

For the Colonial Churchman.

DISSENT OPPOSED TO SCRIPTURE.

Messrs. Editors, (No. 10.)

In my preceding letters, I have endeavoured to shew your readers the unscriptural foundation of all dissent, and I trust every unprejudiced mind who has read and considered all the arguments I have brought forward against this popular sin, is now convinced of its anti-scriptural, and therefore anti-christian nature. I have shewn how it is opposed to the will of God as revealed in the whole of the sacred volume; the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ are all against it; his words and commandments are all such as become the PRINCE OF PEACE, and not of confusion, disorder, and dissent; and his Apostles followed him very closely in this respect; their writings declare an eternal war against the least shade of division, or disunion among christians, and they required the strictest uniformity, obedience, and submission, from all the members of the church. To the passages of Scripture which I have adduced in support of my reasoning, I might have added many more, all equally expressive and plain, in denouncing dissent as a thing highly displeasing in the sight of God, and directly contrary to the language and spirit of christianity. I might also have mentioned an infinite number of instances which have come under my own observation in which the evil effects of sectarianism were plainly seen. I have shewn how it disturbs the peace of the church, how it stops the progress of the gospel, how it cools the love of christians, how it discourages the ministers of God, how it splits families and neighbourhoods into sects and parties, producing variance and the most bitter envy, hatred, and malice, in the hearts of those who ought to shew to the world that they "love one another." I have also shewn that true religion is fallen into disrespect, and looked upon as a mere trade in the hands of crafty men who like to make a living by preaching, and as some of my neighbours have often told me, "they go to no place of worship, for there are so many that they cannot distinguish between them, and they cannot but doubt, on this account, the truth of all religion." Now these things, of course, no one will deny. They are facts, and they speak of themselves. Indeed I dare say that very few, even among dissenters themselves, will not agree with me, and with Scripture, that dissent is an evil, and that it is a pity that we be thus divided. But in what manner do they confess this? Is it with a true and sincere desire to drop all their private views and interests, for the sake of love and unity? Oh! no! They will take good care to condemn dissent in others, but they are not prepared to include themselves in the censure. This is the surprising delusion! This is the fruitful parent of the many sects in existence! The selfishness of men will not allow them to see their own faults, while they zealously reprove the same in others; and the same principle makes a man think that his opinion is the best, and that it is of such importance, and of such value, that it is worth the division of the whole christian world!! Thus, the members of one sect, if they be consistent, must look upon all others as being in the wrong, and they must have a very strong assurance that their peculiar tenets are the best, and of such importance as to take away the sin of schism of which they, otherwise, would be guilty. Yet, not-

withstanding the strong delusion which is abroad, and the many deep-rooted prejudices of men, I am resolved to make a general appeal to all christians, of whatever name they may be, to leave the monster dissent, and its manifold evils, and to oppose it by the beautiful virtues of LOVE, CHARITY, PEACE, and all their accompanying fruits. Yes, and I am so confident, (notwithstanding my many deficiencies,) of the goodness of my cause, and of my arguments, that I only ask a patient hearing, or the attentive reading of my letters, and no man of sense, or of an unbiased mind, will be able to resist the force of the truth which they will contain.

"Yes! yes!" I may be told, "but what do you mean to do? Do you mean to recommend your sect above all the rest? Should you not rather begin yourself to seek unity by laying by all your peculiar views for the sake of peace?"—I answer: this is the language of every dissenter when called upon to renounce the sin of schism; and this reasoning would be very good indeed, if it were true, that the church is a sect, but this I must prove to be false. For the Church to be a sect, it must have been cut off from the primitive Catholic and Apostolic Communion; but how is any man to prove that the Church of England has ever been thus cut off? We are sometimes told that we separated from the Church of Rome, but this is a silly, if not a dishonest, way of reasoning. The Church of England was never at Rome, and therefore could not be Roman, except through some great mistake, or error, which she has rejected. Neither was the Church of England established by popish priests, but it was in existence centuries before the Pope sent any of his missionaries into Great Britain. Neither was the Church of England the mother of those monstrous abuses which she so nobly shook off at her Reformation, but they had been imposed upon her by force, and through all kinds of fraud and Romish superstitions. She has been, therefore, as it could be more fully proved from the beginning, the Church of England—a branch of that true Catholic and Apostolic Church which Christ and his Apostles organized upon earth, and a section of which was to be found in different parts of the earth, as at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Constantinople, at Smyrna, at Rome, at Carthage, &c., &c.—In these very days, several churches of the East are to be found which would never acknowledge the authority of the Pope as chief bishop of the whole church, and which, though sadly fallen from primitive purity, can, like us, trace the source of their foundation to the very Apostles. But even supposing for one moment that we had separated from the Church of Rome, this would in no way excuse dissenters for their schism. If the Romish Church be sound in the faith, and any man is convinced that it is the only church, and that dissent is an evil, then it is his duty to return to that church at once. But, strange to say, those persons who would reproach us with our glorious Reformation by calling it a separation, are themselves convinced that the popish communion is absolutely fallen from the faith, and that no sincere and enlightened christian can hold its dangerous dogmas without great danger to his soul! And these very persons would use our rejection of those abominable fabrications of popery, as a handle to palliate their inexcusable guilt in leaving our pure and Apostolic Church. Can any thing better demonstrate the

badness or poverty of their arguments? Should they not be satisfied with this plain truth, that the Church of England is acknowledged by all the learned to be a branch of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, and that as such, we owe her submission, obedience, and reverence? Do they want to be more fully convinced of this? let them search all the most approved and authorised records of antiquity, let them consider attentively and impartially, all the doctrines of the Primitive Fathers, comparing them with their own, and with the Sacred Volume, and then let them tell me whether they find any thing in the church which is taught as necessary to salvation, which was not taught by the primitive church, or which is plainly repugnant to Scripture. If they can do this, if it can be proved that the Church of England is fallen from the faith in any of the essentials of religion; or, in other words, teaches any thing as necessary to salvation which is contrary to the plain language and meaning of the Word of God, then I would at once declare against her errors, and set about her reformation by all the means in my power. But until this be done, and while the word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered within her doors, it seems to me that we may boldly assert our rights, and claim our pre-eminence among all the dissenting communions, all calling themselves christian churches, but which are in fact nothing else but sects, or persons cut off from the main body. My present assumption may expose me to the charge of bigotry, and particularly to my own, but I thank God who knows and judges me, that I am partial to the church only so far as I firmly believe her to be agreeable to His own word and institutions. Shew me a more ancient church with a more perfect creed, and more scriptural doctrines, and I promise to join that communion at once. Is not this fair? I therefore call upon all sensible dissenters to consider this. They must confess, that division is a great evil. Well then, is it not best for them to give up what they themselves call non-essentials for the sake of what we consider some of the essentials, i. e., for the sake of unity and peace? I fear I have already trespassed upon your time and paper, and I must conclude this letter, in the hope of considering in my next the principal objections to the church, shewing that they are all groundless, or the mere fruits of misunderstanding, selfishness, or the wicked principle of dissent which is real rebellion against God and his church.

I remain, Messrs. Editors, Your's, &c.
Sept. 1838.

THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL.

There is no truth more plainly taught in Scripture than this, that while man's salvation is entirely of God's grace and mercy, his ruin is altogether of his self. If he perish, it will be his own fault, and he will have no one but himself to blame. Whenever the Gospel of Christ comes, it freely invites all to accept the blessings which it brings. Whether more will be the better for the invitation, depends on the reception which they give to it. If they are willing to receive it, and consent to the terms proposed, the blessing will be theirs; but if they refuse and are disobedient, it will be justly withheld from them.—*Rev. E. Cooper.*

Falsehood.—A lie is a breach of promise; for whoever seriously addresses his discourse to another, tacitly promises to speak the truth, because he knows the truth is expected.—*Paley.*