

which had better be repealed, and was as willing as any man to agree to their repeal, he could not but profess himself to be against the present Bill's proceeding any farther.

The Bishop of Bangor (Dr. Warren) considered the Bill as having two objects principally in view.

The first, to relieve the members of the church of England from the penalties to which they were liable by certain laws now in force.

The second, to extend freedom in matters of religion to all persons except Papists.

With respect to the first object of the Bill, the Bishop observed, that it proposed, in the first paragraph, to repeal the Act of the 3d of James I. which imposed a penalty on all persons who absented themselves from the public service of the church; and in order to render the question more plain, the Bishop took a short view of the several Acts of Parliament from the 11th of Elizabeth, which imposed any penalty on persons for not attending divine service, and shewed that these Acts were principally levelled at the Papists, and accordingly very few restrictions were to be found against any members of the church of England. He then observed, that when the Act of Toleration passed, the same care was taken to oblige all persons to attend, on a penalty, public worship, either at Church or some Protestant Meeting, and contended from thence; that even at that period when liberty of conscience was allowed in its full latitude, and the right of private judgment universally acknowledged, this restraint was not considered as inconsistent with the rights of private judgment. He then observed, that it was left to these days of liberty, or rather licentiousness, to call in question the propriety and wisdom of these laws, which obliged persons, on pains and penalties, to frequent the public service of the Church, or some Meeting house. The Bishop then proceeded to defend the law which obliges persons to frequent some place of public worship on Sundays; and on this occasion his Lordship said, that it was the indispensable duty of every man to worship God in public. He mentioned several heads of arguments by which it could be proved; but as such topics, he thought, were more fit for the schools than for a debate in a House of Parliament, his Lordship imagined that he might take it for granted, that to worship God in public was the indispensable duty of every man.—He next observed, that this being allowed, it followed that men had a right to meet together for the purpose of carry-

ing on public worship, without suffering any hindrance or molestation from the Sovereign, or any other person whatever, provided always that such assemblies held no doctrines inconsistent with the safety and security of the State. He then dwelt pretty copiously on the advantages arising from public worship—(such as that religion could not be supported for any length of time in a country without it—That it was the only means by which the ignorant and unlearned received instruction in religious and moral truths—Now, when numbers were thus assembled together, the examples of some must have a good influence over others, both in point of faith and practice; and then concluded with observing, that for these reasons every well regulated government provided places of worship for those who were of the establishment, and permitted those who were not of the establishment to provide houses for themselves; and where the Magistrate had gone thus far, 'it was natural to go one step further, and provide, that public worship should not only be duly performed, but duly attended also, by obliging all on pains and penalties to attend it.

The Bishop then observed, that he should be told that this mode of compulsion was inconsistent with that freedom of judgment which every man has a right to exercise in matters of religion: And to this objection he replied, that in the present case there was no force on the private judgment of any man, as no man in this country could be obliged to attend any public worship, but what he can conscientiously join in; as he that cannot communicate with the established Church may resort to any of the congregations of the Protestant Dissenters; and he that cannot communicate with either, may be supposed to hold doctrines which are contrary to the interests of the Civil State, and as such not fit to be tolerated.

The Bishop thence made a few observations on some other parts of the Bill, and then proceeded to consider the second object of the Bill, viz. the extending freedom in matters of religion.

On this the Bishop observed, that the Bill gave such a latitude in speaking, practising, writing, and publishing on all religious subjects, that it virtually repealed all the laws now in force for the suppression of infidelity, profaneness, and blasphemy, and in particular the statute of King William for the suppression of blasphemy, &c.—He then remarked, that this statute of King William was almost the only law by which impious opinions could be punished, and that this would be useless and of no effect, were the Bill now

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