers of priestism? Sneer on, you who contend that an educated and respectable clergy can only be maintained by a compulsory provision, and that the support of religion by the willinghood of religious men is a scheme of

spiritual Quixotry. Adopting your interpretation of the terms employed, you are doubtless right—for the voluntary principle, we believe, has very little concern in maintaining you or your shriveled forms of -Christianity.

See now, what religious willinghood has done even in this country. How many valuable results have been worked out which the law did not compel men so much as to intend? To the efficacy of what enactment recorded in the statute-book are we to trace that deep concern to vitalise religion which, just a century ago, startled and terrified a sleeping Establishment? The myriads of Sunday-schools which, if they do nothing more, scratch up the surface of a virgin soil before trampled down and neglected, rendering it

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capable of receiving some of the seeds of truth—what legal authority coerced them into being? Chapels, which though too few for the wants of our British population, are yet, taken in the gross, a vast number—by what tax was the amount produced, necessary to defray the expense of their erection? And the ten thousand ministers of various denominations, who proclaim week by week their several views of revelation and its bearing upon the duties and destiny of mankind—how do they find support? What! is all this to be regarded as pure unmixed evil and absurdity, because, forsooth, they who have done these things did them of their own mind, and were not compelled thereto by act of parliament? They are egregious triflers who say this—fops, who have yet to learn that there is within man's heart a power which, when evoked by religion, beggars their own parchment-begotten power, as the will which moves the muscle of the living man does, the galvanism which convulses that of the dead one.

And the elasticity of religious willinghood is just in proportion to the necessity which calls it forth. Unless it be drugged with a lie, it will then move

most energetically when the greatest weight of resistance is to be overcome. Like every mental power it strengthens by exercise, and like every mental power, disuse not merely enervates, but ultimately destroys it. Priestism tells us, that were religion left to the sole care of voluntarism, Christianity would quickly die, and infidelity worse than heathenism would over-

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spread the land. Strange confession this! Three hundred years has well-paid protestant priestism been at work within the narrow area of these kingdoms, professedly to bring our people under subjection to God's truth. During the whole of this time it has clamoured against those who out of a willing heart have helped to do its work. And up to this moment, judged by its own declaration, it has not only failed to diffuse amongst all classes a genial affection for Christianity, but has not succeeded so far as to make men willing to bear the expense of divine worship. Within this little isle, in which already half the means of grace are provided by the good will of the people, there is not sufficient persuasive influence in the church of England to prevail upon the richest aristocracy in the world, for whose especial benefit, too, this church is maintained, to provide the other half. She has made the people Christian, but she has not made them willing to make a single sacrifice for Christianity's sake. What a sublime height of piety must that be, which a national provision for the clergy is fitted to produce, which after three centuries' incessant operation, has not got within sight even of a voluntary maintenance of public worship and ministration!

But if priestism has not called into play sufficient sympathy with divine truth to enlist its willing support of the forms in which it is thought to be embodied, there is one thing it has done most effectually. It has frowned anger, and spit contempt, and palmed delusion upon religious willinghood so long and so incessantly,

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that within the precincts of a state-church, even that has become well nigh nerveless and flabby. Were this whole population left to downright, positive, palpable ignorance—were its want and woe left in their own naked deformity to meet the eye of compassion—were spiritual destitution not concealed behind the screen of baptised nominalism—and were human pravity suffered to harden into its own natural forms, instead of being made to run into artificial forms which wear the semblance of a christian church—would all the earnest Christianity of this country regard it unmoved, and consent to let it be? Whatever there is of willing piety in the land (and all other piety is a contradiction) would it not put forth its strength at the call of so imperative a necessity? Mark how even now it yearns to be at work, and, half deluded, half frightened, by the impostures of priestism, turns from this *christian* country to rescue the millions who remain heathens without a christian name!

Aye! the sympathies of voluntarism, if such we must call it, are, as far as this nation is concerned, oppressed and paralysed by a lie. Capricious! Inefficient! Why, what will not religious principle do when broad awake, when not lulled by the fumes of an opiate thrust down its throat by a state-church, jealous for its property? What has it not done? Within the Establishment and without it, what one great result has been produced of which it was not the author? And in producing it, religious principle has invariably acted in obedience to its own heaven-born impulses, not in

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obedience to parchment law. Take away this state-made church, and how much of true christian willingness do you destroy? None! No! But the blow which severed the alliance between church and state would sherd off all that thick coating of paint with which priestism has concealed the religious destitution

of the land, and lay bare to inspection the rottenness of those assumptions which have been wont to pass for pillars of the truth. Voluntaryism would find it has a great work to do *at home*, and would gird up its loins to perform it. It would awake from a dream—a false, fond dream—and stretch itself for downright earnest work. Priestism has half persuaded it that it is not wanted here—but that imposture having been exposed, it would shape its plans, and enter upon its enterprise according to the magnitude of the country's need.

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XIII.

ABSENTERS.

“The poor man's church!” This is the favourite descriptive title of our national establishment. Where she picked it up is a matter of small consequence. Certain it is, that she piques herself upon her exclusive right to the designation, parades it in the senate, and smirkingly sets it off in the palace. Herein she exhibits no uncommon trait of human nature. A sensitive jealousy for our reputation, in regard to precisely those qualifications in which we are most deficient, is proverbial. The scholar, erudite beyond all living competitors, has been known to cherish a more restless anxiety to make good his pretensions to horsemanship than to learning, and grave divines will occasionally be better pleased with a compliment upon the graceful shape of their legs, than upon the success with which they have grasped apparently unmanageable truths, and the eloquent power with which they

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have wielded them. In such cases, neither the horsemanship nor the legs are above mediocrity—and, by a sort of sliding scale, concern for men's favourable estimate of them rises just in proportion as they sink, and is then most eager when they are most ridiculous.

So the richest and most aristocratic church in "all this world" assumes the title of "the poor man's church;" and although, of all classes of society, the poor are least affected by her ministrations, and least affect them, nothing chagrins her more than to question the validity of her pretensions in this matter.

Doubtless she ought to be, what she is so anxious to secure the reputation of being. That vast provision set apart by this nation for the support of the clergy—those innumerable cares and difficulties which the maintenance of the Establishment devolves upon the state—that discontent which favouritism is sure to engender in the minds of dissentients—that incessant distraction of social peace which compulsory ecclesiastical enactments never failed to produce—the arrogance and sour-mindedness of priestism—the subserviency of character begotten by toleration—the numbness of christian willinghood resulting from a transference of responsibility from individuals to the legislature—these are stupendous sacrifices to make and evils to be incurred, which nothing whatever can justify but the sound and successful religious education of the masses. The working men comprise the great bulk of our population. The aristocracy and the middle classes need no establishment, for they are abundantly

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able to provide religious instruction for themselves. Except for the poor, one cannot see the meaning of so cumbersome, costly, and disagreeable an apparatus of means and appliances. Unless, consequently, this be emphatically a poor-man's church, it is a dead failure—and the continued maintenance of the system is as arrant an imposture as craft ever practised upon credulity. It may be from a secret consciousness of this, that the clergy vociferate this title with a show of angry impatience of dispute, which reveals their fear lest they should be called upon to prove its fitness—it may be from a conviction of what ought to be, that the church

blows its trumpet at the corner of every street, to make men believe that what ought to be, is.

In one sense the clergy are quite correct in designating the Establishment "the poor man's church"—for certainly poor men do much to support it. First of all, a fourth part of the property now enjoyed by the successors in an unbroken line of the apostles, constituted the sacred inheritance of the poor. What, therefore, is so largely enriched, by an unblushing spoliation of the "vested rights" of poverty, may not inaptly be denominated as peculiarly "the poor man's." Then, towards its support the poor man largely contributes. For although, unhappily, there are few cases in which he has a strip of garden to be tithed, every mouth that eats pays heavily to the Establishment, in the enhancement of the price of bread necessarily caused by state-church demands. For nothing is more evident than that the consumer ultimately

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pays the burdens which fall upon the cultivators of the soil. Of these burdens, tithe and poor rates may be considered the bulk. The poor, who are the chief consumers of bread, mainly support this plethoric ecclesiastical corporation. They are robbed in every direction. They had once a sufficient estate to meet their wants—this has been taken from them by our most beneficent Establishment; and to meet the deficiency, a tax under the name of poor-rate is laid upon the bread they eat; and lest they should not be sufficiently interested in an institution to which their whole patrimony has been transferred, a further tax to three times the amount is laid upon the chief article of their subsistence, in the shape of tithe. The money which flows into the coffers of the church seems to come from the agriculturists—just as the water which pours into a neighbouring pond appears to come from the various drains which directly open into it. But in reality the drain is only the contrivance by which moisture may be drawn from the surrounding soil, and the

channel through which it runs—the agriculturists only collect in pence, paid by the poor for bread, the sums transferred by them at the annual tithe audit. Food pays the Establishment, and sustains its burnished dignity—and those who eat most bread ultimately pay most largely towards the expenses of priestism. Not altogether without reason, therefore, is our national church called “the poor man’s church”—for, assuredly, he is the main contributor to its wealth. Of a truth, one would do no great violence to rea-

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son, were he to conclude that the flock thus fleeced by indirect exaction, would be permitted to enjoy unmolested the benefits arising from being penned up within the sacred fold. But no! Bald-headed infancy and simplicity, carried up to the font by sponsors, to be regenerated by water and the sign of the cross, is not allowed to depart without leaving behind it a legal fee. Maternal gratitude, strongly impregnated with superstition, cannot express itself in public assembly without having first deposited its fee. Rustic love cannot contract connubial ties until it has duly paid its fee. Poverty, immured in a workhouse, cannot be spiritually cared for until, by somebody, the fee has been secured. Death itself is not exempt from taxation in “the poor man’s church,” and the rights of sepulture are given only in exchange for a fee. Money—money—money—nothing can be done in this church without money.

Well! what is the issue? This “poor man’s church,” which draws its chief wealth from the hard-earnings of the industrious, is filled with every class of worshipers but the poor. They may enter the church porch without money and without price—and so may the ’squire who sleeps out the service in his well-carpeted and comfortable pew. In this respect both are on a level—but here ends the similarity. The poor man is thrust into the aisle, or takes his place upon the ill-placed benches set apart to desti-

tution. This is all he gets in return for the sacrifices he makes. The poor, therefore, constitute a large

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and numerous sect by themselves. They are not dissenters, but they are almost universally absenters. Few of them care to show themselves in any place of worship. Taught to regard the church of England as the only true church of Christ on earth, and observing that it does little else than fleece and worry the poor, they come to the conclusion that Christianity is but a system of priestcraft, and give themselves up, not to infidelity, for that is positive, but to absenteeism, which is merely negative.

By every kind of evidence which the subject will admit of—by the confessions of the most strenuous advocates of the compulsory system—by statistics which cannot err—by complaints which undesignedly let out the truth—the fact is established beyond all contradiction that “the poor man’s church” has neither gained the confidence, nor won the attachment, nor secured the piety, of the masses. The want of church accommodation does not account for this. In crowded cities there is no excess of attendance—in villages, where every soul in the parish has ample church room, absenters are as numerous in proportion to the whole population, as in towns where churches are too few to contain a tenth part of the people. Be the reason what it may, the experiment has most signally failed. A stated provision for the clergy has turned out anything but a successful method of meeting the spiritual wants of the labouring classes, or of bringing into a temper of loyalty to the Supreme the great bulk of the inhabitants of this land. The whole

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thing is an impudent and very costly pretence—a mode of taxing the poor for the advantage of the rich, under the artful guise of levying upon the rich for the benefit of the poor.

Here then we close this branch of our argument. After an examination of the axiom that "it is the unquestionable duty of the state to provide for the religious instruction of the people"—an examination which, we believe, reduced the proposition to an absurdity, we have attempted to show the effects worked out by the practical application of this maxim, upon the system of revealed truth itself, upon the clergy who proclaim it, upon the members of the Establishment who assent to it, upon the vast body of dissenters who are tolerated by it, upon religious voluntarism, and upon the mass of the poorer inhabitants of this country. And we have seen that the theory of an establishment is not more inconsistent and contradictory, than are the effects of it in all directions disastrous and destructive. As a spiritual institution we are warranted in pronouncing the church of England to be at once a blunder, a failure, and a hoax.

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GROUP THE FOURTH.

THE STATE-CHURCH SEEN IN CONTRAST WITH CHRISTIANITY.

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THE church is often said by the advocates of the compulsory system to be married to the state. The marriage is regarded as a forced one. Religion made law loses all influence beyond law and moulds the actions instead of touching the heart. The gentleness of Christianity is contrasted with the Coarse violence of an establishment. The simplicity of the one is viewed beside the meretricious splendour of the other. The lordship of a state-church is forbidden by Scripture. The whole philosophy of a church is upset by what is called national religion. Christianity is remarkable for its deference to the rights of conscience. A state-church is based on the overthrow of those rights. The first appoints wages to the labourer, the other appoints the labourer to the wages. This last feature of a national church is productive of the fol-

lowing results, That it professes to teach the vanity of this world by means of securing in it vested and inalienable rights and seeks unity by becoming the parent of incessant discord.

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I.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE.

When Constantine proclaimed the bans of matrimony between the secular power and Christianity, the inquiry, had it occurred, would not have been unreasonable, whether the free consent of the latter had been first obtained. And when the civil magistrate, dressed in his gayest, approached the altar to plight his troth and receive the hand of the heavenly maid, what reply, we wonder, would have been given to the question so natural and appropriate under all the circumstances of the case, "Who gives this woman away?" We fear the marriage was a one-sided one—that the bride was never asked "Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?"—that the ceremony so far as she was concerned was a dumb-show, hurried over whilst she was panic-stricken and faint, and that she was borne off by the lusty bridegroom as a sacrifice and not a wife. If so, an imme-

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diately divorce should be promoted—for the consent of both parties is necessary to the validity of marriage.

It may be all very well, and, doubtless, very pious indeed, for the right reverend fathers in God, led on by the Duke of Wellington, to declare that no single duty of the state can be plainer than this, that it should ally itself with the christian church. The boy Jones might imagine himself under a similar obligation to take unto himself to wife, Victoria the First. In this latter case it is just supposable that the duty of the juvenile aspirant after regal honours would be somewhat affected by her Majesty's inclination—and that

upon her manifestation of unequivocal repugnance and disgust at the bare mention of the patronage intended for her, the conscience of the youth would be fully discharged of the guilt of disloyalty, even although he made no further attempt to force his hand upon his beloved sovereign. Should he, however, in defiance of the queen's will, in utter disregard of the disparity subsisting between the two parties, and in innocent but ridiculous unconsciousness of the difference between the tastes, pursuits, habits, affections, and duties of the one and those of the other, persist in believing himself bound by the claims of loyalty to wed his royal mistress—one of two conclusions might be safely drawn, either that the lad's intellects were weak and unsettled, or that his whole being had run into one mould, and could take no other form—an inordinate and morbid appetite for palace cheer.

Holy bishop Blomfield—gentle Philpots—heaven-

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ly-minded Lyndhurst—grave and learned Waterford, together with the combined wisdom and piety which in the upper and lower houses of parliament radiate from stars, crosses, garters, and collars, or repose beneath military and naval uniforms, or settle under the shadow of overhanging wigs, or hide themselves behind silk aprons and shovel hats, may determine that it is the duty of the legislature—that comely body composed of many members—to contract an indissoluble alliance with the church—or, in other words, with the living and embodied Christianity of the land. Be it so. We question not their motives—they are evidently of the purest. All history goes to establish the fact, that the civil powers, in affecting a union with religion, have been swayed by a single and unmixed regard to the welfare of religion—and nothing is more obvious than that, in our own country, and in our own day, nought but affection for Christianity—no selfish, no unworthy passion, prompts our rulers to maintain it uninterrupted. All this may be taken for

granted, or rather may be considered as proved.. Still one might be tempted to surmise that the question "What does Christianity itself say to the union?" is not wholly irrelevant. Surely she is to have a voice in this matter. In an affair so closely identified with her own well-being there is nothing so extremely absurd, that we can perceive, in consulting her will. If, after all, the state be found to be not the man of her choice—if between the two parties there be no natural sym-

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pathy—if religion, speaking through the medium of scripture, plainly say "No," and set forth her hopes, pursuits, objects, as altogether a bar to the proposed alliance—why, then the sensitive consciences of our peers and commons should be considered, we think, relieved of the obligation they had recognised, and the yearnings of their piety might yet find some more becoming mode of expression. If they cannot consistently become legislators for religion, they might perhaps content themselves with being religious legislators.

A truce to banter! Let no one mistake us. If the strain of the preceding remarks savour of irreverence, upon their heads be the responsibility whose deeds can only be fitly represented by such words. If we have resorted to an illustration which would seem to do violence to that chaste and sacred awe with which God's revelation to man ought ever to be regarded, it is that we may bring out into stronger relief the reasonableness, nay, the necessity, of settling this question of a state-church by the dictates of inspired truth. We have no idea of the infallibility of an axiom asserting the propriety of this alliance as a self-evident proposition, without so much as glancing at the authority of the divine word. Whatever the bishops and the clergy may think of it, we must take leave to consult Christianity itself. If it should be found that the genius of that beneficent system abhors a merely nominal submission to its claims, forbids coercion, renounces

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worldly honours, and establishes an authority to which sceptres must reverently bow—if legislation by erring men in matters of religion, even when those men are imbued with unquestionable piety, be distinctly denounced—if a state apparatus for reaching the ends of truth manifestly and necessarily supersede and contravene every distinctive law of the great Head of the church—then, we say, that episcopal axioms, however sustained by pomp, and dressed up in the robes of human authority, are but solemn inanities—frivolous, empty, unreal—a mockery of wisdom—a wretched perversion of sacred things, which every man of common sense and ordinary piety is bound to reject with ineffable scorn and loathing.

Our readers, therefore, will not be displeased, if we now attempt to furnish an answer to the inquiry, “What does Christianity itself say in elucidation of this question of church and state?” We propose to be brief and to the point. We shall address ourselves to the reason of plain men. Assuming that scripture is what it professes to be, and that, being such, its authority must be decisive, it will be our object to obtain from it a response touching the alliance of things sacred and secular, in terms which all men, whether theologians or not, may readily understand. They will then be in a position to determine whether when, in reference to the spiritual ends proposed by it, we declared the Establishment to be a grand imposture, we spoke without adequate

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authority; and to decide for themselves whether a state-church, so far from being a correct representation of Christianity, be not an earth-born monster, whose parentage must be divided between ambition and hypocrisy.

II.

SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS.

The worth of a thing is usually settled by what it can do. Given, a certain weight of matter to remove, that is the best engine which most easily and effectually removes it. Other pieces of mechanism may be more curious, more complicated, more ornamental—but if they fail of the main end of their construction, they might as well not be. Or, drawing an illustration from mind instead of matter, the end of an argument is to convince—and the homeliest which accomplishes that end, is vastly superior to any which fail of it, however admirable their ingenuity, however beautiful their dress. Christianity, if it be a revelation from Heaven, which our bishops will hardly be disposed to deny, has something to *do*. It comes into this our world to effect somewhat which nothing else was competent to effect. It has its own sphere—its own power, too, to work within that sphere. It was not

intended to be a raree-show, a thing for men to gaze at and forget; nor was it designed to be a cushion upon which an aristocracy might pin its jewels and its honours. Neither does it wear on the face of it the appearance of an embroidered purse, knit for the purpose of carrying ecclesiastical gold. If examined, it turns out to be anything but layers of gold leaf, beaten out to the utmost conceivable thinness, with a view to gild the practices of oppression, and give a show of splendour to deeds of injustice and rapine which else would look black as Erebus itself. There is nothing in it which puts on the guise of pretence. It has all the signs about it of an earnest reality. No flimsy drapery—no garish attractions; but a sincere, sober, reasonable, majestic system of truth—from first to

last practical—evidently having in hand some grave business to accomplish which is its one and only concern.

Christianity has to do with *men*—and its aim is to manage them. Law may restrain them—custom may bind them—opinion may drive them—but *she* would win them. Down deeper than all these powers can reach, deeper we mean into man's nature, she proposes to go; and whilst they can do no more than influence what man *does*, she proposes to affect what man *is*. They may govern human actions—she will govern human nature j they may change the conduct—she comes hither to change the man. Her operations are all calculated to tell upon character—and the truth she wields is designed to bear down and subdue

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the will itself, the lord paramount within us. And if she does not this, she does nothing. The system is a failure unless it possess inherent power to accomplish this. If it master not men themselves—if it grapple not successfully with that which is inmost of us—the very core of our being, the hidden germ of which thoughts, passions, deeds, are but the various unfoldings—if it lay not in the lowest depths of our nature some solid basis of truth upon which character may ultimately rest—why then, it aims at what it cannot compass, and it is as well out of the world as in it. We say again, this it is, or nothing. Christianity came into the world to *rule*, where no other power can rule—over man's heart.

Marry this power to the state, and you destroy it. You might as well attempt to sway the heaving ocean by the power of thought, or charm the winds with words, or cabin imagination within brick walls, or analyse an idea with chemical solvents, as to give effect to Christianity by clothing it with the sanction of the civil magistrate. Enact the truth, arm it with the sword of human authority, affix to its decrees pains and penalties, surround it with worldly pomp, deck it with

worldly titles, place it beneath a velvet canopy, and crown it with a monarch's diadem, and you reduce it at once to a common place power, such as the world has always had, competent to deal not now with what man *is* but what he *does*. Its whole destiny is altered. Henceforth it must Work, not upon character, but upon conduct. With these incumbrances It must remain in

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the suburbs of human nature, and is utterly incapable of entering the citadel. Truth may command the heart—law can command nothing but the actions. Truth, made law, can go no further than law. All the addenda of pomp and glory can do no more for it than law proposes to do—enable it to touch the outside of men, whilst they rob it of its power to come in contact with his very being. As well might we solidify heat, were that possible, in order to diffuse its influence more effectually.

In truth, it is a piteous spectacle to see an influence, subtle but powerful, impalpable as light, and efficacious as the dew, fashioned, if we may so speak, of the same invisible and ethereal elements as the human spirit itself, designed to act upon it, and therefore assimilated in material and fibre to it—so that as matter touches matter, and mind sways mind, moral truth, gloriously developed, might affect moral natures—aye! it is a piteous spectacle to see an emanation of this sort, caught and bottled up in clumsy state-church phials, mixed with the rudest, coarsest, dirtiest elements of man, and sold, by compulsion, to duped and gaping subjects, under the name of Christianity. The Christianity, however, is not there, any more than sunlight would be there, were men to pretend to bottle it up with water, and afterwards distribute it for use. It can no more be held in law-prepared receptacles, than can thought be detained under glass tumblers. But the ignorant are deluded, and avarice answers its end—and under the name of truth, whose end is to

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woo and win man, ecclesiastics exhibit an unsightly thing made up of parchment and jewels; a stupid contrivance, in which nothing better can be found than the baton of the policeman, side by side with the coach and four of bishops—a thing of wigs, aprons, lawn, croziers, genuflexions, tithes processes, distrains, money—a sort of plum pudding stone of whatever is of the earth, earthy—a power, not to enter the heart and rest and rule there, but to creep into the pocket and pilfer, or to mount the chair of civil authority and play the tyrant. Is it not piteous? Caliban married to Miranda—bloating worldliness to spiritual beauty! Ah! What does Christianity, pure, unearthly, seraphic Christianity say to that?

Let but a man breathe the atmosphere of truth, and then go into the very midst of our ecclesiastical climate—there, where it is most ecclesiastical. Let him try the air at Oxford, or if it like him better at Westminster, or if he prefer it at a royal christening—and then let him determine whether the breath of priestism has purified the simple element upon which the life of man's heart depends—whether religion can best sustain itself in this atmosphere or in that! And if the vitiated taste of some men lead them to prefer the smell of gas, why then, let them have it; but in common decency let them refrain from urging upon us the axiom, that it is their duty to poison the air of the whole neighbourhood with their suffocating vapour. They might be content with eating coals themselves, without cramming them down our throats.

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III.

COERCION.

Christianity is gentle! Her voice, soft and balmy as the breeze in summer's ere, whispers in tender ac-

cents of peace and lore, and speaks sympathy to the human heart. Her power, like that of woman, is meekness—her delicacy is strength. Mercy is on her lips—benerolence lights up her countenance—the beauty of disinterestedness characterises her whole form—her every movement is inexpressible grace. She asks nothing but love, and she gives that she may have. Amid the wrecks which the fierce passions of human nature have strewed up and down this world she moves with light step and ready hand to minister consolation. No pomp! She “cometh not with observation;” but there, where wretchedness is, and anguish, and despair, she lores to sit down and wipe away the silent tear, and bind up the broken heart—to bless, to do good, to lessen man’s woe, to

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augment his sources of joy, to be a pleasant companion to him, and a patient guide through the stormy scenes of life to immortality.

And this gentle, confiding, lovely, peace-in spiring truth, the wisdom, or rather the craft of priestism, has allied with physical force—smeared her beauty with gunpowder and blood—sent her forth into the land accompanied by troops of policemen and bands of military—put into her hand a license to plunder—armed her with power to enter the dwellings of the reluctant—to seize booty and distribute it among her followers—to imprison gainsayers, and indorse the warrants for their apprehension with “take no bail”—to shoot widows’ sons and cleave the skulls of poor fatherless children—and all this that she may have gold to give to her clergy. Aye! here is the naked truth. Men in these realms and in this enlightened century are to be worried, hunted, fleeced, incarcerated, shot, that the clergy may have gold. They proclaim war to the knife in order that they may have the wherewithal to preach peace, and crush out of man’s necessities the food which is to strengthen them to minister to man’s

wants. Amiable priestism! how like thou art to Christianity!

The paucity of instances, be it remembered, wherein death is inflicted in the collection of tithes, must be regarded as accidental, and consequently not be set down to the kindness of the compulsory principle. Here is so much property in the hands of a given individual assigned by law to the support of divine wor-

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ship, or the maintenance of a professedly Christian minister. Up to the measure of force which that individual employs to retain possession of his own, and beyond it, law must necessarily go in order to seize it. Where complaint only is urged, law answers with threats. Where passive resistance is exhibited, law resorts to forcible seizure. Where contempt of authority is shown, law condemns the recusant to prison. Where physical force is appealed to, law employs force equal to the emergency, and if necessary deals out death. That most men are let alone is not to be ascribed to the leniency of the principle. The principle is—force to the amount necessary to get possession of the gold. A legal provision for the clergy ultimately resolves itself into this. The aspect under which the principle develops itself depends entirely upon the kind of opposition offered to it, not in anywise upon itself. The church of England holds in her hand, as the law-established church, authority to kill men, if necessary, in pursuit of her own maintenance. If the power opposed to her demands for money be too formidable to be encountered by an armed police, she may call the military to her aid, as she has often done in Ireland, and hew to the ground those who resist her claims. A compulsory maintenance of religion, is religion ultimately supported by the power of the sword. It pits *must* against *won't*, and *won't* is crushed at any rate.

Would people but look at things themselves, instead of the mere shows of them, they would discover herein

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the whole pith and core of the question of church and state. The union of the two is the union of physical force and religion, for the purpose of securing a temporal maintenance for the ministers of the latter. It appoints for Christianity an armed bully, to hector men out of the support which they are indisposed to give—and the rude, clamorous, blustering champion of the rights, they call them, of the clergy, the professed teachers of Christianity, dispensers of its blessings, successors of the apostles, demands their pay in a voice of menace rendered yet more significant by the flourish of his club. What are all our church-rate prosecutions and tithing processes but just this?

What need is there to ask Christianity herself what she says to this proceeding? Why, when be-mitred and be-baroned bishops tell us that it is the duty of the state to compel the maintenance of the church, even at the point of the sword if need be, why insist on behalf of religion that the weapons of her warfare are not carnal? When we learn from the lips of truth that her “servants must not strike,” are we called upon to enter into grave discussion to prove that neither must they have professional strikers to do what is forbidden to themselves? Let the christianised heathens who utter oracles for the church, deliver themselves of their wise sayings—sayings which prove them to have slight confidence in any power but the power of the stick; to sit down for the purpose of calmly refuting them is an insult to Christianity. The whole scheme is redolent of human avarice, craft, and

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hypocrisy—scripture distinctly repudiates it—the genius of religion abhors it—common reason, even, and natural sense of justice reject it with scorn. Nothing but the profoundest and most Stygian ignorance of what religion is can extenuate the crime and guilt of those who abet it. Why, even political ends now-

a-days are pursued by moral means only, and all classes unite in disclaiming the instrumentality of physical force. And is Christ's church to be supported by means which would be held to contaminate a movement for civil reform? Let the sanctimonious babblers who gravely tell us this have done with their trumpery! The Christianity they profess rebukes them to their faces, and points out upon their foreheads the marks of Antichrist.

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IV.

ECCLESIASTICAL POMP.

With the permission of our readers, we shall make bold to draw upon their imagination. We ask them to postdate time by many centuries, and, upon the wings of fancy, to transport themselves to any one of those numerous cities which in the earlier times of Christianity acquired renown for their subjection to the truth. Rumour is busy in announcing the approach of some celebrated eremite, and the inhabitants of the city are on the alert to do homage to his sanctity. From youth upwards he has professed and practised abstinence. He has aimed to pour contempt upon this world's pride. His food has been of the simplest, and barely sufficient for the maintenance of life. His drink, the water which gushed from the rock in a fissure of which he had found his Cell. His clothing homely and coarse—his habits retired—his mien externally humble—his whole life a practical comment

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upon the vanity of worldly show. Imagine, then, a populace anxious to do him honour, receiving him at the gates of the town in the same manner as they have been accustomed to receive a martial victor. Gorgeous processions, richly ornamented chariots, flaunting banners, bravery of dress, music which would

“take the imprisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium—”

banquets, in the serving up of which invention and wealth have alike exhausted their resources, wine, dancing, revelry, a carnival of all sensual passions—how would all these become the recluse? or what propriety would there be in this species of homage paid to simplicity, self-denial, sanctity, and religion? The North American Indians might with equal fitness and in equal ignorance have presented to the immortal Penn, five thousand scalps and a goblet of human blood.

Christianity is no eremite, but neither does it court external pomp. It is simple, chaste, grave. It comes hither, if it be anything more than a pretence, to speak to men on their most important interests, in their most sober moments. Its errand is a cheerful one, but one with which the gaiety and fripperies of life but ill accord. Seen in scripture it is always solemn. It is pure spiritual truth, embodied in facts and language. It says much about the emptiness and unreality of this world's glare—more of the unspeakable vastness and worth of the interests connected with the next. The burden of its communication is most felt and best appreciated, when

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the mind loses sight of all outward show. Its voice cannot be heard in noise—it is “a still small voice.” It disclaims worldly pretensions—it warns against “the deceitfulness of riches”—it affects not “the honour which cometh from men.” It was cradled in poverty—it was baptised in suffering—its walk has been of choice among the poor—it has forbidden to its followers titles of distinction. It is mind in all its superiority over matter, reality over show, principle over expediency, eternity over time, heaven over earth.

And the great ones of our kingdom have resolved to do homage to truth—so they marry her to pomp. Let

her superior clergy be selected, or rather enticed, from the families of our nobility. Make ample provision for them—give them titles whose style encircles men of earth with a halo of heavenly dignity—grant them baronial possessions and privileges—build for them palaces—let them shine in court, reflecting back the glory of the throne—bid them play a conspicuous part in every state pageant—dress them up in lawn and silk—carry them from place to place in superb carriages—overlay them with honours, stuff them with pride—make the heralds of Heaven's mercy the porters of this world's wealth! What better method can be devised of promoting religion? Can the spirituality of Christ's kingdom be more vividly illustrated? Can sincere and sober verity be more becomingly set off? Where could be found a comment more striking upon the apostolic exhortation, "Love not the world?"

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Take, now, the last royal christening, and look at it simply as a state embodiment of Christianity. Without staying to question the rite itself or the authority upon which it is founded, look at it as a simple act of divine worship. Why, the religion of the thing is a trifle, compared with its worldly environment. Nothing but costly splendour! Royal sponsors landing amidst salutes of artillery and popular acclamations—cavalcades and processions—jewels and feathers—fetes, banquets, balls, on the most magnificent scale—how can a religious thought or a religious emotion harmonise with the bustle, and the circumstance, and the bravery of a scene like this? We know who retired into a desert to pray. But religion now-a-days can plunge into the very whirl of fashion, and perform its most solemn acts amid the parade of all the accompaniments of frivolous greatness.

Alas! that that meek, sober, earnest, spiritual reality, Christian truth, Heaven's best and noblest gift to man, should thus be tricked out with meretricious ornaments, and sent flaring through these realms, so

berouged and beribboned by aristocratic frivolity, as to leave upon men's minds an impression of nothing whatever beyond earthly pomp! They see the coaches and the gold—but where is the moral loveliness to which they are bidden to do homage? They hear the thundering cannon and the swelling organ—but do they, can they discern amidst it all, the words of persuasion which drop as the dew? Is then that coarse thing which barbarians can equal, if not outvie, Chris-

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tianity? Are her claims and her instructions thus fitly symbolised? Does she delight in garish attire and love to show herself, first among the foremost, in surrounding herself with a vain show? No! but this is what legislators make of God's truth. Their wisdom turns a strangely solemn reality into a plaything for nobles—a fresh occasion for the indulgence of their costly tastes—a mere peg upon which to hang aristocratic pomp and pleasure. Aye! they have turned their hands to religion, and a fine thing they have made of it. Strip this state-church of its titles, power, and wealth, and what would be left? What is it but a bubble, reflecting the colours by which it is surrounded? Burst it, and there remains—nothing. The church of a conquered or merely dependent people may, we admit, be supported by the state, and yet be anything but a thing of outward splendour. But where, as in our own country, the church and the magistracy are, if not indigenious, at all events thoroughly acclimated, and have grown up in union for many centuries, the weaker stem will always receive its characteristic form and bent from that which is more vigorous. The oligarchy and the hierarchy are twin shoots. The church is necessarily assimilated to the state. The pomp of her dignitaries, and the dazzling worldliness of her rites are not accidents. She could not be so allied as she is, without them—nor can we get rid of the one without the other. If

Christianity condemn this profusion of gewgaws in connection with divine worship, it must be held to

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condemn the union from which, in our country at least, they are inseparable. These are not the abuses of a principle sound in itself, which may be swept away without prejudice to the principle; but rather the natural developments of it according to the law of circumstances. This seed planted in this soil can produce no other fruit. It is a mockery of religion, and such as it is, it springs out of the connection between church and state.

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V.

LORDSHIP.

Pomp is but the embroidered cloak of power—the trappings adopted as the appropriate representative of authority—the palace of lordship—the throne upon which, and the canopy under which, dominion sits in state. The sign attracts our notice first—and through it we look at the thing signified. Through that window, pomp, looks forth the lust of rule—man's natural desire to exalt himself above his fellows, and to compel the will of all others to bow in acknowledgment of his own. This desire a state-church not merely sanctions but consecrates. A national religion, founded on human enactments, pre-supposes authority, resident somewhere, to enact in Christ's church. And we care not how the vessel may be fashioned into which such authority is poured, whether it be hierarchical or presbyterian, the thing itself is the same—it is ecclesiastical lordship in the name of

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Christianity—a setting of man over man in matters of religious faith, and worship, and discipline—a constituting of an earthly tribunal for the decision of questions belonging only to conscience—an exaltation of worldly might in a kingdom exclusively spiritual. The burden of a state-church is, “You shall.” This is in brief the interpretation of the whole theory—and it matters not whether one man says it, or five hundred—whether it be W. Cantuar, or presbytery, or parliament. “You shall” is what is said, and said by mortals in reference to the affairs of another life.

If this be indeed Christianity, then Christianity is altogether a mistake. Here is a power set up which cannot vindicate itself, which cannot execute its own decrees—uttering commands which it has no appliances to enforce. It is just the old story of Phaeton in Apollo’s chariot—presumption seizing the reins which it is incompetent to hold, and ignorant vanity converting what was intended for the world’s light into a scorching and consuming plague. And it is curious how the impostor, conscious of his own imbecility, seeks to give effect to his lofty assumptions by the ghastliness of his grins, and the artificial attributes of power. Those “Courts Christian” which disgrace savage humanity, the dens and caverns into which ecclesiastical “you shall” drags its victims to devour them at leisure—what are they, but the gnashing of the teeth and the scowling of the brow, with which lordship in the church attempts to give force to commands to which it cannot ensure obedience? So, ba-

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ronial possessions, privileges and titles, the union in bo many instances of clericy and magistracy, impious pretences to official supremacy, and brazen vaunts of apostolical succession—what are they all but the high caps and imposing robes, the mustachios of burnt cork, and clattering shoes, with which imbecile domi-

nion aims to swagger itself into the appearance of something majestic—an appearance which may justify its big, thundering, “you shall.”

The inner man—that which remains of us when every successive layer of husk has been peeled off—the power to think, to judge, to love, to adore—did Christianity which comes hither to deal with that, intend to put it under authority to a set of garments or torturing irons? For what more is ecclesiastical lordship? Nothing but the truth which it wields can conquer thought, and truth can do it better without the “you shall” than with it. The authority to which the soul of man bows in willing submission, must be in the thing spoken—and where that fails, is it likely that the same thing spoken *ex cathedra* will avail to bend the will? Why then, the will in such case bows not to the truth, but to the chair—and is swayed by a senseless reverence begotten by gold, purple and fine linen, or by an unmanly fear excited by the dangle of a whip before the eyes, or the clank of iron upon the nerves of the ear. If Christianity, designed as it is to rule the inmost man, really proposes to do it, by delivering us up to a lordship of mere dress, titles, and power to inflict bodily injury,

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we cannot but think it a most unphilosophical and worthless thing, a degradation put upon our common nature, which it becomes us, in the name of that God who made us, to resent. Are we to fall prostrate before puppets of rags, and lest we should not pay willing homage to truth, shall we be enticed to do it by the fine buttons, or compelled to do it by the frightful fist, of some one stepping forward to be the truth's champion? “Give me your love,” says Christianity, in tones of mild persuasion blended with authority—and out rushes ecclesiastical lordship, dressed up for the occasion, and showing his teeth growls out—“Hallo there! Now let us see whether you mean to set me at

defiance too! Give Christianity what she bids you, or I'll let you see who's who."

There are not wanting men weak enough in the faith, to contend that obedience is due to this usurped authority, this dressed-up pretence, whatever it may choose to command. We leave such to pay their worship to the god which their own hands have fashioned, and their own fancy clothed. Others argue that the force of its "you shall" dwells in what may happen to follow. If it be "worship as I bid you," it may not be obeyed—if "give halfpence to uphold my form of Christianity," it may not be gainsayed. We discern no essential difference. Ecclesiastical lordship commands in either case—commands too in virtue of authority which it pretends to have derived from religion, and which it exercises on behalf of religion. In either case it is intended to be a supplement to

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Christianity, to ensure the doing of something which truth tries to do, but, according to this champion, cannot—an addition of man's "shall" to God's "ought." Can the one give force to the other? In a kingdom wherein "ought" is appointed sole ruler, and sways the sceptre by divine right, can it be fitting to recognise the usurper "shall," and pay to the latter that which we are commanded to reserve for the former? If "ought" be sufficient, what need of "shall?" If not, obedience to "shall" is only a further outrage upon the rights of "ought." Does the Supreme employ man to secure for Himself the homage which His own mandate has failed to obtain, and after having spoken in vain through His truth, does He dress up bishops to speak for Him?

Answer Christianity, or rather the Master of Christianity! "The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve," This is

said to the apostles, whose successors in a direct and unbroken line are "the right reverend fathers in God by divine permission" of our own day, who eke out their own pretensions with the sword of state, and sit in the senate with baronial titles. Shall we ring in their ears an exhortation penned of yore by one of their brethren? "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the episcopate thereof, not by constraint but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a

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ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." What says "my lord" of London to that? One more passage and we have done. "Call no man master on earth." This we presume is as applicable to the laity as to the clergy. We shall make bold to obey it, and in the Bpirit of true obedience, to pour upon ecclesiastical lordship in every shape, contempt and scorn. Its rags we will hold up to the light of heaven, that all men may see their coarse and rotten texture; and wherever we meet with its "you shall," mindful of the allegiance due to *real* authority, it will be our duty to reply "we won't."

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VI.

PELL-MELL.

"Union is strength." We have in these three words a condensed epitome of man's experience in all foregoing ages. Upon this simple principle, all social and all political movements proceed. Truth has never been found to make head in the world, otherwise than by the consociation of its votaries. All the great changes which earth has witnessed, have resulted from like uniting with like. The winter torrent, the crashing avalanche, the flash of heaven which shivers the rock into fragments, are but na-

tural illustrations of the force acquired by union—the visible symbols of that mysterious power which is generated when many minds, heretofore one in thought and feeling, become outwardly one in fellowship and purpose. Up and down through the various walks of society, knowledge of, and attachment to, any given political principle, may be scattered long time, in

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some plenty, to all seeming, inert. There shall not need to add to the quantity of existing materials, in order to invest them with irresistible might. Let but some common centre be established, towards which opinion may run—let but what is already diffused be gathered into one place—let but the latent electricity of mind be drawn out from the general mass which it pervades, unseen, unfelt, and concentrated in a Leyden phial—a visible and organised association—and it instantly becomes an agent strong enough to shatter time-worn institutions, and shake the framework of political society down to its very centre.

This separation of that which is peculiar from that which is general, this segregation, union, and organisation of minds of like stamp, like character, and like aim, is what Christianity proposes in the institution of what is called “the church.” In the lapse of ages, truth might have crept its way into general respect and wide-spread influence, without calling to her aid a visible fellowship of her disciples. But who does not see the wisdom of her system of means and appliances? By constituting an order of brotherhood—by making sincere submission to her claims the bond of union, and the mark of distinction—her own light is flashed into the eyes of the world, reflected by broad and polished mirrors, instead of glimmering over the surface of society in sparkling fragments—the force of example is multiplied, and purity, always beautiful, puts on a robe of moral dignity which few can contemplate without admiring awe. Associated goodness

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possesses strange power over human nature. Were it real, rather than nominal—real, as once it was, what would be too difficult for it? What opposition would it not overmaster? The design is, at all events, replete with wisdom—to league truth against error, and scatter over the whole globe fraternal associations, linked to one common centre, for the extirpation of irreligion and vice.

It needed but the touch of legislators to spoil this whole machinery, and make of it a thing not merely destitute of wisdom, but destitute of meaning. One is at a loss to understand what is the moral of a national church. It neither distinguishes nor unites—It adds no power to example—it reflects no truth. It is not an association of like with like—but a mere conglomeration of anything and everything—homogeneous and heterogeneous. It sets off neither doctrine nor character—for although its articles are written in a book, it is not at all necessary that they should be believed by its members—and although rules for discipline may be discovered in its canons, they are in all respects, saving a pecuniary one, as practically obsolete as the curfew-bell of the Normans. The church is the nation and the nation is the church. According to the theory of this precious scheme, membership depends upon the accidental locality of birth. It is not particular as to character. Newgate is full of its members—so is the House of Lords. It receives the refuse of all other sects. All is fish that comes to its net. Avowed infidels have

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communed with it. Gamesters, duelers, adulterers, scoffers, the foes of God and the pests of man, all fraternise in this wonderfully comprehensive ecclesiastical society. And there they are, mingled together pell-mell, for what conceivable purpose it would puzzle

the most sagacious to divine. The charm-song of the Establishment is full of charity—

“Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray,
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may.”

The point blank unscriptural or rather anti-scriptural character of this national church, is no less marked a characteristic of it than is its pitiful vacancy of all significance. As nothing more stupidly unmeaning can be conceived, so nothing more flatly contradictory of Christianity can be devised. After having looked into this ecclesiastical cauldron, into which are thrown indiscriminately

“Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder’s fork, and blind worm’s sting,
Lizard’s leg, and owl’s wing—“

one is amazed at the blindness of men, who could ever have mistaken this thing for a Christian church. One is not so surprised at the prevalence of the mistake amongst those who never had a bible in their hands. But for those who have, the delusion is unpardonable. What! Is this mere aggregation of men, without assortment—this fraternisation of all characters, good, bad, and indifferent—this blending into one mass, without assimilation, of every variety of moral material—is this what was meant by the apostle, when he

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said, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people”—this, that church of which Paul said that it was “the pillar and ground of the truth?” We will not go further into the subject. We feel reason outraged and understanding insulted by the preposterous pretence. Satanic craft could not invent a fouler or more malignant libel on Christianity. Why, the very world has had virtue enough to spit upon it with loathing, and to give no equivocal intimations to the priesthood of this lie in the name of truth, that if this be indeed what it purports to be,

then revelation is but a fable, the clumsy fiction of monks and priests.

One word more and we have done. So long as those who know better, in assumed or mistaken charity, choose to recognise this mere worldly association as a church, and, more fearful of being thought violent, than of actually conniving at a pestilential falsehood, refrain from denouncing it as an anti-christian imposture, so long must they expect its continuance and even its growth. From all ranks, dissenters are hurrying to join this body, under the persuasion that it is one branch of Christ's church; and that if there be some things in it capable of improvement, it only resembles in this respect the churches with which they have been more familiar. When will our youth be taught, and our congregations told, that a national church is no church at all—that it has none of the characteristics of a church—none of the powers of a church—none of the ends for which a church is con-

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stituted? It distinguishes not between the disciples and the opponents of Christianity. It is the "pillar and ground" of nothing but a vast hierarchical edifice. It is not associated goodness, nor meekness, knowledge, faith, nor love. It is a compulsory association of men in one company, with a view to their being taxed by one order of clergy—and the sooner its real character is made known, the better.

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VII.

THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE.

Conscience is the power possessed by man to pass judgment on himself—to sit upon the throne, and to hear and determine what is duty, and what are derelictions from it. It has been called, and not unfitly, God's vicegerent in the human mind. It expounds to

us the law of right and wrong—it tries us by that law—it acquits or condemns—it passes sentence—it rewards or punishes. It is that unseen, individual, inmost authority, of which the judges of our land are an outward type—they taking cognizance of social actions, conscience sitting in judgment upon our secret self. It may have more or less light—may be misinformed, may mistake—but, under any circumstances, its independence ought to be secured. Its decisions must be its own, not those of some other power. From behind its chair of state no whisperer should be allowed to sway it by dictation. Man determining his

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own obligations, and the correspondence of his own heart and actions therewith, is a step above all earthly authority. Place him under human law in such case, and conscience ceases to be a judge, and submits to be a tool of the worst, the most degrading, the most hateful tyranny which this world will admit of.

The profound respect paid to conscience by Christianity shows whence Christianity came. Anything trenching even in the remotest degree upon its independence is cautiously avoided. There would seem to be a tremulous tenderness that nothing whatever should interfere with its integrity. “Let me be advocate, but be you the judge.” Thus we may interpret the whole tone of revelation. Accordingly Christianity submits her own claims to the hearing of conscience—spreads out her information, argues, expostulates, appeals, but calls upon the man himself, the inmost man to decide. And what she refrains from doing herself, she most authoritatively forbids her followers to do. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.” “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” There is no one thing more characteristic of Christianity than this—that she goes, not mediately by priestism, but immediately in her own name into the inner court of human nature, and, recognising the supremacy of con-

science, hews before its seat, opens her commission, and deals with it alone—saying, “There is my case—judge you what is right.”

Mark now the strange difference between Christi-

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anity and a state-church. The latter, in its very constitution, and by a necessity of nature, declares it to be unseemly, and an offence against modesty, that individual man should pass judgment upon the right and wrong of his own motives and conduct. A certain number of men band themselves together and call themselves the state conscience—and to this state conscience, that is, to the will of a parliamentary majority, every individual conscience ought to own allegiance. This composite conscience, this ultimate result of a number of consciences fused into one, is the authoritative rule of right and wrong in affairs of religion—it is the town-clock of the spiritual world, by which all the watches that men wear in their fobs are to be regulated. It is right, say the advocates of this system, that we all think together—that our faith should tick in unison. Oh! the heinous sin of men thinking differently about religion! But such a calamity as variety of judgment seems to be inevitable whilst men continue to think for themselves. How much more fitting that some party should think for them. It was a great mistake to endow men with consciences at all. We must try and rectify it. We must promulgate a creed and rubric of right and wrong—and let them be right and wrong to everybody whether they think so or not.

If any power on earth have authority to determine in matters of religion, all we can say is, that it is difficult to conceive the reason why the herd of mankind are troubled with consciences at all—unless, indeed,

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to be employed as drivers on the estate of which a company of priests have usurped the proprietorship.

In that case, however, it seems desirable that some marked distinction should have obtained between the consciences ordained to rule and those ordained to submit—and in the spiritual world there should have been negroes and whites. The shallow, babbling, empty-headed, arrogant priests, who claim to have the right of ordering conscience down from the throne on which God has placed him, ought to show some better credentials than black clothes and white cravats. And yet in what else they differ from their fellow men it is hard enough to discover. That they can pretend more, we know well, but “great swelling words of vanity” are no veritable and infallible guarantees of the rightfulness of spiritual domination. What more can they *do*? Can they preach? so can we—pray? so can we—meditate? so can we—discern things that differ? so can we. There is only one thing they can do which we cannot. Either befool themselves so far as to believe, or disgrace themselves so far as to pretend, that Heaven has authorised them to spit upon Heaven’s own viceroy, conscience—to hoot at him, and smite him, as other priests once smote his Master. We do not see why, because they *can* do this, they are therefore *warranted* in doing it.

The truth is, the alleged necessity for uniformity of faith and worship is nothing but a pretence for uniformity of pay. The clergy, like friar Tetzels, cry up their wares, and extol the peculiar and exclusive virtue

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of their creed and their ministrations, that men may imagine they receive for money, more than money’s worth. The state-church cannot compel submission, and yet leave conscience in a position of supremacy. One or the other must yield. An expensive establishment like ours will not long be supported, whilst reasonable men are allowed to use their reason, unless it can show some special good which it alone can compass. Not having this to show, reason must be dethroned by impious quackery—quackery which when

men can stoop to practise they are given up to believe. Men must cease to be men, that priests may be priests—and God in the soul must be lorded over by stupid fictions of state-made clergy. View this beside Christianity. “Look on this picture and on that”—is it not “Hyperion to a Satyr?” Which comes to us from above, and which from a long way under above, we leave our readers to determine.

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VIII.

THE WRONG SIDE UPWARDS.

The valuable results attainable by a division of labour are, in this country at least, pretty generally recognised. A man is far more likely to do one thing well than ten things. Suppose all the ten things, nine of which a man cannot do, to be equally necessary to his well-being as the one which he can do. What is, in such case, the dictate of common sense? Not, certainly, that he strive against impossibilities, and wage a fruitless contest against the unchangeable laws of his present existence, but that he wisely attempt to avail himself of those very laws, and turn them to account for the accomplishment of his own ends. In doing this he brings out a vivid illustration of the maxim, “Knowledge is power.” The very conditions of our social being, those relations of dependency in which we stand one to another, the dexterity acquired by habit, and the due subordination of part to part in the machinery

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of society, may thus be made—abstractions as they seem—to work for us, to become force, to produce material results. To “knowledge” it is given to harness even the most impalpable laws, and make them carry us whither we will; and to tame to our own purposes, not merely things themselves, but even the invisible and metaphysical links which connect this

thing with that, and that with something else. All men seem to understand this, and most men to act upon it.

It would be a strange thing if we did not find in a system of religious truth something analogous to this. Priestism, Christianity utterly rejects—any intermediate *authority* between us and God we are required to renounce. This is one thing. It is a very different, and to our minds a perfectly philosophical arrangement, for men to select from amongst themselves one whom we shall venture to designate a *thoughtsman* for the rest—one whose specific business it shall be, seeing that every-day concerns engross the attention of most of us, to make himself intimately acquainted with truth, to spend his life in exploring it, to do nothing else than dig out solid masses of valuable ore, for the common benefit of all. It is only by this economy, this wise distribution of labour, that an extensive acquaintance with the phenomena of Christianity can be generally diffused. Thus it is that one mind may pursue the work of investigation for many, and abridge for them the labour which else would be indispensable for all.

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Christianity not only sanctions, but enacts this arrangement, guarding it on all sides, however, by checks which may prevent it from degenerating into priestism. And they who thus give themselves up to work exclusively for the spiritual advantage of others, she commends to their esteem and to their temporal support. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." This is but fair. All things are here presented in their natural order. We have desert first, and then its reward—man doing somewhat for others whereby others become indebted to him—he leaving temporal affairs, that for their benefit he may give himself to the exclusive care and study of spiritual things—they availing themselves, for instruction, of his knowledge of truth, and supplying his worldly wants according to their ability.

We have here the right side upwards—religion first, then the secular arrangements necessary to its sustentation—the last being wholly subordinate to the first, springing obviously enough out of the necessity of the case.

This natural order of things a state-church deliberately and impudently reverses. It begins by ordering a levy upon temporal things, leaving the religious instruction to follow as best it may. And the ground upon which it bases this equally unphilosophical and unscriptural arrangement is one of the most curious illustrations on record of the wisdom of aristocratic legislation. The message we have to bear, say the advocates of this system, is an unwelcome one. Men devoid of religious instruction are always disinclined to

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it—they have no natural taste for Christianity—they are indisposed to go to it, and therefore it must be brought to them. Exactly so! We dispute not the truth, but its application. Men are disinclined to religion—and a strange method it is of overcoming that disinclination to introduce her to their notice dressed up in the odious garb of a tax-gatherer. The first word we hear from the lips of a state-church is “Pay”—“pay first, listen afterwards if you please.” You wish to instruct your neighbour in some truth which it concerns him to know, but from which he has an avowed aversion. Your first act is, arming yourself with the power of law, to seize a portion of his property, and tell him that if he wants an equivalent he may come to you at a stated time and place, and you will give him the information which he is already disinclined to receive.

Now we submit that this method is putting the cart before the horse, and exhibiting truth the wrong side upwards—standing the cone upon its head instead of its base. Will Heaven's message come with more force from the lips of men whose subsistence is seized from their hearers by legal violence? Will

the authoritative command of the civil magistrate, to keep God's temple in repair and pay His ministers, add a prevailing argument to divine truth? Do we ordinarily listen with more deferential respect to others because they are forcibly quartered on our resources? What persuasion will be wrought in the hearts of men, by taxing them for Christianity? How is this fitted

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to mollify their resistance of its claims? Surely, if in any cause the intentions of the teacher should be visibly pure—if, in the enforcement of any doctrine, he should be able to appeal to his hearers in the language of the apostle, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel"—if ever, in aid of the system he advocates, the speaker should be able to exhibit a deep, spontaneous, disinterested benevolence, a carelessness for himself, and an absorbing interest in the welfare of those whom he addresses, it is in the exposition of spiritual truth. And the wisdom of a state-church can hit upon no better expedient than to present it to the view of men disfigured by exchequer processes, stained with the squabbles of clergymen for their tithes, rendered hideous by church-rate seizures, and decked out in the garments of injustice, extortion, and violence. Men are to be made loyal to the Supreme—and the very first step taken to accomplish this purpose is to seize their property for His ministers and worship. By oppression they are to be taught kindness—by legalised plunder they are to be inspired with love.

The consequences might have been readily foreseen. The national church has come to be regarded as a huge bundle of vested rights—property takes precedence of purity, and fiscal laws throw into the shade the laws of faith. Wherever the matron moves we hear nothing but the jingle of money. Earnest religion is voted enthusiasm—and Christianity is exhibited as having nothing to do in this world but to find incomes for a numerous clergy. The pay which is independent of

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merit seldom, and then only perchance, secures it. The spirit of the age can hardly mount, it is true, without dragging up after it the great body of state ecclesiastics. They are, however, a dead weight upon society—meet with them in what age we will, they are always at the bottom of the scale—always resisting improvement—always obstructing the progress of the people. Why is this? Nothing can be more evident. Because they are the only order of men for whom we provide pay, in the first place, and then leave desert to reach it if it please. The mistake is not that of Christianity, but of those who, misunderstanding it, have thrust themselves into the position of legislators for it.

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IX.

VESTED RIGHTS.

Were the representatives of our national church put upon the defensive, and compelled to furnish an answer to the inquiry, what great practical object an ecclesiastical establishment is designed to answer, we should not be a little curious to observe the mode in which their reply would be framed, so as not to involve the whole system in condemnation. We should imagine that it would be absolutely necessary to show an appearance, at least, of identity, in the main end of "the church" and that of Christianity. Now the principal characteristic of Christianity, as far as we are acquainted with it, is that it brings to light another and higher state of being, and teaches us to make the present life subservient to the future. "This we apprehend to be the grand truth which the church is appointed to proclaim and to enforce. Men are apt to forget their high destiny—need to be reminded perpe-

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tually that this world is only a school for another—that although playing at marbles may be very well in its place, they are sent hither to prepare themselves for something better—and we always thought that the church was appointed to convince the grown-up boys and girls of society that the tops and skipping-ropes with which they amuse themselves are not the noblest inheritance which belongs to man.

If such be indeed the object of a national church—if she be designed to call away men's minds from the too ardent and exclusive pursuit of passing trifles—if she have any mission to fulfil with respect to the world beyond death—if she be instructed to impress men with a sense of their own immortality, and to educate them for that wider sphere of duties and enjoyments which immortality opens up to their view, then we must say, that of all means which could have been selected for the accomplishment of such a purpose, she has chosen unquestionably the oddest and most incongruous. Why, the teacher shows a more anxious care about marbles and tops, sets a higher value upon them, makes a greater outcry about them, sobs more bitterly over the loss of them, locks them up more securely, and fences them about with stronger guards than any of her scholars. Her whole talk is about them. "Vested rights" is a phrase ever on her lips. All her quarrels are on this score. She never uses the rod but when these are touched or threatened, and according to her own representation, those committed to her charge will be best prepared

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to enter upon the larger world for which she is training them, by showing the blindest and most implicit deference to her "vested rights."

"Vested rights!" What are they but an attempt by the church to confer immutability upon that which the church is appointed to proclaim mutable—to give per-

petuity to that which she tells us is passing—to fix for herself that portion by law, which by the gospel she assures us is worthless—to make herself a settlement here, under the pretence of teaching us the vanity of all earthly settlements? Her professed object is to convince us of the superiority of another world, and in order to the attainment of it, she begins by making herself a very comfortable and quiet home in this. A home she must have, undoubtedly whilst on earth—but who so anxious and troublesome as she to get her property vested in her for ever and ever?

Seriously, nothing can be more marked than the contrast exhibited in this respect between Christianity and our established church—the avowed teacher, and if we may take the word of the clergy for it, the exclusive teacher of Christianity. The one aims to depreciate in our estimation all secular possessions—warns us against an undue attachment to them—cautions us against anxiety on account of them—tells us to hold them loosely—unveils to our view somewhat unspeakably more important. The other, whatever she may teach from the pulpit, shows a concern for the security and enlargement of her possessions on earth so intense as to have become proverbial. Her

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alliance with the civil magistrate, unnatural as it is, was contracted and is maintained solely with a view to property. What would become of her, she pleads without a settled and permanent provision? Faith is out of the question. Confidence in the Master whom she professes to serve she has none—none in the justice of her own claims—none in the gratitude of her own members. Her dowry must be settled upon her by law—settled upon her in perpetuity—settled upon her in such manner that she shall be able to plead a vested and inalienable right in it—and this done, she will preach the vanity of worldly cares.

To us, it is one of the most astounding mysteries that men with brains in their heads and consciences in

their bosoms, able to think and competent to judge, with the bible before them on the one hand and the statute-book on the other, should ever have suffered themselves to be befooled into the belief that two things so opposite as Christianity and a state-church, are nevertheless identical. The noise made by the latter in erecting a substantial and durable abiding place, is quite sufficient to distinguish it from the former, who is satisfied with a tent, easily set up, and, if need be, easily removed. Rights of property vested in the church are regarded as the only foundation of ecclesiastical stability by human legislators. The supreme lawgiver never even hints at such rights as important—holds them up as worthless—and tells his disciples to seek principally and first of all the es-

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tablishment of his kingdom, and all these things will be given them as they have need.

Exceedingly curious it is, too, and with this remark we shall conclude, that whenever the established church lays herself fairly open to the charge of immorality—a violation of a palpable law of her Master—it is always in pursuit of some “vested rights.” Whether murder be committed by her military in Ireland, or imprisonment by her courts in England and Wales, or robbery by her bailiffs and police under church-rate warrants—whether every bond of charity be snapped asunder here, or division be stirred up there, or the Bpread of religion be hindered everywhere—it is always in defence of “vested rights.” There would seem to be no law of man or God, which this church will not Bet aside in favour of “vested rights.”

“Them first, them last, them midst, them without end.” And this church which can scramble through every hedge of divine precept in search of “vested rights,” we are told to regard as the fittest, the *only* suitable instructress of our world, in the vanity of mere secular possessions, and the superiority of things beyond time!

Amiable and accomplished hypocrite! who can wonder at the kind of success you have enjoyed?

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X.

THE WRANGLER.

No attentive reader of the history of this country can have been unobservant of the fact, that the ecclesiastical Establishment has been, from its earliest days, a fruitful source of national disquietude—a perpetual blister on the back of the body politic. The temper of the “holy apostolical church,” as she is wont, with more vanity than wisdom, to style herself, has ever been not a little shrewish. Her quarrels have been many and various. Sometimes she has contended for power, sometimes for pence—and the weapons she has wielded, in every case, have fitted the hand of low malignity, far better than those of gentleness and love. She is not only irritable herself, but she is the cause of irritability in others—and by the reflex influence of her example, the numerous sects who differ from her, and whom she would fain scold into submission, have been very apt to practise intolerance one towards

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another, and to catch and evince somewhat of that bad feeling, a sanction for which they can always find in the conduct of a state-church.

A main end of Christianity, we learn from the best authority, is union. To “gather together in one,” is stated emphatically to be its grand design. And the unity it seeks and enforces is a unity of character, heart, purpose. Attracting all towards one common centre, it secures, in so far as it is allowed free scope, that end which legislative authority vainly aims to reach—the government of the whole body by the law of harmony. Its provisions, so to speak, are all conceived in a spirit of broad catholicity. Legitimately carried out, they

invariably tend to the overthrow of mere sectarianism. Convergence is the characteristic effect of the system. Like the law of gravitation, its influence, wherever it reaches, brings nearer to each other the bodies which, but for it, would be far distant. Territorial limits it never once recognises. It is a scheme to bless mankind, not to enrich the priesthood of England—and in perfect accordance with this its comprehensive object, it aims to secure oneness by producing agreement of spirit, not by clipping men's minds to the same pattern, as old-fashioned horticulturists do their box-trees and hedge-rows.

The halcyon days of the Establishment are gone by. The spirit of the age has played havoc with its constitution. Nevertheless it is nowise altered in nature or in habit. Its identity is not destroyed by the decrepitude of age. Wrinkles and shortness of breath,

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weakness of limbs and shattered nerves, may forbid it to *do* what once it did, and yet leave the desire as strong as ever. The true principle of a state-church involves the possibility of all men thinking alike in matters of religion, at the word of command. In point of fact, a national church is an attempt on the part of authority to compress all minds into one and the same mould. That the attempt in this grosser form of it was unsuccessful, is only what in the nature of things, might have been foreseen. Equally rational it would have been to try and grasp water in the hand, and hold it firmly in one compact body. Unhappily, however, failure was not the sole result of this ineffably stupid experiment. It divided into numerous sects what it was meant forcibly to unite, and in the place of general agreement it produced separation and bitterness.

To our minds there appears no essential difference between the spirit evinced by the state-church now and that displayed in former days. Division, rather than union, would seem to be as natural a result of ecclesi-

astical legislation when its object is universality of pay, as when it was uniformity of faith and worship. "Support my sect," is a command not less likely to ensure bitterness of feeling than "Think as I tell you." The outward homage which the church constrains, unwillingly rendered, chafes and galls our natural sense of independence, throws us at once into an attitude of self-defence, and summons into play all those resentful feelings which, just in proportion to their energy, unfit

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the mind for union and peace. Mere theological differences have thus been rendered acrid by infusing into them questions of ascendancy and inferiority; and, lest the feelings of men who cannot think alike upon spiritual affairs should not be sufficiently curdled by the pride of intellect, the law church adds the pride of station and secular authority. Elements which might otherwise mingle and be one, are thus turned sour and driven asunder. The law of love which would draw all minds together being abrogated, the law of compulsion and dispersion comes into full operation, and the enactments which were intended to force men into agreement, full among the various sects as a hand grenade in a crowd, driving all as far as possible from the common centre, and consequently as far as possible from each other.

Among the characteristic effects of Christianity, peace and love may be considered as holding no subordinate place. "Love one another," holds a foremost place among its commands. The means adopted by the state-church to insure a uniform observance of this precept are not only unreasonable but self-contradictory. Do men ever tamely submit to palpable injustice, when there is the slightest probability of their being able successfully to resist it? Look at our church-rate contests, our tithe squabbles, our refusals to bury the unbaptised dead, exhibited week after week throughout the lengths and breadths of the land.

Priestism has carried the torch of discord into every village of the kingdom, and an annual conflict in a

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large number of places keeps up an exasperation of feeling. What other can be expected? The Establishment, too proud to ask, attempts rudely to snatch our property from our hands; and having regard to the composition of human nature, what state of temper are such proceedings calculated to excite? Means thus alien to the spirit of truth are not likely to effect religious unanimity.

The church, by its connection with the state, is placed in the most unhappy of all positions. No breath of air can stir but it will necessarily shake the web of ecclesiastical conservatism. Every movement, civil or religious, which promises an expansion of the human mind, is consequently viewed by priestism as hostile to its interests, and out it rushes like a black spider, ever on the alert to show its resentment of all intrusion. Or, to change the figure, the church, conscious of the injustice which pervades its whole economy, like a peevish and vinegar-hearted step-mother, moves about in constant suspicion of machinations against her authority. Nothing is heard but scolding from morning to night. The infection seizes the otherwise, peaceable members of the family, and in the place of harmony there is an uninterrupted din of wrangling and quarrel. Whilst she retains her position peace cannot be expected; for an ecclesiastical Establishment is a spiritual Ishmaelite—her hand is against every man, and every man's hand against her.

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XI.

SUMMING UP.

Before we close the lengthened series of papers which has been devoted to an examination of the prin-

ciple of a church establishment, we deem it expedient to present a short recapitulation of our labours, and to exhibit in one view a general outline of the evil, the details of which have been one by one submitted to the notice of the reader.

Our first business was with dissenters. They had been long occupied in seeking a "redress of grievances." Their efforts had signally, we may say with truth, disgracefully failed. We set ourselves, therefore, at the outset to urge upon them the adoption of a bolder course. The separation of church and state, as it is their real object, so, in our judgment, it is their proper, their right noble mission. That they have been unfaithful to the solemn trust committed to them,

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we ascribe to the apathy of dissenting ministers. We have examined and exposed the fallacy of those pleas usually put forward in defence of their inaction. Upon the responsibility of the great body of dissenting divines, we have largely insisted, and have endeavoured to rouse their zeal by demonstrating the vigour of the voluntary principle, especially where, as in heathen lands, it has scope for free and unfettered exercise. The severance of the union now subsisting between church and state, we hold to be a practical question, not a mere abstraction, and the advantages of firm adherence and prompt obedience to principle in preference to expediency we have shown to be incalculable.

The ground having been thus prepared, we entered upon the political aspects under which a state-church may be properly viewed—what is practically involved in the notion of separation. We have discussed the evils of which it is the prolific parent. They are neither few nor small. The church of England, as the mere tool of our aristocracy, has been in all past times and is at the present moment, wielded against the just liberties of the people. The waters of political strife are embittered by it; war, the worst scourge of the

human race, is patronised; and monopoly is abetted by our religious Establishment. Its influence upon the throne, whether in respect of legislation, or the distribution of honours, of the administration of law or the discharge of magisterial functions, is uniformly mischievous. Public political opinion it stunts and

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distorts, and to popular education it presents an almost insuperable obstacle.

Seen in the light of mere reason and philosophy, the national church appears to no greater advantage. The axiom so perpetually in the mouths of our bishops, that "it is the unquestionable duty of the state to provide for the religious instruction of the people," if closely examined, turns out to be an absurdity. If religion be regarded as loyalty to the divine government, if religious instruction be anything more than a simple mechanical exhibition of the truth, and if by the state be meant king, lords, and commons, then a more ridiculous dogma than the favourite one just mentioned it is scarcely possible even to imagine. The effects worked out by the practical application of it are certainly as baneful as the maxim itself is unreasonable. It discourages free inquiry into theological science, by fixing a creed for its clergy, and requiring to it unhesitating subscription. It challenges opposition to divine truth by giving to it the sanction of its own uncalled for, and therefore questionable, authority. The cure of souls, which ought to be regarded as imposing the weightiest of obligations, it turns into a marketable commodity. Priestism is engendered by it—priestism, the first-born child of worldliness and hypocrisy. The religion of its own members the state-church teaches them to devolve upon a parochial functionary, and to seek at the hands of the clergy a passport to a happy immortality, which will allow them to Baunter thither through any bye-ways, and in any com-

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pany which may suit their pleasure. Its very constitution renders it necessary that it should resort either to open persecution, which the spirit of the age prevents, or to toleration, which, in fact, is persecution *in posse*; and, however painful may be the former, it cannot degrade those against whom it is leveled to a lower and a meaner position than does the latter. The sympathies and energies of voluntaryism, as far as this nation is concerned, the state-church oppresses and paralyses by a lie; and as to the mass of the poorer inhabitants of this country, it has failed either to gain their confidence, to win their attachment, or to secure their piety.

If we turn from reason to religion, and consult inspired truth in reference to a religious Establishment, our views of it will scarcely become more favourable. All the great objects of Christianity, a state-church would seem constructed expressly to defeat. The one aims to govern human *nature*—the other, allied as it is with law, can command nothing but the *actions*. The first is gentle, and she comes speaking peace to the heart—the other allies herself with physical force, and seeks the maintenance of her clergy by means which are held to contaminate even a movement for political reform. Christianity is characterised by a beautiful simplicity—the state-church is overladen with the ornaments of ecclesiastical pomp. This forbids lordship—that asserts and upholds it. The aim of the one is to associate goodness, for the purpose of promoting its influence—the other mingles all classes

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together pell-mell, for no other object that can be discerned than with a view to their being taxed by one order of clergy. The first is characterised by a respectful deference to the rights of conscience—the last recognises no conscience but the fictitious one of the state. In the one case we have wages appointed to

the labourer—in the other the labourer is appointed to the wages. And this last feature of a national church is productive of the following results—that she professes to teach the vanity of this world by means of securing in it vested and inalienable rights, and whilst professing to seek unity, is herself the parent of incessant discord.

Such then is the evidence we have arrayed against the principle of national religious Establishments. There remains to us no further duty in this particular direction, than the offering of a few concluding remarks.

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XII.

CONCLUSION.

We cannot persuade ourselves to close our somewhat lengthened discussion of the principle of a state-church, and of the frightful evils, civil, social, and religious, which invariably follow in its train, without making a remark or two of a general nature, suggested by the subject considered as a whole. Those of our readers who have patiently (we dare not hope unweariedly) accompanied us from the outset of our career, and tracked our footsteps through all the varied scenes through which we have deemed it our duty to hold on our undeviating way, cannot but retire with us from this chase of error, bearing upon their minds impressions, more or less distinct, which may be regarded rather as the combined result of the general cast and tone of the argument, than as the effect of any one specific view of the question to which their attention has been invited. Such impressions it is our wish to revive.

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Those indistinct thoughts which ever and anon presented themselves at different stages of our inquiry, shadowy, fleeting, but yet perpetually recurring; recurring, too, with a more vivid show of reality, just in

proportion as we drew nigh to our conclusion, it is our present object to resuscitate, that they may be looked at afresh, viewed with judgments now somewhat cleared of the rubbish which habit had previously sanctified, and seen with eyes purged of those films which early associations had formed over them.

We think it impossible for any of our readers to turn aside from the contemplation of what is dignified with the title of national religion without being sensible, in some measure at least, of its utter insincerity. We speak not of the men who support it. What they may be as individuals, what the motives by which they are actuated, to what extent they are ignorant or mistaken, to what crafty or hypocritical, happily, it comes not within our province to decide. But that the system bears upon the face of it one thing, and carries in the heart of it another, and a very different one—that whilst it speaks of heaven it means earth—that its whole machinery works in the opposite direction to that in which it was professedly constructed to move—that it is a hollow pretence, a shining lie, a many-coloured globule of inconsistency—mere sanctified imposture—avarice and ambition under the guise of religion—the grossest worldliness thinly gilt with spiritual seeming—has, we make bold to think, been pretty conclusively established. It is not simply that

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the institution does not work out the results it professes to intend—this is not the ground of our hostility to it. It is rather that it does not, and cannot, intend what it professes—that it intends with the whole bent of its being something else, something which, if avowed, the bubble would burst—that were its means and appliances to compass the end they are devised avowedly to reach, and to fail of producing the results which are stated to be no part of their design—that is, were they to succeed in promoting genuine religion, and to fail in providing revenues, and offering themselves as an engine of influence

for, the aristocracy, the whole affair would be speedily thrown up as useless. Never was any people more effectually and more craftily deceived by mere words, than is our own by that ecclesiastical vocabulary which it has been the aim of successive generations to regard and treat as unquestionably sacred. The things said of the state-church have more weight, a thousand-fold, than the things done by the state-church—and so long as it gives out the sound of heaven, and rings like Christianity, we have been content to let it pass as pure gold, although, tried by every other test which knowledge and common sense can suggest, it turns out to be metal of the basest sort.

If our preceding labours have been of any worth—if the charges we have endeavoured to substantiate are sustained by any tolerable amount of proof—if we have given a fair outline of our own religious Establishment, and of the effects which necessarily result from the

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alliance of things secular and sacred, then the question of separation ought no longer to be regarded as a sectarian one, but rather, in the fullest sense, a national one. The whole people, save the small section comprising the patrons and recipients of church property, Buffer, whether they know it or not, incalculable mischief from the operation of the system. The tone which our national church avowedly gives to class interests and class legislation—the burden she imposes—the useful reforms she obstructs—the vicious principles, both social and political, to which she gives her sanction—the popular ignorance which, if she does not create, she may be proved to have upheld—the debasing influence she exerts upon the religion of all parties and all sects—and the disesteem, far more widely spread than appears upon the surface, into which her grasping spirit and recklessness of morality have brought the Christian faith, render her a public nuisance, the speedy removal of which interests every class of people in this country. The question is not one of creeds, but of

patriotism. It belongs not to denominations, but to the subjects of the realm. Whether the doctrines established be scriptural or anti-christian; whether ecclesiastical government should be episcopal, presbyterian, or congregational; or whether the formularies of the state-church embrace more or less truth, may be matters for grave discussion, considered in themselves, but they by no means appertain to the subject of separation. The controversy between the abettors and the opponents of state-churches ranges only within

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the limits of this inquiry, whether the ascendancy and legal maintenance of any one sect, are conducive to the civil, social or religious welfare of the nation. The question, therefore, is a national one. The evils inflicted by an ecclesiastical Establishment are inflicted upon the empire at large; and honest patriotism, far more than sectarian zeal, is concerned in the rightful settlement of the controversy.

We have another remark to offer—a remark, as it appears to us, of great practical importance. Hitherto objections to the national church have involved the admission that the institution is a religious one. It has been treated as though it formed a section of the universal church of Christ. The language held towards it—the maxims enforced upon the dissentients from it—the line of defence which nonconformity has usually consented to adopt, have all combined to leave upon the public mind an impression that the church of England is a true church, which owing to various influences has wandered into the paths of error. Now, that a goodly number of sincere Christians may be found within its pale, and profess ardent attachment to its doctrines and discipline, we are not disposed to deny; but that it is a political institution, not a sacred one—that it is maintained for secular rather than spiritual ends—that it is under the government of worldly powers—that it comprehends within its bosom all classes, without the slightest regard to their religious

character—that it adopts means for the accomplishment of its objects which the whole spirit, and in many

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instances, the express precepts of Christianity repudiates—that it wants all the essential qualifications, not simply of a true church, but a church in any sense, we take to have been abundantly substantiated. The controversy between its advocates and dissenters will make little progress until this ground is boldly taken. Defections from the ranks of nonconforming families will continue to go on until this view of the subject is fairly and honestly adopted by the friends of the voluntary principle. We want the decision, without the violence, of the first reformers. Our strength lies in aggression, rather than in defence. The system which at present obstructs the free working of Christian principles, and the general diffusion of Christian truth, must be smitten with the sword of sharp rebuke, and pursued with all the determination of purpose which should sustain the minds, and brace up the energies, of men who are aiming at the overthrow of antichrist. Whatever there is of real good, mingled with the mass of corruption and evil, will survive the system which it now helps to sanctify, and by which its own elasticity and usefulness are well nigh destroyed. Upon all national churches is enstamped, in deep and indelible characters, the mark of the beast. All kind of alliance with them, the genius of Christianity strictly prohibits. “Come out and be separate,” is the only command which, in reference to these institutions, we are permitted to regard. Homage the most indirect paid to the state-church is, in essence, the recognition of falsehood and the worship of a lie.

APPENDIX.

WHILST the papers entitled, "Political Views of a State-church," were in course of publication in the *Nonconformist*, a new paper called the *Church Intelligencer*, attacked the writer's views on church property. A discussion followed—and the following pages contain two or three papers on the subject, just as they appeared. They are inserted, without alteration, that the tone of them may be more easily accounted for, and something like continuity preserved.

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APPENDIX.

CHURCH PROPERTY NATIONAL PROPERTY.

If the church of England, "as bylaw established," has any other title to her revenues than that conferred upon her by act of parliament, they must be hers of her own right. The *Church Intelligencer* implies that they were possessed by the church "before any parliament at all existed." We must beg him to inform us what church he is speaking of. The protestant episcopal establishment, claiming exclusive right to these funds, never had a legal being until the statutes 1 and 2 Edward VI. Tithes were originally set apart for the support of that branch of the Roman church established in this kingdom. By that church they were for centuries enjoyed, until, by act of parliament, 2 and 3 Edward VI., it was provided that if any rector, vicar, perpetual curate, or other priest, should, in future, say mass in the usual manner, and not use the common prayer-book, he should forfeit to the king one year's revenue of his benefice, and be imprisoned for six months; that for a second offence he should be deprived of his benefice and of all his spiritual promotions, and be imprisoned for one whole year; and for a third offence, impri-

sonment during his natural life; and, further, it authorised patrons to appoint a protestant successor, as if he were dead.

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If this be not, as we described it, a handing over in trust by parliament her present temporalities to the Anglican church, we must leave the *Church Intelligencer* to tell us more precisely what it is. The original possessors of these funds are by law dispossessed—and by law, authority is given to appoint other men to the enjoyment of them in their stead. The state was either right or wrong in passing this act. If right, then church funds are under its control. If wrong, then the protestant episcopal church, has no title to them.

If our opponent objects to take the acts to which we have referred, as decisive of the question, we beg to call his attention to the 13th Elizabeth, c. 12, excluding from all share in the tithes or any other church property, all persons who will not swear to, and subscribe the articles of the church of England. The effect of this act is just this. The state declares—“You, the clergy, whom I permit to enjoy these revenues, shall obey my commands. The doctrines I am resolved to promulgate are contained in these articles. Preach them, and I will allow you the pay—deny them, and the funds shall be withheld.” Again we say, that if words have any meaning, this is parliament handing over to the church of England temporalities in trust.

That the church does not hold this property in her own right is easily demonstrated. The *Church Intelligencer* says, “It is true that although it has not the *right*, parliament has the *power* to take away from the church, all or any portion of her property—but it can never exercise that power only on the same principle, and with the same justice and wisdom as it can take away Mr. *Nonconformist’s* coat from his back, or the property of any individual in the land.” This is placing church property on the same footing as individual property—to which the following objections may be urged.

1. Individual property is possessed absolutely—church property only on certain conditions. The clergy are servants

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of the state, paid their wages for communicating religious instruction after a certain creed. It matters not a rush whether their pension be a pecuniary or a territorial one. Their salary is paid for work presumed to be done; and the non-performance, of the work, destroys the only valid title to the pay. This is not the tenure on which individual property is held.

2. Private property is held for the benefit of the person possessing it—church property for the benefit of the country at large.

3. Private property may be disposed of in any way the person possessed of it may consider fit—the revenues of the church are inalienable by the parties enjoying them. It is justly observed by Macintosh, that “it would not be less absurd for the priesthood to exercise such authority over these lands, than it would be for seamen to claim the property of the fleet they manned, or soldiers that of a fortress they garrisoned.” In each case the property occupied is that of the state.

4. Quoting further from this illustrious jurisconsult—“It is confessed that no individual priest is a proprietor, and it is not denied that his utmost claim is limited to a possession for life of his stipend. If all the priests taken individually are not proprietors, the priesthood as a body cannot claim any such right—for what is a body but an aggregate of individuals, and what new right can be conveyed by a mere change of name?”

Our opponent will forgive us, and our readers we are confident will not be displeased, if in illustration of this point we cite the language of another authority. Lord Brougham in a speech delivered by him in parliament during the session for 1825, after describing the nature of private property, thus expressed himself—

“But how did the property of the parson at all correspond with this description? He could neither sell it, nor transfer it, nor leave it to whom he pleased; but it passed from him to a successor of whom he knew nothing, and who, perhaps, had been his most mortal enemy. If private property

were taken from an individual, the state robbed not only him, but his children, or next heirs; but if the law said to a clerical incumbent ‘the profits of this living shall cease after your death,’ who, in whom that clergyman had any interest, was in the smallest degree damnified? Besides, was it not clear that private property was that income for the receipt of which the holder had no duty to perform? The clergy were officers of the state, and like other officers of the state, might be got rid of in proportion as they were no farther required. If the church property, as it was called, was private property, why was not the pay of the army and navy personal in an equal degree? And the practice showed how the fact stood. If the tithe was really private property, it could not be meddled with at all.”

The *Church Intelligencer* declares, that “inasmuch as the property of the church has been devoted and consecrated to God, and is His especial property, it is far more sinful to rob the church, than it is to rob a private individual.” This is taking high ground, but is it safe? Our opponent seems to imply, that the head of the church—we mean our Lord, not the Queen—takes an interest in worldly property for its own sake. Does he mean to affirm, that if the present application of these funds to religious purposes, is found to impede rather than assist the cause of Christianity, the diversion of them from their present channel would incur divine disapprobation? Does God love money better than truth? We grieve that any professed advocate of the gospel should put us under the necessity of asking the question. Besides, if it be especially the property of God, it cannot belong to the clergy, the only sense in which we can understand the term church as used by the *Intelligencer*, unless they can show a clear warrant from Heaven for retaining it. The matter stands just thus—here are certain funds devoted ostensibly to the support of the Christian religion; if it be found that the mode of collection and application is not in consonance with the genius of that religion, and serves, in fact, to secularise and corrupt it, it becomes every lover of truth, to seek to put an end to the arrangement. To talk of the sinfulness of the attempt is to do what the Establishment fatally encourages—it is to confound truth with mammon.

TITHES AND BEQUESTS.

It will save a vast deal of trouble to the *Intelligencer* if thus early in the discussion, we untwist his tangled thoughts on other matters to which frequent reference must necessarily be made. It will at once furnish him and his readers an answer to every material objection he has yet offered to our scheme, and prevent him, in future from perpetrating many a blunder. For without intending the slightest discourtesy, we may affirm, that even the little appearance of force which his arguments display, must be ascribed to the unhesitating air with which he confounds things which differ.

1. It may be very right for the state to protect what it may be very wrong for the state to support. Governments are instituted for the protection of our rights—of which, the most valuable is, liberty to worship God according to our conscience. Thus much the state is bound to secure to all its subjects; and, if the meetings of dissenters for this sacred purpose be disturbed by lawless violence, as citizens, they do right in claiming the interposition of the magistrate. This is a very different matter from asking state support. Had our opponent seen the distinction, he might have spared himself the pains of putting forward the case of Lady Hewley's charity. The wisdom of disputing before civil tribunals respecting the legal application of endowments for religious purposes, may be open to a question: but the inconsistency of the man who repudiates the support of his faith by public money compulsorily exacted, and who at the same time claims the assistance of the state in what appears to him to be the proper appropriation of funds voluntarily bequeathed, must

be clearly pointed out before it can be fitly designated by the epithet "preposterous."

2. Our opponent must learn to distinguish between "tithes" and "property bequeathed"—and when he speaks of property bequeathed to the Romish church, (in almost all cases "expia-

tory donations from wealthy sinners, bestowed expressly for the purpose of obtaining the church's carminative to soothe the irritability of a feverish conscience," or "property made over to priests in exchange for their intercessory influence in favour of souls in purgatory") he is hardly warranted in saying that it was bequeathed "for the express purpose of promulgating the doctrines of the book of common prayer," by which that same Romish church is denounced as anti-christ. If such mystifications of plain truth will pass with his readers, it must be in consequence of their entire ignorance on such subjects—but, really, he must not attempt to palm off upon us as genuine argument, stuff like this. What was given to the Romish church certainly was not given "for the express purpose" of spreading the doctrines of the church which overthrew it.

Not more correct is it to speak of tithes as property bequeathed. Even were history silent on this head, the uniformity and universality of this tax upon produce—it being always a tenth, and imposed in every parish, operating as well upon recent inclosures of waste lands as upon those of old under cultivation—might suffice to convince us that in the proper sense of the term, taxes are not a bequest but a state grant. And what the nature of the thing suggests, history confirms—the power of seizing a tenth of the produce of the soil, having been granted by Offa to the priests of Hadrian I., for the avowed object of expiating a foul and villainous murder committed on his rival in the race of usurpation. Property specially devoted to God! Why, if we are compelled to rip up the history of church property, how it came into the hands of the clergy, and how it has been dealt with

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since it got there, we will be bound to present from authentic sources a picture of rapacity, cruelty, cunning, and impiety, such as no other single subject can furnish. Is it possible for the clergy to look at the statute of *mortmain* and not blush to speak of church funds as bequeathed by the piety of saints for the advancement of Christianity? Was not the mass of ecclesiastical property wrung by clerical avarice, using the screw of superstition, from dying wretches whose lives had disgraced

humanity, and whose ill-gotten wealth was at last the purchase-money paid to the priesthood, to open the gates of heaven?

We have only further to remark on this subject, that the power of tithing the produce of the soil, given by Offa to the clergy, was bestowed by him in his usurped capacity, as the supreme civil magistrate, for the property thus invaded was not individually his own. He chose to affirm practically "*L'etat c'est moi*," and what the state unrighteously gave in trust in Offa's time, what it violently transferred backwards and forwards in Henry, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth's time, it may justly and peacefully resume in our own time.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY *IN RE* TITHES

That tithes were claimed by the clergy, and in many instances received previously to any grant of them by the civil power, is admitted *quoad* the fact, but not *quoad* the argument. Neither the claim, nor obedience to it, constituted any right of property.

Offa king of Mercia, avowedly to expiate the murder of Ethelbert king of East Anglia, whom he had received at his court as suitor for the hand of his daughter, with every show of hospitality, first decreed the payment of tithes. Ethelwulf probably after his return from Borne, to which city he had

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made a pilgrimage, and where he behaved in manner suited to his narrow mind, in making charitable foundations, and in extending over the whole of the kingdom the Rome-scot or Peter-pence, which the folly of some princes of the heptarchy had granted for their particular dominions—Ethelwulf, in a decree, three varying copies of which are yet extant, and the real meaning of which it is difficult to ascertain, is generally supposed to have conveyed a grant of tithes, with the consent of the Witan, to the clergy of Wessex; which charter, by a *council* of the tributary states, held at Winchester in 855, was extended to all the nations of the Saxons.

On these main facts we are agreed. And from these facts we deduce our first conclusion—that tithes became the property of the church by a grant of the civil magistrate—in

other words, that the state gave to the church the power of claiming tithes, prædial, mixed, and personal.

The next question which occurs, is, as to the nature of the grant. Did the state let go its hold on the property thus allotted to the church, or bestow it in trust, reserving to itself power to regulate and control its distribution, and when it pleased to alienate it for ever?

From the first, the state has dealt with tithes as property in trust. So early as the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. it interfered in the appropriation of tithes, enacting (15 Ric. II. c. 6; 4 Hen. IV. c. 12), as a check upon the avarice of monks and rectors, that curates, who, from being vice-agents, were then called vicars, should have some determinate support assigned to them for the perpetual maintenance of the cure.

By the statute 45 Ed. III. c. 3, great wood of twenty years' growth and upwards were exempted from the operation of tithes. By an act of 2 and 3 Ed. VI. barren heath and waste ground are likewise discharged.

There can be no need to do more than refer, in confirmation of this point, to the act (27 Hen. VIII. c. 28) by which "his majesty shall have and enjoy to him and his heirs for ever, all

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and singular such monasteries, priories, and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns, of what kind of diversities of habits, rules or order soever they be called or named, which have not in lands, tenements, rents, tithes, portions, and other hereditaments, above the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds."

We think these facts, coupled with another fact, that church property is wanting in all the attributes of property absolutely possessed, prove that the state which allotted it to the clergy, allotted it on trust, never loosed its hold upon it, regulated at its will the disposal of it, and resumed it as it saw fit.

We proceed to examine, on what church this property was originally conferred.

The *Intelligencer* says, "By 'the church' we mean the church of England, or, if he like it better, the church in England, or the English church, or if he wishes us still further to explain, we mean that branch of the one holy catholic and

apostolical church of Christ which has existed here in England well towards eighteen hundred years, to which the tithes of England with other privileges and immunities were given hundreds of years before Edward the Sixth or Henry the Eighth were (was?) born, and long before either parliament or popery existed." This reminds us strongly of a similar definition by Bardolph, "I will maintain the word with my sword to be a good soldier-like word, and a word of exceeding good command. Accommodated; that is, when a man is, as they say, accommodated: or, when a man is—being—whereby—he may be thought to be accommodated; which is an excellent thing."

Shifting the title "the church of England" does not touch the question. The name represents a reality—has usually stood in this kingdom, and especially in connexion with church property, as the representative of a body of clergy, held together by some common bond, acting out some common purpose.

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The clerical body called "Ecclesia Anglicana" upon whom tithes were first bestowed, were united by faith in the doctrines of the church of Rome, recognised its spiritual jurisdiction, and sought to extend its triumphs.

For near a century after the mission of Augustine, the great ecclesiastical chair, in this country, was filled by foreigners nominated by the popes. Ethelwulf, who made the grant of tithes, was a devotee of Rome. The alienation of them by ecclesiastics, whether to laymen or spiritual corporations, was abolished, and appropriated to those persons who had the cure of souls in the respective parishes, by Pope Innocent III. in a decretal epistle addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury. To Edward the First, the pope granted (for the civil power was then completely subordinate to the ecclesiastical) the tenths and first-fruits of an ecclesiastical benefice for six years; and it was not until 1532, in the reign of Henry VIII., that an act was passed for withholding from the court of Rome the first-fruits which had been invariably paid. The *Church Intelligencer* may say, this was not a branch of the Roman church established in these realms—but it has equal reason to

affirm this of the holy apostolical church of Christ in Spain. Merely calling it the church of England does not alter its real character. The clergy were members of the Roman church, subject to its control, liable to be deprived, at its will, of their benefices, and dispensing its sacraments. To this clergy, for these purposes, tithes were originally given—and this clergy do not now enjoy them.

Let us watch the process of transfer.

In answer to our assertion that “the protestant episcopal establishment claiming exclusive right to these funds, never had a legal being until the statutes 1 and 2 Ed. VI.,” the *Church Intelligencer*, who afterwards speaks of our “making vague assertions about acts of parliament which we never saw and which never existed,” challenges us to prove “that any such thing as the protestant episcopal establishment received a

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legal being from those acts, or is even once mentioned in them or in any other act of parliament whatsoever.”

That it is not mentioned by name is true—nor is it, that we are aware of, mentioned in the New Testament. As in the one case, the absence of the title would not be held by the *Intelligencer* as proof that the thing represented by that title was not to be found there, so, if we find the *thing* in acts of parliament, he must excuse us for standing by our first assertion.

It matters very little whether the cart is brought to the horse, or the horse to the cart, when the inquiry is, as to the party that brought them together.

We say that the protestant episcopal church was constituted the church of England by act of parliament, and was put into possession of ecclesiastical funds in the place of the Romish church, which was thrust out to make room for it. What matters it whether the church set apart a clergy for the tithes, or set apart the tithes for a clergy? The title by which the clergy hold the tithes, is the act of parliament that brings into legal association the one and the other.

We shall cursorily glance at these acts which the *Intelligencer* says never existed.

The statute 1 Ed. VI. c. 1 enacts, that "the most blessed sacrament be hereafter commonly delivered and ministered unto the people within the church of England and Ireland, and other the king's dominions; under both the kinds, that is to say, of bread and wine." The statute 2 and 3 Ed. VI. c. 1, after setting forth in the preamble, that the king had appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury and others, "to draw and make one convenient and meet order, rite and fashion of common and open prayer, and administration of the sacraments, to be had and used in his majesty's realm of England and in Wales," proceeds "to give to his highness most hearty and lowly thanks for the same," and enacts, "that all and singular ministers, in any cathedral or parish church, ...

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shall, from and after the feast of Pentecost next coming, be bounden to say and use the mattens, evensong, celebration of the Lord's supper, commonly called the mass, and administration of each the sacraments, and all their common and open prayer, in such order and form as is mentioned in the same book, and none other or otherwise;" and further that "if any such person once convict of any such offence (vis. 'to preach, declare, or speak anything in the derogation or depraving of the said book, or anything therein contained') shall after his first conviction eftsoons offend ... shall therefore be deprived *ipso facto* of all his spiritual promotions, and that it shall be lawful to all patrons, donors, grantees, of all and singular the same spiritual promotions, to present to the same any other able clerk, in like manner and form, as though the party so offending were dead."

We have here the sacraments of a church and the ritual of a church altered by law, and the forms of the present protestant episcopal church receiving a legal being by enactment—and we have a clergy, who down to that time administered the seven sacraments of Borne, and used her ritual, thrust out of office to make room for such as adopted the new faith and forms. The statute was repealed by 1 Mary, c. 2, sec. 2, but that again being repealed by 1 Jac. c. 25, this present statute stands now in force, excepting such part as is altered by 5 Ed. VI. c. 1, and by 1 Elis. c. 2.

All that we now want to make a new church of England, are articles of faith and a clergy.

The statute 13 Elis. c. 12 thus opens:—"That the churches of the queen's majesty's dominions may be served with pastors of sound religion, be it enacted by the authority of this present parliament, that every person under the degree of a bishop, which doth, or shall pretend to be a priest, or minister of God's holy word and sacraments, by reason of any other form of institution, consecration, or ordering, than the form set forth by parliament in the time of the late king of

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most worthy memory, king Edward the Sixth ... shall in the presence of the bishop, or guardian of the spiritualities ... declare his assent and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which only concern the confession of the true christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments, comprised in a book imprinted, intituled, '*Articles, &c.*' and shall bring from such bishop ... under his seal authentic, a testimonial of such assent and subscription, and openly on some Sunday in the time of public service ... read both the said testimonial and the said articles, upon pain that every such person which shall not ... do as is above appointed, shall be *ipso facto* deprived, and all his ecclesiastical promotions shall be void, as if he then were naturally dead." The act goes on to require the same assent and subscription of every future incumbent, and to declare that all admissions to benefices made contrary to the form and provision of this act, "shall be merely void in law as if they never were."

Here we have in these statutes the legal enactment of the sacraments, ritual, and articles of the present protestant episcopal church, authoritatively displacing the sacraments, ritual, and articles of Rome, heretofore of force in this kingdom—and yet, because to both churches the title is given "the Church of England," we are called upon to regard them as one and the same.

We contend that when a body of men holding certain doctrines, submitting to certain jurisdiction, and seeking a certain end, are driven from the possession of the funds they have long enjoyed, to make room for men holding quite other

doctrines, submitting to quite another jurisdiction, and seeking quite other ends, call the body by whatever name you will, it is not the same body before as after such interference. The title may be the same but the thing is different.

We have now proved that tithes were originally bestowed upon the church by the civil magistrate, that they are held from the state in trust and have always been so dealt with,

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that the church who first enjoyed them was a branch of the Roman church, and that the present protestant episcopal church has no other title to church property than that conferred upon it by act of parliament.

FALLACIES LURKING UNDER THE TERM "CHURCH."

We have an indistinct glimmering of having somewhere read in our younger days—we believe in a book of vanity, but displaying great intellectual power withal, yclept "Arabian Nights"—of a certain genius who could dwell in a bottle, or occupy the space of a mountain, at will. We should imagine, but that the writer was a genuine Mussulman, that he intended to present his readers with a pleasant type of the term "church." No descriptive title in use amongst us at the present day is more elastic. At times it would appear to represent a small body, say two or three, of believing men. Occasionally it stands for the bench of bishops. Usually, in connection with the subject of church property, it comprehends the whole body of the clergy; and, when argument requires a further expansion of the term, it can be made to embrace the entire nation. Sometimes it means a thing, sometimes a community of men. Now it stands for a fiction of the imagination, and anon for a substantial edifice. It would seem to be the legitimate representative of anything, or nothing, according to the convenience of the party employing it.

We have no objection to this various use of the word tunder consideration, provided that the writer does not shuffle his cards. The utmost confusion has been introduced into discussions upon ecclesiastical topics, by the practice of playing off

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this title sometimes in one sense, at others in a very different one. Of this species of sophistry the *Church Intelligencer* has largely availed himself, and, by a sort of *hocus-pocus* use of the word "church," has contrived to give his articles an appearance of argument.

We believe the *Church Intelligencer* himself would start with astonishment at the shrunken and shrivelled appearance of his reasonings, were he only compelled to define the term in question, and rigidly to adhere to his definition throughout his entire course. As we shrewdly suspect he will never be guilty of so much honesty, we shall considerably relieve him of the necessity. And now "mark how plain a tale shall put him down."

The substance of the *Church Intelligencer's* argument is this. The holy apostolical church of Christ existed in this kingdom hundreds of years anterior to popery itself. To it, tithes were given by the civil power, and in favour of it bequests made, long before Henry VIII. or Edward VI., were heard of. From the first it has been the church of England, or the church in England, or the English church; consequently, the property which it enjoys, it enjoys in its own right; and, therefore, the appropriation of such property to civil purposes, would be worse than robbery, it would be downright sacrilege.

By the "church of England" existing prior to popery, he means, if he understands himself, certain congregations of professed christians, unconnected with the state, holding fast, for the most part, the doctrines of the apostles, possessing no legal claim to tithes, and supporting themselves, as all primitive churches were wont, by the voluntary contributions of christian disciples. Upon the aggregate of these religious communities scattered up and down through various parts of the kingdom, he claps the designation "church of England," and forthwith exclaims, "See here the venerable antiquity of our holy mother church." It does not seem to occur to this

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writer, that if these societies of believers are fitly represented by this title, no valid reason exists why it may not be appropriated by the numerous churches of methodists, independents, baptists, and other denominations of our own day. They are christian bodies, they hold evangelical doctrines, they are unconnected with the state, and they exist in England; and, if the protestant episcopal church derive her claims to property from these societies who transmitted none, equally valid would be the claim of every christian congregation in these realms.

Passing forward from remote antiquity, we come to the mission of Augustine. We have now a new order of things. Troops of clergy subject to the Roman pontiff take spiritual possession of the kingdom, and the church of which they may be said to constitute the body, the head of which was the pope, partly supersedes, partly absorbs the christian societies planted here and there before their arrival. Their master, the legitimate successor of St. Peter, establishes an ecclesiastical chair at Canterbury—appoints its occupants, and receives their homage. By working upon the superstitious fears of one of the vilest, and one of the weakest of monarchs, this new clerical body obtained a decree for tithes. The church is established, and wears the title—"church of England."

In the former case the term comprehended a few christian communities, nowise associated with the state—in the latter, a host of clergy sent hither by Rome, and under papal control. We argue, that if the protestant episcopal church does not hold its property by virtue of an act of parliament, the funds it now enjoys belong of right to the Roman Catholics—and we are told that "the church" existed in these realms long prior to popery itself. We go back to examine how the claims of our present Establishment spring out of the ante-papal church; and when we urge that tithes were not bestowed upon it, we are led forward to decrees of Offa and Ethelwulf, made in favour of a church which supplanted the

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elder one. Now we wish to have one thing or another. The title to the property is either derived from the constellation of voluntary churches which shone upon our land before popery was established, or from the decrees obtained from the state by the papal clergy. If from the former, why quote the decrees *1* if from the latter, why pretend to a right prior to them? We are reminded strongly of the dexterity of those sons of wit, who abstract current coin of the realm from the pockets of liege subjects of her Majesty, by shuffling a pea from one thimble to another, and practising upon the simplicity of spectators. The pea stands for property, and the thimbles represent churches. We guess that it is to be found first under this, then under that, but no! we are always wrong. It comes not from statutory enactment—it comes not from the Roman church—it comes not from the ancient Anglican bodies—and yet, at need, it is found under each of them. What are we to do? First, this is the church—then, this is not the church but that—in short everything is the church by which property may be secured. The whole trick consists in playing off the various meanings of the word, “church of England.”

What is the “church of England” but the nation viewed in relation to spiritual things? The national church and the nation are co-extensive, and made up of the same individuals. This is the theory of an Establishment. By what right, human or divine, do the clergy constitute themselves “the church,” and pretend, in virtue of being so, to be sole legal possessors of ecclesiastical funds? Were every one of them to die to-morrow, what right does any individual, or body of individuals, except the state, hold to tithes? Who would be defrauded, were the state to appropriate them? What man could complain that he had been robbed by the tyranny of the state? And if none, then what difference does it make, whether the clergy die all at once, or only one by one, as to the justice or injustice of this resumption of funds by the state?

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The *Intelligencer* tells us the church would be deprived of her own. Now let the *Intelligencer* just toss the term overboard, and inform us who are the *men*, singly, or in an associated capacity, that would be deprived of their own, supposing the proceeds of every benefice, upon the death of its present incumbent, should be diverted to civil purposes, after allowing the patron reasonable compensation. Things do not claim tithes, but men do. To what men do they of right belong? and whence did those men obtain their rights? Until our adversary answers this, we beg to hand him over for cross examination to our able correspondent, "A Wesleyan dissenter," whose letter we have just at this moment opportunely received.