

establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But where Christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some popular system; and as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his binding his sanction to the false as to the true. Splendour and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church; which are a strong inducement to its members to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent; and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues in spite of superior light and improvement to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in the various parts of Europe; a natural and never failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had obtained the utmost splendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer that piety flourishes much more among dissenters than among the members of any establishment whatever. This