

their exercise of it, when they find an argument against the buskin of the player, in that it 'adds a cubit unto his stature,' &c.—we cannot but admire the same research as applied to a more worthy end, when it discovers a number of subordinate prophecies relating to the Saviour to come, in passages commonly overlooked; and we think the preacher would only have the more attentive audience, who whilst he did not keep back such prophecies, as are the most striking and prominent, as, for instance, that of the Miraculous Conception, contained in the seventh chapter of Isaiah; that of his character and office, in the ninth; or that of his person, reception, and end, in the fifty-third; should nevertheless sensor his sermon with those more secondary predictions which Tertullian detects, or thinks he detects elsewhere, of his being sent by Pilate to Herod; of the darkness at noon-day; of the veil being rent; of the body being missing; of the resort of the women to the sepulchre; and of the charge they received on seeing the vision of angels.

The observance, therefore, of this rule in the construction of sermons, to presume upon the congregation having some acquaintance with the common places of scripture, though much to learn as to the remainder, would have the effect of relieving them from that tediousness which naturally attaches to compositions that enlarge upon what we know well, and keep silence upon what we know imperfectly; and though the remark applies to all sermons alike, yet the country parson is he who is likely to offend against it most, being under a temptation beyond others to reckon upon the simple people loving simplicity over much, and thus to dilute his divinity till it is really too small for bibles. Baxter, who, as every body must be aware, is for the plainest of all plain-speaking in the minister, nevertheless cautions him with his characteristic good sense, 'lest in fearing to go beyond the present understanding of the people, he teach them nothing but what they know already; and thus entice them to think that he is as ignorant as they, and that they are as worthy to be preachers as he, because they can do as much and as well as he is used to do.' It is not indeed in the nature of things that a class of persons who delight in a pithy proverb beyond any other, and seldom open their lips without one, can take much pleasure in a thin and threadbare address; and the preacher who is to hold together even the most rural congregation for any long time, must be prepared, with Mr. Hare, to bring out of his treasures things new as well as old. It may not be here out of place to add, that the staple of these sermons is rendered still more substantial by their author's theological reading, independently of scripture. We can trace in them, for instance, Taylor, Baxter, and, we think, Hull, not always as works which Mr. Hare was directly quoting, though this sometimes, but which he had digested and made his own, and might draw from, without knowing it; and it will be found in theology, as in all other sciences, that however elementary may be the treatise required, it will be the best done by the best informed man; that the Church Catechism, simple as it seems, could only have been framed by deep divines, and that a village sermon will be most to the purpose, when written by one who, like Mr. Hare, combines with a knowledge of village ways, such reading as would qualify him for a far different audience.

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH; IN TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND. LETTER II.

My dear Friend,—

I now proceed, agreeably to my promise, to a vindication of the FORMS of the Church, and I trust that I shall make it appear to your satisfaction that these are good and proper in themselves, and agreeable to the practice of the Church in all ages. I had heard it frequently said, that in the reading of prayers there could be little or no devotion; and without much reflection upon the subject, it seemed as if there must be some truth in the assertion. The custom was so different from that to which I had been used, and my mind was so habituated to an entire dependence upon the invention of my minister, that I did not dare to suppose that there could be any such thing as prayer, where the language was premeditated. The supposition even carried with it the idea of profanity, and I was almost ready to condemn unequivocally and without examination.

But when I attended upon the worship of the Church, and noticed the appearance so different from that in congregational societies—every knee bent, and every heart and voice seemingly engaged, I could not but think that the spirit of supplication was there in a greater degree than I had ever before witnessed in any other place, and that if the blessing of God was ever granted to a human petition, it would not be withheld from those who manifested so much apparent fervency and sincerity.

This, with some other circumstances, soon dispelled my previous impressions in regard to the reading of prayers, as the effect of early prejudice, and led me to consider the assertions which had been made as the ebullitions of ignorance and bigotry. I found that there were some congregational ministers who were always in the habit of using a form; that whole associations united in publishing and recommending volumes of written prayers for the use of their people; and that family devotions in many instances were carried on in this way; and upon reflection, I could not consider the singing of psalms, as usually practiced, and without any doubt of its propriety, to be any other than praying to God and praising him by forms. These are pre-composed in all congregations; and if a general union is intended in the part of worship which they compose, as they partake in a great measure of the nature of prayer, it seemed to me that what was right in the one case could not be wrong in respect of the other. Besides, I found that extemporaneous prayers on the part even of ministers generally fell at last into a form; and that indeed such they must always be considered in regard to those who join in the petitions they contain. Public prayer, whether pre-composed or extempore, is unavoidably a form to all by whom it is not originated, inasmuch as they receive words which are dictated to them; and if they are intent only upon their devotions, it is impossible for them to determine whether the minister invents at the moment, or repeats from memory. I knew also that as respected

myself, I had too generally been a hearer of prayer, rather than a devout worshipper, and the appearance of a great portion of the congregation intimated a similar condition on their part. I found that they were ready to criticise the language and style of prayer in the same manner as they did the sermon: to admire every beauty of expression, and to applaud all the minutiæ of detail to which the occasion led.

With these views, which satisfied me at once that there could be no rational objection to forms, even on the part of those who rejected them, I proceeded to consider whether they were not from the nature of prayer, and in order to the suitable edification of the people, far preferable to the extemporaneous mode. It is the design of public worship that the united wants and feelings of a whole congregation should be expressed. And how is this to be done unless some method be adopted of which there may be a previous general knowledge, and in the form and order of which all may agree?

There is, I think, a great advantage in having a form of prayer for the whole Church, as it constitutes a bond of union which cannot be broken, and tends to the preservation of the faith in its purity. Not only the members of one society or congregation unite in their prayers and praises to one common Father, but the same petitions and thanksgivings are ascending to the throne of grace from the Church Universal. And if Christ has promised to hear the requests of two or three when gathered together in his name, how much more will he grant their petitions when presented in the same way by the thousands and millions who kneel before his altar?

That forms of prayer are of ancient and divine institution, is to me evident from Scripture: The first piece of solemn worship recorded in the Bible is a form—the song of Moses and the children of Israel, after the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, which was first repeated by the men, and afterwards responded by Miriam and the women.—Forms also were given to Moses and Aaron in the wilderness; one in relation to the atonement to be made for the expiation of an uncertain murder; another to be used when the ark rested, and when it set forward, and a third for the blessing of the people by the priest. Besides, the whole book of Psalms are forms of prayer and praise, which were used in Jewish worship, and are still retained in the Church.

If we come to the New Testament times, we find Christ providing a form for the use of his disciples, even as John also had taught his followers the manner in which they were to pray. He always attended the worship of the Jewish synagogue, which was carried on altogether by forms, and had there been any impropriety in the mode, he certainly would not have withheld his reproof. From the time of Christ and his Apostles, forms in public worship were universal in the Church until the sixteenth century, and the same arguments are to be produced in their favour from ecclesiastical history as in regard to the Episcopacy.

When I had satisfied myself of the superior excellence of forms over extemporaneous prayers, and became convinced that they had prevailed in all ages of the Church, and been sanctioned by the example and precept of its great Head and his Apostles, as well as by Moses and the prophets, I proceeded to the consideration of the Episcopal Liturgy, which I found so rational, so comprehensive, and so well adapted to the expressions of public wants and feelings, that I could not for a moment withhold my approbation. The language is scriptural and solemn, the arrangement excellent and instructive, and it may well be said that in the Prayer Book, the Bible is discovered in a devotional form.

(To be concluded in our next)

THE CHURCH.

COBOURG, SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1836.

Upon the spirit, if not upon the literal tenor of the Constitutional Act, as cited in our last, Churchmen, as we have often said, might be content to rest their cause; and they are not without a hope that even the dictates of expediency, apart from the possible return to a respect for equity and law by those who should be its legitimate guardians, may yet secord them the justice which has been denied them so long. Whosoever peruses the several clauses of this Act, without the prejudice of sectarian jealousy or of interested opposition, cannot fail to come to the conclusion that in allowing it to be the subject of a day's litigation, is an injustice to the Church of England only to be explained by the degenerate and fickle character of the times.

And this, as we shewed in a former number, was a construction of the Act from which, until within a few years, there was neither at home nor in the Colonies one dissenting voice. What had been the universal impression here, is sufficiently evident from the various provincial enactments, already cited, which are expressly predicated upon this interpretation of the Act; and that such was the persuasion also of the Imperial Government, is manifest from the establishment of the Bishopric of Quebec, from the subsequent division of the Provinces into Archdeaconries, from the tenor of the Instructions to the Governors of the Colony, from the unequivocal reply of Earl Bathurst to the first memorial of the Scottish Clergy, and above all from the establishment of the Corporations—composed exclusively of clergymen of the Church of England—for the management of the Reserves themselves.

The only ground upon which the shadow of a pretension from any other quarter can be made to rest, is the apparent vagueness of the term 'Protestant Clergy,' for the maintenance of which these lands are specifically appropriated; but as this was intended to embrace one body, in contradistinction to another body for whom provision had antecedently been made, it was the simplest and most natural term which, under the circumstances, could have been adopted;—PROTESTANT, as distinguished from Roman Catholics,—and CLERGY, as distinct from the ministers of all other Protestant sects and denominations: For the word 'Clergy,' it ought to be recollect, is a term purely legal; and, in the English Statute Book, it never has a reference to any

other than the ministers of the Established Church. None but a 'clerk in orders,'—in other words a 'clergyman'—can, according to Blackstone, hold a benefice; but to whom can a reference to the holding of a benefice in England apply, unless to the ministers of the Established Church alone? Various statutes can, in short, be adduced where this distinctive application of the term 'Clergy' is most decidedly maintained; and in the 41 Geo. III. c. 63, the difference is upheld, in masked terms, for example between "a clergyman of the Church of England and a minister of the Church of Scotland."

How strange, too,—if any other religious body than the Church of England were meant,—that, when in the 38th and 39th clauses so specific a provision is made for the endowment of Rectories and the presentation of Incumbents ordained according to the rules of that Church, not a word of illusion should be made to any other Protestant denomination! Laws are usually superabundant rather than sparing in the number of terms employed; and it is from a multiplicity rather than a paucity of words that legal ambiguity most commonly arises. But here there is no room for ambiguity: all is perfectly comprehensible and clear; and the consecutive clauses of the Act preserve their due and natural connexion. In the 36th clause, provision is made for a Protestant Clergy in contradistinction to a Romish, provided for in a previous Statute:—the 37th clause, allots the 'rents and profits' of this reservation exclusively to the said Protestant Clergy;—and the 38th clause, in providing for specific landed endowments, defines who this Protestant Clergy are.—When endowments are alluded to, then, according to the obvious spirit of the Act, Rectories are introduced, and of consequence the Church of England is mentioned by name. This clause, therefore, and that which follows it shews, with sufficient clearness, who were meant by the term 'Protestant Clergy.'

And to shew that this was the meaning of the framers of the Act, let us observe the language of Mr. Pitt on that occasion. He—in the House of Commons, May 12, 1791—declared that "the meaning of the Act was, to enable the Governor to endow and to present the Protestant Clergy of the Established Church to such Parsonage or Rectory as might be constituted or erected within every township or parish, which now was or might be formed; and to give to such Protestant Clergyman of the Established Church, a part or the whole, as the Governor thought proper, of the lands appropriated by the Act." He further explained that "this was done to encourage the Established Church, and that possibly hereafter it might be proposed to send a Bishop of the Established Church to sit in the Legislative Council."—This is a comment upon the Act—if it needed any comment—which no one can misspprehend.

We would add a few words upon that clause in the Act which makes provision for the repeal or variation of the law that establishes the Clergy Reserves. We cannot, upon a re-perusal of this clause, repress our astonishment that, after all the discussion which has taken place upon this subject, the fact should have been overlooked or so little dwelt upon, that this power to vary or repeal the law cannot possibly have been meant to apply to past reservations, and cannot possibly have reference to any other than future appropriations. The meaning of the clause is, surely, simply this.—A certain reservation is made in a stated proportion to the amount of lands in a country, but the time may come when it shall be found expedient either to vary the amount of proportion, or to cease from making it at all; and therefore, to meet this contingency, a provision is contained in the Act for such variation or repeal. For what sense or pertinency could the term 'vary' be thought to have, if it did not apply merely to the power of changing the proportion, for example of the seventh to the tenth or the twentieth, as circumstances might require? And, considering that every title-deed issued from the Crown contains a specification of the allotment of this seventh in relation to the amount of the grant, what repeal—without involving contradictions and confusions innumerable—could be meant other than the power, after a certain amount of reservation had been made, of stepping all further appropriations?—Without pretending to advance any other view than what common-sense seems to dictate upon this point, we shall venture to say that if the meaning of this provision to 'vary or repeal' should be submitted to the twelve judges of England, they would come to the conclusion for which we contend.

But we shall drop the subject; upon which, for the present at least, our readers may have heard enough. In the progress, however, of the discussions which have taken place upon it, we are forcibly reminded of the process of reasoning by which persons who, in the first instance, hazard a position merely as a subject of speculation, come at last to adopt it as a matter of conscience and conviction. There was a time, for example, when Episcopacy was the universal tenet of Christendom, and it was so as being supported by Scriptural precedent and Apostolic usage. A period arrived when a continental church were, from the force of circumstances,—perhaps not altogether insurmountable,—driven to a deviation from this established medium of the ministerial commission. In the first instance, the deviation—unequivocally deplored even by those who felt themselves constrained to it—was the subject of numberless apologies and attempted justifications. In process of time, however, the long habit of irregularity, not merely reconciled to its introduction, but as is not unfrequently the case, the exception was attempted to be converted into the rule, and the upholders of the rule came to be stigmatized as the innovators which, in a more ingenuous age, was the title freely assumed and with reluctance justified by those who adopted the exception.—But we hope there is virtue enough still in the present age to reject the unsoundness and the disingenuousness of this style of reasoning in its application to the question of the Clergy Reserves.

In all our remarks upon this subject, we trust we have advanced no argument that is unfair, and have uttered no language that is offensive. We propose it not as a topic for agitation,—not as the theme of stormy debate or political controversy,—but for calm consideration in the social circle and by the domestic fire-side. We propose it as the subject of deep and careful reflection at those moments when the fond parent looks round upon his little ones, and in hopeful contemplation of the eternity to which he is himself fast hastening, casts about—often alas! in