

meritorious subjects, from all situations of trust, honor, and emolument: and, while shearing to the very quick their neighbour's sheep, to deny these, the natural means of repairing their fleece. It is not in fine, this meek forbearing spirit that had them hold forth so pertinaciously their abjuring *tests*: which but debarred the conscientious and worthiest part of the community from sharing with them in the public preferments; at the same time that the vain, invidious and unjust formality, proved but a stumbling block to the weak, exciting them to perjury, if they swore against their conviction: but to the unscrupulous reprobate, and infidel, a ready patent to place, profit, and every attainable dignity in the empire, And is all this intended to uphold the church establishment, and prevent its downfall!

What! Do they then acknowledge that their system, to which they would have us swear our belief, is not founded upon the promises of Christ: that it rests, not on divine, but on human support; and that support of the most unfair, partial, nay, iniquitous description. They need not wonder then at the daily falling off from such a Church: How can it stand if its main prop be but human: if its chief corner stone be not *the rock*, which is Christ; but the penal code: the parliamentary statute: political injustice, and legislative atrocity?

That the authorities who all, or nearly all, are of the same religious persuasion, should adopt such measures to prevent religious dissension, were not a very surprising. But in a country like this, where, under the general denomination of *Protestant*, christians of every persuasion *reforming or reformed*, abound; in so much that it is hard to say which sect, in point of numbers, is the most popular and prevalent: that only one of all these, though declared by statute *the established one* of two thirds of the British empire, should prove so intolerant to all the rest: should thrust itself between them and their common national rights; and, with its *test* in hand, forbid them to proceed one single step towards these, till they have yielded sincerely or insincerely, no matter how, the worn proof of their conformity with its particular tenets: that it should thus stand in the way, like the dragon, guardian of the golden fleece, with open jaws and outstretched fangs, to scare away the scrupulous Christian, and deny him all access to the golden temptation: that such should be the conduct of any Church, were it even a *Pagan* one, must excite in every liberal and impartial mind, no less disgust than amazement: the more so when it is considered that this one, besides acknowledging her decisions all *fallible*, is herself the avowed offspring of that freedom of thinking for which the others contend; but which she now so unjustly denies them: or if not such, as by her conduct she seems anxious to prove, at best then but the creature, I had almost said the *procureur* of a rapacious, cruel and libidinous tyrant.

On the same subject,—Extracted from the *Moniad*.

But chief that virtue in his conduct shone
Conspicuous forth; that virtue all his own;
Sweet charity and universal love,
Embracing all and each of human kind
With fond fraternal feelings, and unfeign'd:
Which no exclusive difference e'er allow'd
Of country, kin, persuasion, friend or foe.
As tale of kind Samaritan must prove,
To all who ask who may their neighbor be,
By him adduc'd; and such their model shewn.
That love without reserve, till then unknown,
First taught by him, that renders good for ill.

O were his law of love by all observ'd,
Who boast his law to keep! a heav'n were earth.
Now, unobserv'd that law, what misery reigns
And wild uproar; that earth half hell might seem:
For hell is most, where least of love is found.

And strange! 'Tis passing strange, (as no pretence
For conduct e'er so barbarous can be found
In all his maxims mild, and precepts pure)
That they, who boast them followers of that chief
Who stay'd th' uplifted steel, drawn in his cause,
Though righteous; and forbearance meek enjoin'd
Who to his aid had call'd th' angelic host,
If aid he'd wanted, though he wanted none;
That they should seign commission from such chief
To arm in his defence with fire and sword;
And, like Mahomet fierce, spread carnage round!
Should force the gift repugnant of their creed
On minds, that unconvinced, reluctant prove;
With threats, proscriptions, confiscations urg'd;
Exclusions, and the torture's dreaded pang!
Nay more: that ev'n they'd make his charity
And love for those they slay, the main pretence
Of all this monstrous cruelty display'd!
Who could believe, what yet we all have felt!
And feel; who does not feel! as else where, here?
Nay, ev'n in Britain feel the hot remains
Of unextinguish'd bigotry scorch sore
All, but *Court-Christians*; who can pliant trim
Their faith to modes most prevalent, as their dress;
Yielding of loyalty their perjur'd test,
If yielded insincere? As, *Cowper* thou
Of England's guilt fors'worn dost loud complain.

The mind is all her own: and to her own
Decision sole assents. 'Tis reason clear,
Not force terrific shewn, can her persuade.
Who would the mind compel, may make her feign;
But he'er can make believe. 'Twas but to win
By plain conviction and persuasion soft,
The willing mind from error, that our Lord
Religion sent; not bade coercive rule.

*TO ENGLAND.

Hast thou by statute shov'd from its design
The Saviour's feast, his own blest bread and wine;
And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office key, and picklock to a place:
That infidels may prove their title good
By an oath dipp'd in sacramental blood!
A blot, that will be still a blot, in spite
Of all that grave apologists may write;
And though a bishop toil to cleanse the stain,
He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain.
And hast thou sworn on ev'ry slight pretence,
Till perjuries are common as bad pence:
While thousands, careless of the damning sin,
Kiss the book's outside, who ne'er look'd within.
Cowper — *The Task*.

THE IMPORTANT ADVANTAGES DEPAILED ON THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION.

WHAT has the Christian world gained by the boasted Protestant Reformation? The first gain looked for in it was freedom from all vowed religious restraint, and a *living* for its earliest Apostles, with their wives and families. They had to preach down the old Clergy to make way for themselves: and in this bold attempt they were encouraged and supported by the great and wealthy owners of estates in the vicinity of the Monasteries and religious establishments; the lands and property of which they made sure of gaining, should the new doctrines succeed in effecting their abolition. These were the first gains contemplated, and finally secured by the early reformers and their chief abettors.

But in order to get, and be able to keep them, when gotten; it was necessary to hold out in the new system of belief, some prospect of gain to the community also: some powerful lures to attract the people: for, *no flock, no fleece*.

The grand reforming lure held out to these, was the privilege granted to every one of thinking and acting as he pleased. All spiritual jurisdiction and subordination were at once proscribed. Each was now to be his own sole master, free to determine by *his own private judgment*, what he should believe, and what he should do, in order to be saved. None henceforth were to be reputed as babes, requiring merely the milk of instruction. All

were suddenly grown up into *the perfect man*. No food was too strong for their craving appetites: no substance too hard for their powerful digestion.

Gross as this illusion was, it readily took with the weak and vain; and was hailed, as an excusing and plausible plea by the sensual sinner and the religious sceptic. For such indeed, (not the smallest portion of our race) the tempting lure was wistfully intended: and, like the devil's speech to Eve, it won them over by the flattering assurance that they should all henceforth become as *Gods*, knowing both good and evil. Gen. 3.

Yet, how evident the inconsistency of the Protestant Reformers; and how inaccountable the blindness of their followers!!! They promised the people a complete disfranchisement from all instructive authority on earth; telling every one to take *the bible*; and, rejecting all human interpretation of it, except *his own*, to model upon *that alone*, his whole faith and practice.

Now, without asking why one, so contrary to the usual rule of prudence, should rely more upon his own private opinion, than on that of all the world besides; for to do so, were the very extreme of idiotic presumption; though the inculcation of such an absurdity was indispensable, in order to induce the people, so directly against the Saviour's command, no longer to *hear his Church*—Matt. 18, vii—or attend to the instructions of her lawful Pastors: Luke 10, xvi. Without pressing upon them this unanswerable query: I shall only beg to know with what consistency, after thus constituting every one the sole judge and regulator of his own faith and morals; could or can our Protestant Reformers still offer themselves to the people as their spiritual guides and teachers? They had assured the people that *the Bible alone*, and as understood by each, was *the all and sole sufficing rule of faith* to the Christian believer. What need then is there of their farther instructive interference? Or, if there is still need of such; why was I told by them the contrary; and thus made to reject the instruction of the whole Christian Church, as being *merely human*, and therefore inadmissible? Was it only to have foisted upon me, though *human* also, and far more inadmissible, the whims and dreams of every strolling teacher, and upstart, untaught and self-commissioned dogmatiser? And yet, how strangely unaccountable! An absurdity so grossly palpable; an inconsistency so obvious and glaring; could hitherto pass unnoticed even by the sensible Protestant public!!! And still more unaccountable how such an evidently self-contradicting principle could have so long prevailed; and won over so many from the sure and unerring guidance of the Church of Christ! But, there is no effect without a cause. Let us look a little nearer then to the cause of the people's fond attachment to so open a delusion.

As I said at first, it was the wish for freedom from the Saviour's yoke; and the greed of gain—the love of *thine* and of worldly acquirements; at the expence of the ancient Clergy and Religious; which prompted the first Reformers, and their powerful abettors, to oppose and cry down the hitherto