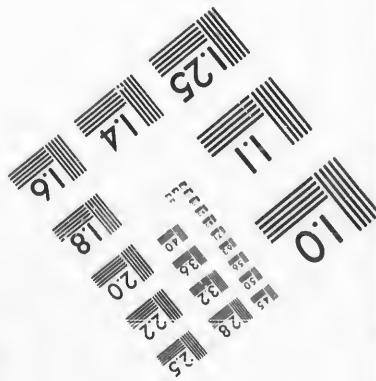
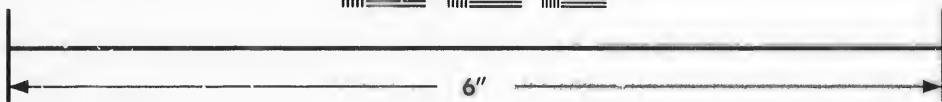
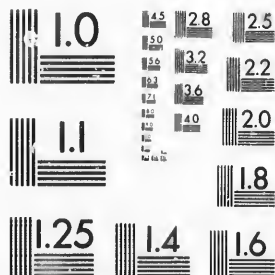


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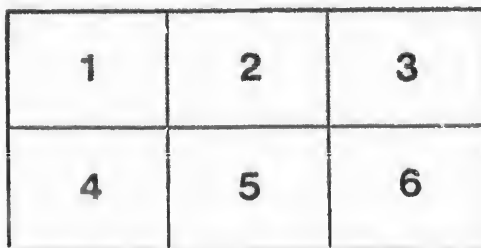
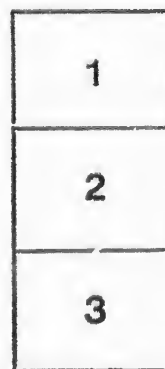
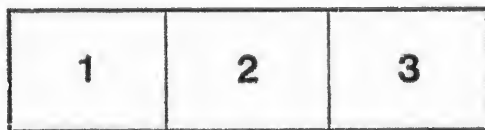
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**ADDRESS**

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TO

**PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.**

SUITED TO THE PRESENT TIMES.



**KINGSTON, U. C.**

Printed and published (for the author) by

**H. C. THOMSON,**

And sold by most Booksellers in the Provinces.



**1828.**

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MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

I rejoice to think that we live in a day of unexampled liberality among the disciples of Christ. This has been greatly promoted by their having discovered that there are certain points in which they can come into contact—certain measures in which we can co-operate in order to disseminate the knowledge of divine truth.—But while we most cordially hail such a spirit of Christian liberality, we ought to guard against losing sight of any of those principles which we are convinced are founded on the word of God. The object of the following pages is to remind you of those principles, in which, as consistent dissenters, we are united, and to which, so far as we see them supported by scripture, we ought conscientiously to adhere.

First, in the observations that follow, you are requested always to distinguish between *systems* and *individuals*, and not to suppose that any arguments that are brought against the former are to be interpreted as personal attacks on the latter. We may often see a particular point, in which one whom we highly esteem, misapprehends (as we think at least) a part of the truth of God. But while this should never prevent us from vindicating that part of divine truth, such a vindication should never be viewed as a personal reflection on the individual who holds sentiments, which on

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that particular subject, we consider erroneous; nor should it be supposed inconsistent with our perceiving, and most cheerfully acknowledging all the excellency that exists in the character of those who differ from us. Such a man as Leander Van Ess being found in the Church of Rome, should not on the one hand, make us blind to the evils of the catholic faith; nor should his connexion with such a system prevent us, on the other, from admiring the ardent zeal for the diffusion of the Scriptures by which he is so eminently distinguished. We should at all times be willing to bring every sentiment to the standard of the word of God. It is only by the patient and careful application of this rule that truth is to be made manifest and confirmed, and that error, wherever it lurks, is to be detected: and we are not influenced by the true spirit of enquiry, if we are not as desirous that our own errors (if we inadvertently hold any) be brought to light, as those of others. If we are under the influence of this spirit, our single aim will be to discover the will of God, that we may reduce it to practice. We will thus be prepared to renounce whatever we formerly held, the moment it is shewn to be inconsistent with this will, and to receive what we formerly opposed, as soon as we discover that it corresponds with it. Is it not much to be feared that a jealousy of our own little personal characters; a fear of surrendering our own implied infallibility, by acknowledging that we formerly were wrong; or a dread of the consequences of certain discoveries, to our own little personal interests, prevents many from seeing the force of arguments, which, were it not for such a kind of influence, they would feel to be irresistible?

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mand of the Lord Jesus that we call no man Fa-  
 ther on earth, (*i. e.* acknowledge no man's autho-  
 rity in matters of religion;) for one is our master,  
 who is Christ. We profess to be his disciples, and  
 we are to learn his will from himself—from the  
 revelation which he and his apostles have left us.  
 On this principle, while we ought to admire the  
 image of Christ, wherever we find it, we are im-  
 peratively called to guard against allowing any  
 degree of antiquity, any veneration for great  
 names, any piety or respectability of character in  
 individuals, to prevent us from trying things by  
 the infallible standard of Divine truth. We are  
 not indeed to treat the sentiments of any good  
 man with the tone of supercilious contempt. But  
 we are not to allow the mere circumstance of their  
 being *his* sentiments to be in any measure the  
 ground of our receiving them. This is violating the  
 law of Christ, by calling that man Father on earth.  
 We are patiently to examine how far he supports  
 his sentiments from the word of God, and we ought  
 to feel grateful to any one who shall throw the  
 smallest additional light on the meaning of any  
 part of that word. But we are at all times to re-  
 collect that this is the only authorised standard:  
 that we are accountable for the use we make of it:  
 that the word which Jesus hath spoken, (and which  
 must be considered as including that which was  
 spoken by inspiration by his apostles) is that by  
 which we are to be judged in the last day. John  
 xii. 48. To the law and the testimony, then, let us  
 ever appeal.

With respect to the external arrangements of  
 the church of Christ, men are apt to run in oppo-  
 site extremes. Some are apt to lay inordinate  
 stress upon these—to rest in a mere outward con-  
 formity to certain rules, losing sight of one most

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important principle, that every thing external is merely a means for accomplishing something else—that the design of all ordinances is to promote the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; and that, in so far as these objects are not accomplished, the very end which all outward arrangements are intended to attain, is entirely lost. Others are apt to disregard every thing that is not essential, and to think that as good men are to be found among all classes, the external arrangements of the church of Christ form a subject altogether unworthy of their regard. We cannot but view this as another extreme, and a very pernicious one. It will be found that some of these outward institutions are closely connected with some very important principles. To some of these I may afterwards have occasion to advert.

I cannot here forbear quoting on this subject the language of a respectable clergyman of the English Church. I mean the Rev. John Scott, son of the well-known and excellent author of the commentary on the Bible. This passage occurs in a note appended to a late volume of his father's truly valuable letters. "There is scarcely an error," says he, "more prevalent, or one that is employed with greater effect in the present day than this: Various denominations of Christians all agree in essentials, therefore it is of no consequence to which we attach ourselves. That is, if any thing is not essential to salvation, it is of no importance, at least of no material importance at all. If a man has but a head and a heart, his wanting a leg, or an arm, or an eye, is of little moment."\*

I have known some, who, while altogether ignorant of the manner in which public instruction

\* Scott's Letters, p. 402.

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is conducted among dissenters, were apt to sup-  
 pose that the preacher very frequently dwells on  
 some of the peculiarities of his sect. You, howev-  
 er, know that the very reverse of this is the truth,  
 and that it is seldom indeed that any observation  
 occurs from which it could be discovered to what  
 particular denomination he belongs. But as every  
 Christian should be ready to give a reason not on-  
 ly of the hope that is in him, but of every part of  
 his conduct as a disciple of Christ, it is proper that  
 every member of a dissenting church should distin-  
 ctly understand the grounds of dissent, and the  
 principles on which, if he act consistently with  
 these, he could not be a member of any National  
 Establishment. To remind the more advanced  
 members of the society of these principles, and es-  
 pecially to make younger ones, acquainted with  
 them is the design of this Pastoral Address.

In my following observations, I shall first state  
 the general ground on which I think we are justi-  
 fied in separating from any National church. I  
 do this the more readily, as some popular works  
 on this subject have almost an exclusive reference  
 to the Establishment of a particular country, with-  
 out placing the argument for separation from all  
 such institutions upon what appears to me a suffi-  
 ciently broad basis. Nay, one writer, whose pub-  
 lication has long been considered quite a standard  
 book on this point, so far from stating the argu-  
 ment in that general form in which it is equally  
 applicable to every Establishment of Christianity  
 plainly intimates that if some of the evils of the  
 English Hierarchy were done away, there would  
 be, in his opinion, no serious objection to Dissen-  
 ters conforming to it.

Thus, Mr. Towgood, in his *Letters on Dissent*,  
 speaking of the period when so many excellent

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ministers of the English Church were ejected for non-conformity, says, "This was the rise of that separation from the Establishment, which I am defending in these letters: a separation which, as it was founded upon Christian and just principles, so it has marvelously subsisted under great worldly discouragements, strengthened and upheld, we trust, by the mighty power of God: and by the same mighty power, we hope, will still be upheld, *till his mercy shall dispose the hearts of our brethren, who have cast us out, to receive us again.*"\* Now such language is to me a satisfactory proof that the author who could use it did not enter into those general principles which are equally applicable to every National Establishment of Christianity, and which would effectually prevent any one who adopted them becoming a member of any National Church, whatever might be its supposed or real purity, and under whatever modification it might exist.

I have been much pleased to observe, in Dr. Chalmers' justly esteemed work on the Evidences of Christianity, the very successful application of the principles of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the investigation of that subject. But as this remark may, to many of you, need some explanation, accept of the following.—Before Lord Bacon's time, who is called the father of true philosophy, or of the proper method of discovering truth, those who went by the name of philosophers, instead of confining themselves to the accurate observation of facts, in accounting for the appearances of nature, indulged in mere fictions of their own imagination. No solid or satisfactory discovery could be the result of this. In opposition to this plan, Lord Bacon

\* Towgood on Dissent, p. 161.

laid down the two following rules as essential to the discovery of truth. 1. That before any thing can be introduced as a cause to explain any particular fact or appearance in nature, it must be manifest that that cause exists. 2. It must be capable of accounting for that particular fact or appearance which it is brought to explain.—The introduction of these simple and obvious rules, placed the enquiries of philosophers on quite a new foundation, and, in the room of mere conjecture, substituted genuine knowledge in every department of nature to which they were applied. It was, in particular, by carefully adhering to these rules of investigation, that Sir Isaac Newton was enabled to make those splendid discoveries by which his name is so well known to be distinguished.

It is evident then that where the New Testament is admitted to possess the character of a Divine Revelation, the same principles of accurate induction may with the strictest propriety be applied to the inquiry how far any particular doctrine which it is alleged to contain, is actually revealed in it. On this supposition this book must be viewed, like external nature, as a part of the works of God, while the clear *testimonies* of revelation in the one case, correspond with well authenticated *facts* in the other. And as sound philosophy looks with a stern and jealous eye on the most ingenuous conjectures, in what relates to the natural world, and will admit of no conclusions which are not established by fair observation and experiment; so in the department of revelation, no deductions are in sound reasoning admissible, which are not supported either by the plain general principles, or by some express testimony of revealed truth. But if we find a particular conclusion, instead of being confirmed by such evidence,

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at obvious variance with either the one of these or the other, it must at once be assigned to the region of mere conjecture, and can have no place among the sound interpretations of this department of the works of God.—Let us apply this mode of argumentation to the question, how far the contents of the Sacred Volume countenance any civil establishment of the Christian faith.

In reasoning, then, on this subject, I must be allowed to assume the following propositions:—That Christianity is a revelation from God—that, as such, I must take it as it stands—that I must implicitly acquiesce in its doctrines and submit to its precepts, and receive its own account of the way in which it is to be supported and propagated in the world. You will remark that the admission of these simple propositions greatly narrows the field of our inquiry. Much of that extraneous matter which is often introduced on this subject is in this way entirely cut off. Thus, I have nothing to do with the general inquiry which regards the political expediency of a government employing religion as an engine of the State.—Certain political ends may be attained by instituting the religion of Brahma in Hindostan, and there may be, in like manner, a certain political accordance between the doctrines of Mahomet and the civil establishment of the Sublime Porte. Religion is here quite a vague term. My inquiry exclusively regards *Christianity* as a revelation of the will of God to man; and unless it appear, either from its general spirit or particular precepts, that it admits of its being supported in the form of a national establishment, or, in other words, by the power of the civil magistrate, any discussion of the question of expediency I must consider as totally irrelevant.

In settling the ground of the following argument, there is another point to which I must call your attention; I mean, the essential distinction between *persuasion* and *force*, between acting under the impulse of personal conviction and acting from the authority of the civil power. Nay, these two principles are not only different, but directly opposed to each other. Thus where conviction exists, force is excluded; there is in this case no room for its operation. On the other hand, the application of force implies the absence of conviction. Its aid can only be needed where conviction, as a principle of action, is not to be found. But it is this power which properly belongs to the civil magistrate. He does not depend on the influence of persuasion. It is no doubt well when he can show the reasonableness of his requisitions, but the sword is his proper and legitimate weapon. Whatever be the state of the mind, he comes clothed with authority, to enforce immediate compliance with whatever he demands.

To this distinction a popular writer of the present day plainly refers, when he says, "The establishment (of the church of England) remembers that man is fallen, *forces* him to provide the means, (of religious instruction,) and trusts that the conversion may follow."\* Here it is admitted that force is first employed, in hope that that which must be the result of conviction, and which force cannot accomplish, may be attained. But this author must certainly have calculated on addressing a very superficial class of readers, if he thought them capable of being imposed upon by such a statement, without the shadow of an argument to support it. This assertion would do ex-

\* Velvet Cushion, p. 88.

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tremely well at Constantinople, because the Koran certainly admits of Mahometanism being supported and propagated by the sword. Nay, it would not be out of place at the Vatican, as with the Romish Hierarchy the church is all in all, and the supporters of that system without hesitation, avow the principle of employing the aid of the civil power to maintain its influence. But if Christianity be the religion of which he speaks, and if, as a Protestant, the opinion of the church is to me of no avail unless I find it supported by the Bible, I at once demur, and call for the previous question. Does this religion allow the application of such an instrument in its support? If it does, show me where.

What, then, it may be asked, do I define a civil establishment of christianity to be? It is that institution by which the government of a country employs its authority to support certain authorised teachers of the christian faith. To this definition I think no one can object. It enters into the very essence of every Ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom, however various their forms, and whatever measure of toleration may be given by the government, to those not connected with the dominant sect. Now, it is to this most general and simple view of such institutions that I object, as inconsistent with the general spirit as well as the particular precepts of the christian Revelation.

When I look into the New Testament, I there find certain truths addressed to the understanding and conscience; I see these truths to be of the most important kind—deeply interesting to every human being—fitted to produce the most beneficial effects on the individual who embraces them; and thus, by their general dissemination, evidently calculated to regenerate the world. But I also



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see that this religion is entirely *spiritual*, that its effects are to be produced, by the truths which it contains obtaining access to the understandings and consciences of men. This however they can only do by *persuasion*; by an address to the understanding and the heart. No other kind of influence is admissible here. The moment you have recourse, in any shape to civil authority, you act upon a totally opposite principle, & such as appears altogether unscriptural: You employ a power in this service which is quite incompatible with the genuine influence of a spiritual religion. The application of force to this religion of the conscience, tends at once to paralyze it, and to destroy its native character. It resembles the effect of touch on the sensitive plant, which instantly shrinks, however cautiously applied, and the finger must be completely removed before this delicate production can again expand its leaves, and present to the eye of the beholder its native form and beauty.

It is a first principle in the christian faith to require truth in the inward parts, and every species of hypocrisy it most pointedly condemns, as quite repugnant to its whole spirit and character. But it must no less condemn any kind of influence by which, so far as it operates, nothing else but hypocrisy can be promoted. Now this is quite the effect of the application of civil power in religion. I say so far as it operates; because if you suppose a person, from conviction, either embracing christianity or supporting it, no application of civil power is requisite. If it be only by the application of this power he does either the one or the other, this proves the absence of conviction, and hence, that he acts under the influence either of avowed constraint or direct hypocrisy.

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As well may you attack a citadel with motives and arguments as assail the human heart with any other kind of weapons; or with as great propriety might you propose to employ the pulley and the lever to assist in advancing vegetation, as call in the aid of external force to promote the influence of a spiritual religion. In both cases, there is an equally manifest incongruity between the means and the end proposed to be attained by them. There is a plain line of distinction between our character as beings who have at last to render an account to God, and our character as members of civil society. Under the former aspect we are accountable only to God for our religious principles, and if we be wrong in these, it is only by argument and persuasion that we can be put right. There is here no room for any other kind of influence. Under the latter, we are amenable to the laws of our country for our conduct, and it is here that the power of the civil government is properly exercised.

But while I thus infer, from the general character of christianity as a spiritual religion addressed to the understanding and the conscience, that it does not admit of the application of civil authority in its support, I am more fully confirmed in this conclusion by some of its specific declarations. Accordingly, I find the Lord Jesus speaking of his kingdom in such a way as expressly excludes the application of force in its defence, or in advancing its interests in the world. "My kingdom," says he "is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence," John xviii. 36. The kingdom of Christ being not of this world, is here distinctly introduced as a rea-

son why the use of the sword was not to be employed in supporting it. Force is necessarily employed in the kingdoms of this world. They are both extended and defended by it. The power of the magistrate implies the exercise of it. He is ordained of God to use the sword. His power is to be employed in defending the weak against the strong, and in punishing those who violate the laws of the kingdom over which he presides. And in like manner, temporal honours and rewards are the inducements held out to those who are most active in defending these kingdoms, or in extending their boundaries.

But as the kingdom of Christ is essentially different in its nature from all worldly kingdoms; as it consists in the reign of principle in the hearts of its subjects—in the communication of divine knowledge to the understanding, and in the influence of truth on the conscience and character; this kind of spiritual kingdom can only be promoted by instruction, by argument and persuasion. Force can never be a method at all fitted to attain the end of imparting conviction. It may constrain the body—it may inflict punishment; and by the terror of punishment, it may make a man a hypocrite by professing to believe what he does not believe: but it cannot influence his mind, or lead him to embrace truth. If I understand this passage aright then, the principle which our Lord lays down is that external force, which is employed in defending and extending the kingdoms of this world, is not to be employed in his kingdom. This view of the meaning of the passage is, I conceive, fully confirmed by the context.

It seems to have been the design of the language here used to show Pilate, that if he felt any jealousy respecting the interests of Cesar, he had

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nothing to fear from Jesus claiming the character of a king. He was not to support his kingdom in a way which could give the Roman government any ground of alarm. But this could only be said upon the principle, that external force was not to be employed in the kingdom of Christ. Ever since it has been introduced, it has given the most serious cause of alarm to the kingdoms of the world, and has been the occasion of producing some of the most eventful revolutions which the page of history records. Does not this clearly show, that the introduction of such a power is quite inconsistent with one of the grand features by which, according to this text, this kingdom was to be distinguished?

The accuracy of this interpretation seems further confirmed by attending to one expression—"Now is my kingdom not from hence." The true religion, as it existed under the former dispensation, was embodied in the instructions of the peculiar people; and in this way it was connected with a kingdom that needed to be defended by force.—But the new dispensation, denominated the kingdom of Christ, was to be placed on a different footing. It was not as the former, to be exclusively connected with any one people. It was to be entirely spiritual, consisting in the reign of principle in the hearts of its subjects, wherever they existed over the face of the earth. These were thus to be found, not confined to any one territory, but intermingled among men of all nations.

Our Lord's declaration in this passage, regarding the spiritual nature of His kingdom, very strikingly accords with his language to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21. "Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,

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(i. e. exclusively.) But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." But being true worshippers, and being the subjects of this kingdom, are manifestly expressions of the same import. All then possess this character, and they alone, who thus worship the Father in truth.

Let us again commit this part of the sacred narrative with the manner in which our Lord follows up the expression "now is my kingdom not from hence," and we shall observe a striking coincidence between them. "Pilate then said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King, (i. e. yes, it is true.) To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. *Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*"—Here is a most explicit testimony to the spiritual nature of this kingdom. They only are to be considered and treated as belonging to this kingdom who hear the voice of Christ, and thus give evidence that they are his true subjects.

When I read the regulations of this kingdom, and the history of its progress, as recorded in the New Testament, I find every thing perfectly to correspond with the above mentioned general description of its character given by the great law-giver himself. Every act of obedience must be voluntary. The laws of the kingdom so far regulate the motive as well as the action, that whatever is not of faith is sin. Those who enjoy the benefit of the public ministry of the gospel, are commanded to support by voluntary contribution such as teach them. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." Gal. vi. 6. Now I ask; was this with similar scriptures, intended for the direction

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of Christians at every period of the world! If so, an important point is here established. They show that those who devoted their lives to the ministry of the gospel were to derive their support from the *voluntary* contributions of those to whom they ministered, or who, in cases where christianity was not formerly known, thus enabled them to minister to others.

But does not every national establishment of christianity put this on quite a different footing; and by employing the power of the magistrate to support the kingdom of Christ, virtually nullify his own express institution, that his kingdom is to be supported (so far as temporal means are requisite) by the voluntary exertions of his subjects. If there was wisdom in this appointment, (and to say that it was *his* is at once to establish that it was the result of infinite wisdom all this is lost by that arrangement by which this institution is abolished, and which substitutes the arm of power in the room of the voluntary exertions of the disciples of the truth. The support of those who serve the altar, is in every establishment not voluntary; it is a matter of constraint. The civil power secures it, and the application of this power is often necessary before that support can be obtained. This last circumstance, however, is of no moment in this argument. I shall suppose the best understanding prevails between a clergyman and his parishioners; that they pay their tithes most cheerfully; nay, that, in addition to this, the government admits of the most unlimited toleration—still the *power of demanding* the payment of of these tithes exists: and it is the same power, it ought never to be forgotten, which at one period can demand a part of my\* goods to support the

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religion of the state, that at another could imprison any person for attending a conventicle, & which still, in another quarter of christendom, could drag me before the tribunal of the Inquisition, to atone for the errors of my faith, by the sacrifice of my life. The power is radically the same, though there are various forms and degrees in which it is exercised.

Here, then, it should never be forgotten, that whatever misery has arisen from persecution for conscience sake, among professing christians, the root of all this evil, the existence of the capability to inflict so much misery on the world must be traced to the introduction of civil power into the kingdom of Christ.

fair statement, that no one's goods are demanded to support the religion of the state: that the tithes belong to the church, and that the landlord purchases his estate, and the farmer takes his farm distinctly under this consideration While all this is readily admitted, it must be remarked that in whatever way the tithing system was at first introduced, in England at least, and still more in Ireland, it is well known to be attended with the same baneful effects as if it were a regular tax for the support of the clergy. In Scotland, indeed, this business is conducted in a far better manner, and by the ministers stipend being usually paid by the landed proprietors, no such pernicious effects on the minds of the people, in general, are produced. The above observations, then, must not be considered as implying that any injustice is done to the individuals by the exacting of these tithes; but they are designed to shew the evil of introducing a power into the kingdom of Christ, in whatever way it has originated, which is not

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Let no beneficed clergyman, then, suppose for a moment that a conscientious dissenter feels the smallest stirrings of envy when he contemplates that superior *status* in society which is derived from being connected with an opulent Hierarchy, or when he hears of the ample emoluments with which it is endowed. No man deserves the name of a dissenter, or at least he does not understand the true principles on which he should assume such an appellation, if he does not feel a full conviction that though the highest dignities of the church, and its most extensive revenues, were laid at his feet, he could not, on any account, partake either of the one or the other. His views of the kingdom of Jesus must be completely altered before he could take any part in the support of a system which he believes to be derogatory to the honour of his Divine Master, by introducing a power into that kingdom which he expressly condemns.

In pursuing this line of argument, you observe I have nothing to do with what has often been so

authorised in his word, as well as the dangerous lengths to which, in many cases, that power has been carried.

It has, indeed, frequently been made a subject of discussion, how far it discovers wisdom in any government to appropriate a considerable portion of the public property to the support of a particular form of religion, especially if that form is by no means universally approved of by the body of the community. But this is entirely a question of political economy. The inconsistency however of this mode of supporting christianity with the declarations of Scripture, is altogether a separate question, and quite independent of every other.



plausibly said in support of the advantage resulting from the independence of the clergy; of the power which a conscientious man possesses in re-proving sin without the fear of consequences. when his living does not depend on the good wishes, and cannot be affected by the caprices of his hearers. I might even here, perhaps, safely refer to the history of every national establishment, as affording a fair answer to this argument, so far as it regards the *general* effect of the system. Good men, in estimating the advantages of Ecclesiastical establishments, often fix their eyes on a few excellent characters attached to them, while they entirely overlook the greatly prepondering majority of such as they themselves acknowledge are manifestly influenced by no other principle than a regard to their own worldly emolument, and who of course must help to mislead and pervert the minds of their people. But if we reflect that all the persecutions of the faithful servants of God, whether by Popish or Protestant governments, have originated in the connexion between the church and the state;—if to this we add the multitudes that have in every age been deluded by the mere profession of christianity, by those false teachers, who have been under every establishment, introduced into the church, as the natural result of political patronage;—if we farther consider the opposition that has been given in every age by such teachers to any efforts made by others to diffuse the knowledge of divine truth, as well as the temptation thrown in the way of christians to omit these efforts, even where the grossest ignorance prevailed, from the idea that some means of instruction are enjoyed wherever an establishment exists—we shall have a

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fearful counterbalance to the admitted real good effected by conscientious men wherever they are found. But if, in addition to these considerations, we further reflect that the really useful men in any establishment are those who preach the gospel out of love to it, and that, therefore by far the greater part of such would be employed in this service, whether they enjoyed the benefit of an establishment or not; it will be found that even on the score of general expediency much may be said on the negative side of the question. But I repeat it, I do not find myself at all entitled to discuss the point of expediency here: Every one will admit that it must be proved that a thing is lawful, before the question of expediency can fairly occur.

All, then, I have to do here, is to return to *the book*. It has been very happily observed in the work above referred to that when we have a divine revelation, the question respecting any point which that revelation embraces, is not, what thinkest thou? but, how readest thou? Does the New Testament allow the application of force in matters of religion? My position is that it does not;—and that the power which is essentially involved in every national establishment of christianity, is a power the exercise of which is totally inadmissible in supporting the kingdom of Christ. Till, then, I find this position fairly overthrown by an appeal to the word of God; nay, while, instead of being allowed to suppose this practicable, I see every thing in christianity addressed to the understanding and conscience, and that, from its distinguishing spirit as well as its particular injunctions, it excludes the application of civil power in advancing its interests; I could view the admission of

the expediency of introducing such power here in no other light than that of making myself wiser than God. Under the influence of these principles, then, I must consider every civil establishment of christianity as inconsistent with that exclusive and supreme authority which the great lawgiver under the christian dispensation claims in his kingdom.

While I have adverted to the difference between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world, and remarked the exclusion of the use of force in supporting the former, I must here add that this is no way inconsistent with our steadily maintaining the obligation of submission, in every thing not interfering with divine authority, to the civil government of the country in which we live. This appears from various passages to be clearly a precept of the christian faith.

If again, we are at any time called by the civil authority to violate the injunctions of the word of God, the recorded example of the apostles Peter and John, when placed in such a situation affords a decisive rule for the regulation of our conduct. When they were prohibited by the council of Jerusalem, in direct opposition to the command of their master, to preach any more in his name, they respectfully answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."—I trust, my brethren, you know well how to appreciate both your civil and religious privileges. Allow me then to add that while the above general principles appear to me to furnish ample ground for dissenting from the Ecclesiastical establishments of our own country, we ought never to forget the peculiar calls we have for the exercise of the most lively gratitude to the Author of our mer-

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cies, when we recollect the mild and excellent government under which it is our happiness to live, and the religious toleration we are permitted to enjoy.

I might now conclude my observations on this subject, having shewn that the Scriptures condemn that exercise of civil power in religion which enters into the very essence of every national establishment of christianity. But as there is something plausible, at least in the arguments that are urged in favour of such institutions, it may be useful to advert to them; and farther, show how, on the above mentioned principles, their fallacy will appear.

While some acknowledge that we have no authority for Ecclesiastical establishments in the New Testament, they argue that it will not be denied we have an explicit example of them in the Old; and that as the Jewish kings received the most decided expressions of the divine approbation for employing their power in promoting true religion, as the bible is to be viewed as one continued revelation, it cannot be thought inconsistent with the will of God for christian magistrates to employ their power in the same way still.

Mr answer to such an argument is this. The Jews were under a dispensation altogether peculiar, and, as it is acknowledged that some things were with them not only lawful, but matter of express duty, which we could not now do without sin, it is from the New Testament that we must learn in what cases their conduct, though approved, furnishes a model for our imitation.—Thus they were expressly commanded to extirpate the Canaanitish nations,—to put idolaters to death,—to inflict the same punishment on these

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who did not hear the priest; and they received the divine approbation in thus also punishing such as did not seek God: Deut. vii. i.; xvii. 2—12; 2 Chron. xv. 13.

Now if it is allowed that these are exercises of power which in a christian magistrate would be exceedingly improper, because the New Testament does not authorise them, is not this an acknowledgment that it is from the New Testament we are to learn what application of civil power is lawful in matters of religion? This, however, is precisely the point for which I contend. The argument, then, from the divine approbation of the conduct of the Jewish kings, if admitted, would prove a great deal too much, and must therefore be considered as proving nothing.

Or perhaps this argument may be more shortly stated thus. In order to introduce and support the Jewish theocracy, it was absolutely necessary the Jews should fight. But the Lord Jesus expressly declares that, from the nature of his kingdom, his servants were not to fight in its support. When I meet with this pointed discrepancy, I cannot adopt the principle of the former dispensation respecting the application of civil power, without violating the spirit and injunctions of the latter. If then the New Testament is to be my rule as a christian, I must consider the conduct of the Jewish kings, though marked with the divine approbation under that economy, as never intended for the imitation of christian magistrates under the gospel.

Again, it is argued, that though we have no example of national establishments of christianity in the apostolic age, as, from the external situation of the church during that period, no such institutions could exist; it does not follow

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that they are unlawful. Nay, it is asserted that, according to one of the great general principles of revelation, that which teaches every man to do good to all as he has opportunity, it is not only lawful, but a binding duty on those placed at the head of a government, to form and support such establishments. The argument is put thus: The diffusion of christian knowledge, it is allowed, is eminently fitted to promote national happiness and prosperity. Suppose, then it is alledged, that a christian magistrate is convinced of this, is it not most natural and praiseworthy, nay, is it not his bounden duty, to lend all the aid in his power to promote the knowledge of a system so much connected with the improvement, the prosperity, and the happiness of the community? Can any one object to his employing the power with which he is invested in so good a cause; nay, would he not be chargeable with a criminal disregard of the best interests of those over whom he was placed, if he neglected so to use it?

This, I think, comprises the substance of the argument in favour of what is called a christian government introducing and maintaining the national establishment of christianity; and though I am aware I shall unavoidably fall into some degree of repetition, it may be useful simply to state how the above mentioned principles bear on it.

If you ask me, where is the fallacy here, and how do I meet this argument? my reply is this. If the advocates of Ecclesiastical Establishments admit that they cannot plead in their behalf either precept or example, but rest the argument in their favour, on certain general principles, I think all will allow that they are, at least, bound to show, in sound reasoning, that such institutions neither

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require a violation of the general spirit of Christianity, nor set aside any of its injunctions. But if it appear that they cannot exist without both these evils being necessarily involved in them, it will follow that their inconsistency with the tenor of Revelation must be considered as clearly established.

Now it is allowed that every Christian magistrate will be convinced of the importance of diffusing Christian knowledge among the people; that this is the most effectual way of promoting public morals and national prosperity. But the simple question recurs, How is this to be done? Is he at liberty, from whatever motive, to introduce into the kingdom of Christ a power which the great Lawgiver not only does not acknowledge, but expressly disapproves? Is he at liberty to form any arrangement by which, while the maintenance of those who preach the gospel is derived from quite a different source from that instituted in the New Testament, one of its express precepts is virtually abrogated? Is he to attempt to disseminate the knowledge of Christianity by means which it condemns? Are its precepts and spirit to be violated that its influence may be promoted? In short, is the magistrate permitted to do evil that good may come, and thus be chargeable with disregarding one of the plainest injunctions of revelation by the very act by which he professes to respect and support its authority?

There is an argument which has been frequently brought forward of late in support of Ecclesiastical Establishments, and which, though only a branch of that already stated, yet, as it possesses considerable plausibility, deserves particular notice. It is put thus.—Though according to the

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received maxims of political economy, the experience of the want of any particular article will always produce a supply, and there is therefore no necessity for giving a premium to furnish this supply, yet the case is different with regard to religion. Here the want, though real, is not felt; nay, the greater the want is, the less it is felt: i. e. the greater a man's ignorance is, the less is he sensible of it, and of course the less is he disposed to make any exertion to have it removed. An aggressive operation therefore upon this ignorance, must in the first instance take place. Others must endeavour to break in upon it by the voluntary offer of instruction. Hence the utility of an Ecclesiastical Establishment in a country, by which this operation may be conducted.

The first part of these observations may be admitted to be just—the importance of endeavouring to break in upon the ignorance that surrounds us; and yet the conclusion will not follow. At no period, wherever genuine Christianity existed, has this aggressive operation not been going forward. It is involved in the very nature and spirit of the system itself. Christianity is essentially a system of proselytism, because a system of benevolence. The man who has felt the value of the gospel himself, cannot fail to love his brethren; and while, from the nature of his principles, he must do good to all, as he has opportunity, he must be disposed to use every exertion to lead others to partake of the same blessedness. But though the propriety, the utility, or even the necessity of such an operation is conceded, the question recurs, by whom is it to be conducted? by the rulers of the kingdoms of this world employing their civil authority in carrying it on, or by the voluntary exertions of the disciples of Christ? **Aggressive**



any, the expectar article will is therefore no furnish this sup- regard to reli- eal, is not felt; ess it is felt: i. e. e less is he sen- is he disposed to moved. An ag- this ignorance, ce. Others must y the voluntary utility of an Ec- untry, by which tions may be ad- e of endeavouring hat surrounds us; llow. At no peri- y existed, has this oing forward. It d spirit of the sys- tially a system of of benevolence. ue of the gospel his brethren; and rinciples, he must tunity, he must be to lead others to s. But though the n the necessity of the question recurs, d ? by the rulers of mploying their civil y the voluntary rist ? Aggressive

operations of the former kind, professedly against the ignorance and darkness of this world, were carried on for centuries by the Church of Rome, and what was the effect ? It was such as corresponded with the nature of the agency employed. It diffused over Europe, and extended to foreign lands, a system of worldly policy and ecclesiastical domination, altogether regardless of the spiritual good of those among whom a merely nominal Christianity was disseminated. But with these we are happily able to contrast other aggressive operations which have of late years been carried on by various voluntary associations of Christians, and what has been the effect ? It too has corresponded with the nature of the instrument employed. Let the success of the Moravian missions—the glorious effects of the gospel on the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, as well as the marvellous change produced in Western and Southern Africa, and various other parts of the globe, accomplished by the agency of Christian Missionaries, be admitted as unquestionable evidence of what the voluntary exertions of Christians are capable of effecting. It is particularly worthy of notice, that no National Establishment, as such, has given any countenance to these benevolent labours. Nay, we may safely say, that the greater part of the clergy, in all the National Establishments in Europe, have done what they could to discourage such exertions.

But respecting these aggressive operations on the world, whether at home or abroad, let us again refer to the book. Has the great Head of the church made any provision for this, and to whom has the important service of spreading the knowledge of his gospel in the world been committed ? Has he given the smallest hint that it is to the ru-

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lers of the kingdoms of this world? or has he not committed it to his church? The apostles in the first instance were the agents in this operation. They again employed, under the Divine direction, others in this service; and Timothy, who was one of these, was directed to commit the same service to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also. A standing ministry was thus appointed; and while those engaged in it are the constituted instruments of spreading the knowledge of Divine truth, by whom were they to be assisted in carrying on this labour of love? While from the church of Thessalonica sounded out the word of the Lord in Macedonia and all Achaia—while the church at Phillippi are commended for supporting Paul when imprisoned at Rome for the cause of the gospel—while Gaius is commended for helping forward those brethren who went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles—have we not in these examples a proof, that it was by the voluntary exertions of the disciples of Christ that this aggressive operation on the world was to be conducted?

No one will deny that it was by this means that this operation was carried on during the three first centuries, and then it was accompanied with marvellous success. When the system was changed, and this aggressive operation was professedly put into the hands of the rulers of this world though under the Christian name, every one knows that genuine Christianity declined just as rapidly as it had previously advanced. On this subject, the learned author of the credibility of the Gospel History observes—"That in about three hundred years after the ascension of Jesus, without the aid of secular power or church authority, the christian religion spread over a large part of Asia, Eu-

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topæ, and Africa, and at the accession of Con-  
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another three hundred years or a little more, the  
beauty of the christian religion was greatly cor-  
rupted, in a large part of that extent, its glory  
defaced, and its light almost extinguished. What  
can this be so much owing to, as to the measures  
then set on foot, and followed in succeeding  
times? This fact speaks volumes. How is it  
to be accounted for? The proper agency for  
spreading the gospel, thus appointed by God, and  
to which his blessing was annexed, was abandon-  
ed. Another was adopted which had no divine  
sanction, and the result was manifest.†

It would be a bold conclusion then to say, that  
though an aggressive agency is to be employed, it  
is agreeable to the divine will for us to abandon  
that which was appointed at the beginning, and  
to have recourse to another, in support of which  
nothing can be quoted from the word of God, but  
which naturally involves, and has ever been accom-  
panied with the introduction of a numerous class  
of false teachers into the professed church of Christ;  
a character against which the scriptures speak in  
language of the most unmeasured condemnation.  
We must not endeavour to escape from this diffi-  
culty by saying, this is an evil inseperable from  
every scheme, however excellent in itself, which  
is conducted by fallible and sinful men. It is not  
an incidental evil, but one which is the obvious  
and natural result of the scheme itself, of the

\*Lardner's Works, 4to, Vol. II. p. 353.

† Appendix, No. I.

politics of this world being avowedly introduced in professedly supporting the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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We are met, then, at every turn of the argument, by the original question, What kind of influence does this religion say may be lawfully employed in its support? If christianity be acknowledged to be a revelation from God, it must regulate the conduct of those placed at the head of a government as well as others. In this character it speaks with the same commanding tone to the king and to the subject. If, then, it avowedly disclaim the power of the magistrate as such; if it decline, in his public character, his aid or co-operation: then, instead of promoting its influence, he in effect pours contempt on its authority, if that power is interposed.

Let a christian magistrate, then, in his private capacity as a member of the community, give every encouragement to those who are endeavouring to diffuse the knowledge of what he believes to be a system of divine truth, and eminently fitted to promote human happiness: Let him support it by the influence of his example: Let him contribute as liberally as he pleases of his property, to carry into the most extensive operation the divinely appointed plan for disseminating this knowledge, by the public preaching of christian faith and morals: Let him, in his public character, protect those who are thus engaged. From him, as a magistrate, they want no more; nay, consistently with the book which contains their principles, *they can receive* no more. Any farther aid they must, according to that standard, decidedly reject. The moment a magistrate professing christianity employs civil authority to promote it, he discovers the melancholy inconsistency of at-

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tempting to support a religion from a professed regard to its divine origin and beneficial effects, while the very way in which that attempt is conducted betrays either an avowed disregard of what it enjoins, or complete ignorance of one of its leading features as a religion addressed to the understanding and the heart.

I have thus suggested a few hints which enter I conceive, into the very pith and marrow of the argument respecting National Establishments of christianity. My object has been to state principles rather than enter into detail; but the above outline you will be able to fill up by your own reflections. The principles I have stated appear to furnish a very powerful argument against every form, except that of extending its protection, in which the civil power is introduced to support the christian faith.

Such reasoning as I have employed can only be expected to influence those, who, considering the bible, and the bible alone, as the religion of protestants, feel themselves bound to try every question by its authority, and to abide by its decision. But do not suppose from this that I charge every one as destitute of respect for this authority who does not acquiesce in these conclusions. I know well that the best of men have entertained different views on this subject. We also know the effect of early prejudice, and how apt men are to be biassed in their views of particular subjects, who, in other respects, show the most sacred regard for the testimony of the inspired word. We are all creatures of habit and outward circumstances, and the longer we live we shall feel the less surprise at the different, nay opposite views which good men take of the same subject. *But still there is a standard; and a considerable point*

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is gained when men are brought so far practically to acknowledge this, as to admit, that while the system in which they have been educated is not necessarily free from error, it is their happiness to detect this error, if it exist, by comparing the views they entertain with the only infallible standard of faith and practice—the word of God.

By this standard I wish the above reasoning to be tried; and I shall conclude my observations on this part of my subject, by repeating once more the sum of my argument.—As christianity is entirely a spiritual religion; as it has to do with the understanding and conscience, and can only accomplish its benevolent design through the medium of personal conviction; as this view of its general character is confirmed by our Lord expressly refusing to employ force in his kingdom, and by his apostles resting the support and propagation of the gospel in the world on the voluntary exertions and contributions of those who believe it,—the application of civil power in supporting this religion is the application of an instrument manifestly inconsistent with its whole character and spirit, and the use of which the great Author of the christian faith expressly disclaims.

This general argument against the union of the church and the world appears to me founded on scripture; and till I can see how it can be set aside, I should feel myself constrained on principle to be a dissenter. I know, however, there are some who, while they admit many evils in establishments as they at present exist, cannot go this length, but conceive that a civil establishment of christianity *may* be so formed as not only to be unobjectionable, but highly beneficial to the community. It is of no use to discuss the

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merits of ideal systems of this nature, which never had any existence. But looking at things as they are, I remark that in addition to the above reasoning, there is to me an insurmountable objection to all the Ecclesiastical establishments, at least with which I am acquainted, and that is, that *some of the laws of Jesus Christ cannot be observed in them.* These establishments, it is well known, generally proceed upon the principle of treating the body of the community as christians. In some of them, the people at large are considered as having a vivil right to those ordinances which are a mark of the christian profession; and though perhaps, in the laws of some establishments, a regard to christian discipline is recognised, it will I believe, be very generally allowed, that it is impossible to reduce these laws to practice.\* This must be the case *when those to whom the ultimate appeal is made are not influenced by the authority of Christ.* But this is just what may be expected, whether the appeal lies with an individual or the majority of a general body, if that individual, or that majority, depends for Ecclesiastical preferment, not on personal character, but on political influence. It is not necessary, surely, to go into particulars here. For whatever influence may insensibly bias the minds of good men from the circumstances in which they are placed, yet that it is agreeable to the will of the great lawgiver that the affairs of his church should be under the control of those whose who are entirely indebted for the situations they occupy to the politics of this world, is a proposition which few or none will attempt coolly to defend.

Evangelical ministers of all denominations, it

\* Appendix, Note II.

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is well known, are accustomed frequently to dwell on that most important doctrine of Scripture, that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; that it implies a great change of heart and character: and though we cannot look into the heart, as we can see the tenor of the life, they will, without hesitation, declare that if a man is living in the violation of some of the plain and acknowledged laws of Christ, he can with no propriety be viewed as one of his disciples. But while this doctrine is clearly taught, can it be denied that multitudes of this description are publicly acknowledged as disciples, by being admitted to those ordinances which directly imply a christian profession? Now, we say, either the *preaching* is wrong here, or the *practice* is. The standard is in the one placed too high, or in the other too low. Why alarm men by telling them that a certain character is essentially necessary to their being christians, if it be not? and if it be, why deceive them by treating them as christians, when you are satisfied they give decided evidence that they are strangers to that character? Can any thing be more fitted to mislead them to make that essential to the christian character which is deliberately dispensed with in the christian profession?

Let no one be deceived by a mode of expression often used here, that we cannot judge the heart, and that we should judge charitably of our brethren. To judge the heart is what no one pretends to do. But we should never forget, that *that* is the truly charitable kind of judging which is regulated by the laws of Jesus Christ. If charity means love, it is in this way we must effectually show our love to our brethren. But these laws do not leave it at our option to judge of men or

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not as we choose: they expressly require of us to judge of them by their fruits.

This part of our argument, however, will be more clearly stated by selecting a particular case. Let us take the injunction of the Apostle, to separate from a christian community one who is living in sin. "*But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*"\* "*This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*"\* In these passages, we have an express command of an apostle of Christ repeatedly inculcated. It is a command in which we see much of the divine wisdom and goodness. The observance of it is likely to be of material benefit to the individual who is the subject of discipline, because of all things it is most calculated to bring him to repentance. It is of much importance to the community with which he is connected, on the plain principle that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump; and it tends to remove the stumblingblock which is thrown in the way of the world, by one being acknowledged as a christian who is living in known iniquity.

We ask, then: Are the injunctions addressed to the apostolic churches intended for our direction,

\* 1 Cor. v. 13.

\* 2 Tim. iii. 1—5.

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or do we mistake the meaning of the precept? If we do, we will thank any one to inform us where the mistake lies. It is not from captiousness, or a disposition to find fault with others, but from a regard to the authority of Him whom we are bound to obey, that we feel ourselves constrained here to act as we do. If this be a command of Christ, as we are convinced it is, we feel that we should be disregarding his authority, if instead of separating from the christian community those who are living in sin, we should deliberately acknowledge them as brethren, by admitting them to the participation of those ordinances by which the christian profession is distinguished. And if, with these convictions, we should refuse obedience to this plain command, we should have reason to question how far it is a regard to his authority that influences us in any part of our conduct.

Let it not, however, be supposed, that it is only in churches established by law that this evil is to be found. The want of that discipline which the word of God enjoins, prevails to a melancholy degree in many other societies. But if we are correct in the view above given of this discipline, there must be something fundamentally wrong in the constitution of any society where it cannot be observed: and if there be no obstacle in the constitution of the society, there must be a criminal remissness (to use no stronger term) in the members of that society, if so clear a command of the word of God is neglected.

Here then I would, without hesitation, take my stand. If there be a plain law of Christ, which, under any system, cannot be observed, it argues a radical evil in that system, and on this principle I should feel it my imperative duty to abandon it.

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This argument, I know, it is often attempted to turn aside. It is alleged there is no perfection on earth—that there was a Judas among the twelve—and a perfectly pure society is what we are never to expect, but that the tares and the wheat must grow together till the harvest. All this is allowed, and yet none of these assertions touches the case. Judas was not an openly wicked man, but a hypocrite; and though his character was known to Christ, no one will say that the omniscience of the Saviour is a rule of duty to us. On this principle, we might argue the propriety of appointing a wicked man a minister of the gospel, because our Lord, though he knew the character of Judas, called him to the apostleship. Every one will admit, however, that this would be carrying the argument too far; but from this it is manifest, that no legitimate inference can be drawn from Judas being found among the apostles for admitting ungodly characters into the church of Christ.\*

In quoting the parable of the tares and the wheat, we should never forget, that the field is not the *church*, but the *world*—that the tares denote, not hypocrites, i. e. those that deceive others by a concealed character, but those who were known by the servants as distinct from the wheat, and as the children of the wicked one.—The parable thus seems to refer to the disciples of Christ and the wicked living together in society in the present world. If, instead of interpreting it thus, we shall, in opposition to the authority of Jesus Christ, make the field the church, while the tares denote ungodly men, the parable

\* See this subject more fully discussed in the Appendix to Sketches of Human Nature. By Wm. Innes, 3d Edition.

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would be in direct contradiction to other passages of Scripture. It would decidedly condemn all discipline in the church of Christ, because it is an express command, that the tares and the wheat *must not be separated*. They must grow together till the harvest; and any discipline which attempted such a separation would be directly criminal.

Again, a perfectly pure society is what no one expects on earth. But what is the inference? Because we cannot get this, are we deliberately to disobey a command of Christ? What should we say of one who, in reference to his individual character, were thus to argue, and say, because I must despair of attaining absolute perfection, I will therefore deliberately live in sin? But is not this the very reasoning which in this case men apply to the church of Christ? Because we cannot attain absolute purity, we will therefore live in the avowed neglect of those laws which are intended as enable us as a church to approach as near to it as possible.

Besides, absolute purity in any church is not what the great lawgiver requires, i. e. no blame can be attached to the members, if one who formerly seemed to walk consistently prove a hypocrite. But blame *is* to be attached, if, when this is made manifest, the laws of Christ are not applied.

In adverting, however, to our principles as *dissenters* in this address, I should be chargeable with a very material omission, if I did not remind you of the deep importance of shewing the practical effect of our principles as *christians* in every part of our conduct. I have known some who imbibed strong prejudices against the principles of dissent, from not observing so much spirituali-

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ty of character, and so much consistency of general deportment, in those who embraced these principles, as in others. Nay, has there not been too much ground for the complaint, that among those who thus separate from others, a spirit of strife and vain jangling has been produced; and that self-complacency and self-confidence, along with an excessive zeal for external forms, have usurped the place of that humility, self-denial, watchfulness against sin, fidelity in every duty, and devotedness to the glory of God, which are the great ornament of christian character? Others who were once attached perhaps to the principles of dissent, and were satisfied by the arguments by which they were supported, have had that attachment shaken, from witnessing these evils, and not observing that superiority, in point of personal character, which they naturally conceived correct sentiments regarding any part of divine truth ought to produce.

Is there not here, brethren, much room for deep humility and great searchings of heart? Such evils are surely not the natural or legitimate effects of just views of any part of the truth of God, nor should their existence make us in any measure indifferent whether we understand the directions given us in Scripture aright or not.— If we be among those who tremble at the word of God, and who believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, truth, in whatever part of that word, and respecting whatever subject, ought to be highly valued by us, and we ought to adhere to it with the utmost decision.

But we pervert divine truth, if we allow attention to one part of it to lead us to neglect ano-

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ther. The religion of the New Testament is one consistent whole; and we do not understand any part of it aright, unless we take it in its connexion with the rest. It should be a maxim indelibly impressed on our minds, and constantly present to them, that the ultimate design of all the outward institutions of the church of Christ is, on the one hand, to bring those who have been hitherto strangers to the gospel to embrace it, and, on the other, to promote the spiritual good of his disciples—to keep them unspotted from the world—to lead them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, and thus to prepare them for the inheritance of the saints in light. None of these institutions then are properly understood, and properly observed, except in so far as these ends are attained by them. But as it is far easier to direct our thoughts to outward arrangements, and to subject of controversy, where the mere collision of sentiment keeps up the attention, than to maintain in the closet, and in the habitual tenor of our conduct, the genuine influence of christian principle; so it becomes us to be exceedingly jealous, lest we substitute even the most correct speculative views of what relates to the kingdom of Christ, in the room of spirituality of mind and practical godliness. The individual who does so is manifestly living under the most fatal delusion. But while we see that this is a delusion by which many have been deceived, and that it often forms one of the most dangerous machinations of our spiritual adversary, let every member of the church be constantly on his guard, lest under the guise of zeal for the general purity of the society with which he is connected, he deceives himself, by resting

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satisfied without that personal holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

If there are members of dissenting churches, who, though not furnishing ground for christian discipline, have reason to fear that they are declining in the exercise of personal religion, they ought seriously to recollect, that they are not only in danger of deceiving their own souls, but that if, in acting on the principles of dissent, they are following a part of divine truth, they are materially injuring that part of it, by creating in others prejudices against it. Nothing, on the other hand, tends more to excite a favourable impression of any class of principles, than seeing the general body of those who hold them distinguished above others by personal godliness. If you truly value your principles, you will study thus to recommend them; and you will in this way far more effectually do so, than by a thousand warm and stormy debates, or even by the most triumphant refutation in argument of the reasoning of those who differ from you.

I have thus reminded you, my brethren, of the principles on which I trust you are associated.— These have not been taken up rashly, but on conviction. We are not ashamed to avow them, because we are convinced they will stand the test of inquiry. While we rejoice in the circulation of friendly intercourse, and of mutual affection among all the followers of Christ, let us remember that to maintain this it is not necessary to forget our own principles, or to neglect decidedly to act upon them. If we are convinced that those which we have embraced regarding the kingdom of Christ are agreeable to his word, let us be consistent. Let us steadily follow them out. While I would wish you to be liberal dissenters, I would

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at the same time wish you to be decided, conscientious, & consistent dissenters. Principle, personal conviction, must be mingled with every thing we do in religion, if we are the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Let us never shrink from avowing our principles, whatever the consequences may be. In certain circles, the name of *dissenter*, I am well aware, is not a fashionable one. A certain degree of odium or contempt is apt to be attached to it. But if there were one name that would incur more reproach than another, I should blush at the thought of deviating a single *iota* from what I believed to be a command of Christ, in order to avoid that reproach. If I did, my conscience would tell me that I was essentially deficient in allegiance to my Lord and Master, and I should feel myself overwhelmed, when laid on the bed of sickness at the recollection of such a conduct. I should think I had, in shrinking from that reproach, so far refused to confess Jesus before men. You, my brethren, need not be informed of the dreadful consequences of doing so, or of that unutterable confusion which must overwhelm the mind of that man who should have occasion to look back to the smallest approach to this guilt, when every disguise is drawn aside, and when his real character is just about to be made manifest, as seen in the light of an opening eternity.

Every disciple of Jesus is called to confess his Master, by conscientiously inquiring, what is his will in all things, and by steadily following in practice those discoveries which are the result of a patient and impartial examination. I know not what others feel, but I confess I consider it a high privilege to be in a situation where no one can point to a plain command of Christ and say:

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there is an acknowledged part of revealed truth which you cannot obey. Let us, my brethren, prize our privileges, and act consistently with them; and may we enjoy, at the great day of trial, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world.

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## APPENDIX, No. I.

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On the subject of ecclesiastical establishment, the Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester, has the following observations.

Speaking of dissenters he remarks, " Their opinion respecting establishments is founded on reasons which appear to them weighty and solid. They have remarked that in the three first and purest ages of religion the church was a stranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid, Christianity never flourished so much as when they were combined to suppress it; that the protection of Constantine though well intended, diminished from its purity more than it added to its splendour.

" The only pretence for uniting christianity with civil government is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it have any power, operates on the conscience of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions, but will appear to the most advantage, upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumults of worldly policy. Can it be imagined that a dissenter who believes in divine revelation does not feel the same moral restraints as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament. Human laws may debase Christianity but can never improve it; and being able to add nothing to its evidence can add nothing to its force.

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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

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progress of things is so natural that nothing seems wanting in any country to render the thinking part of the people infidels. but a splendid Establishment, It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate both in discipline and doctrine every error and abuse.

“Turn a Christian society into an Established Church, it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded amidst the desire that is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of Christianity with civil power, it is that Ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which, left to itself, had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.

“Among the evils attending the alliance between Church and State, it is not the least that it begets a notion of their interests having some kind of inseparable, though mysterious connexion; so that they who are dissatisfied with the one, must be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinged with this delusion, in which Church and King are blended together, with an arrogance that seems copied from Cardinal Wolsey’s “*Ego, et meus rex.*” “I and my king;” as if the Establishment were of more consequence than the sovereign who represents the collective majesty of the State. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animosity of sects will subside for want of materials to inflame it, nor will

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any man suspect his neighbour for being of a different religion, more than for being of a different complexion from himself. The practice of toleration, it is true, has much abated the violence of those convulsions which for more than a century from the beginning of the reformation, shook Europe to its base, but the source and spring of intolerance is by no means exhausted."

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## APPENDIX, No. II.

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In confirmation of the impossibility of observing Christian discipline in the Church of England, I refer the reader to the following extract from Mr. Conder's valuable work on Protestant Non-conformity.

"The XXVith Canon provides that notorious offenders shall not be admitted to the Communion; an exclusion which is generally considered as a 'lesser excommunication.' But the way in which the minister is instructed to proceed renders the direction nugatory. The discipline of the parish is ostensibly vested in the Church-wardens who are bound by oath to present to their ordinaries all such public offences as they are particularly charged to enquire of in their several parishes; in particular, in the cases of such as are openly known to live in sin notorious without repentance, or who have maliciously and openly contended with their neighbours, and have not been reconciled: their said oath and their faithful discharging of them, being the chief means, according to the express language of the Canons, whereby public sins and offences may be reformed and punished. It is unnecessary to remark that this part of the Church-warden's office is never attempted to be discharged; and for this simple reason, the thing is morally impossible. It would only become, if attempted, the source of endless vexation and dispute, and the means of exercising a petty tyranny over every village; while the office itself would become identified in ignominy with that of a common informer.

"May not, then, the minister himself, in the conscientious discharge of his sacred function, ex-

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clude from christian communion the notorious offender? In the church of England, as by law established, he has no such power. If he refuse to administer the sacrament in the church to the most infamous person, the man may appeal to the Ecclesiastical court, and there, if he can secure the favour of the lay-chancellor, he may securely set both the minister and the bishop at defiance: nay, the minister, should he persist in refusing, is liable to be suspended, and even excommunicated for his contumacy. And in the court of Arches, bishops themselves are subject to the sentence of the chancellor.

“In the case, however of an individual who comes to demand participation of the Lord’s supper, as a qualification for an office in the army or the fleet, it is at the peril of incurring a suit at law, that the clergyman resists the application.—The church to which he has attached himself has obtained from the state the boon that all persons previously to admission into such posts, shall submit thus to qualify themselves; and the state, in its turn, exacts from the church, as the price or condition of this grant, that all persons seeking to become thus qualified shall be admitted. And is this any thing more than what is just? In the event of refusal on the part of the church; though the matter be spiritual, a temporal damage is sustained by the individual; for this, accordingly, an action would be maintainable in the civil courts, and the defendant, if unable to bring legal proof of the fact on which he grounded the refusal would be liable to damages.\* Revolting as this gross profanation of the Lord’s supper must be to

\* See the opinions of Mr. Sergeant Hill and others, in Towgood’s letters to White.—Appendix, page 309.

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every pious mind, and intolerable as the predicament of the conscientious Episcopalian must sometimes be found, when he finds himself compelled to prostitute the symbols of the body and blood of Christ to persons who, *he knows*, are eating and drinking their own condemnation,—still, the minister of religion has no *right* to stand between a man and his temporal interests,—to deprive him of his post, or it may be, his subsistence,—his honourable promotion, or his hard-earned pension.—How flagitious soever may be the man's mortal character, his services deserve from the country for which he has fought, their just reward. Were he, in voluntary, gratuitous hypocrisy, to offer himself as a communicant at the Lord's table, it would be highly fitting that the minister should have the discretionary power of repelling him; but when he comes at the command of the Legislature, to perform a right which the church has procured to be made a condition of secular benefit,—if he be the sinner, who is the tempter? Surely the church has no right to punish him for the crime which it in a manner necessitates."



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