



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>

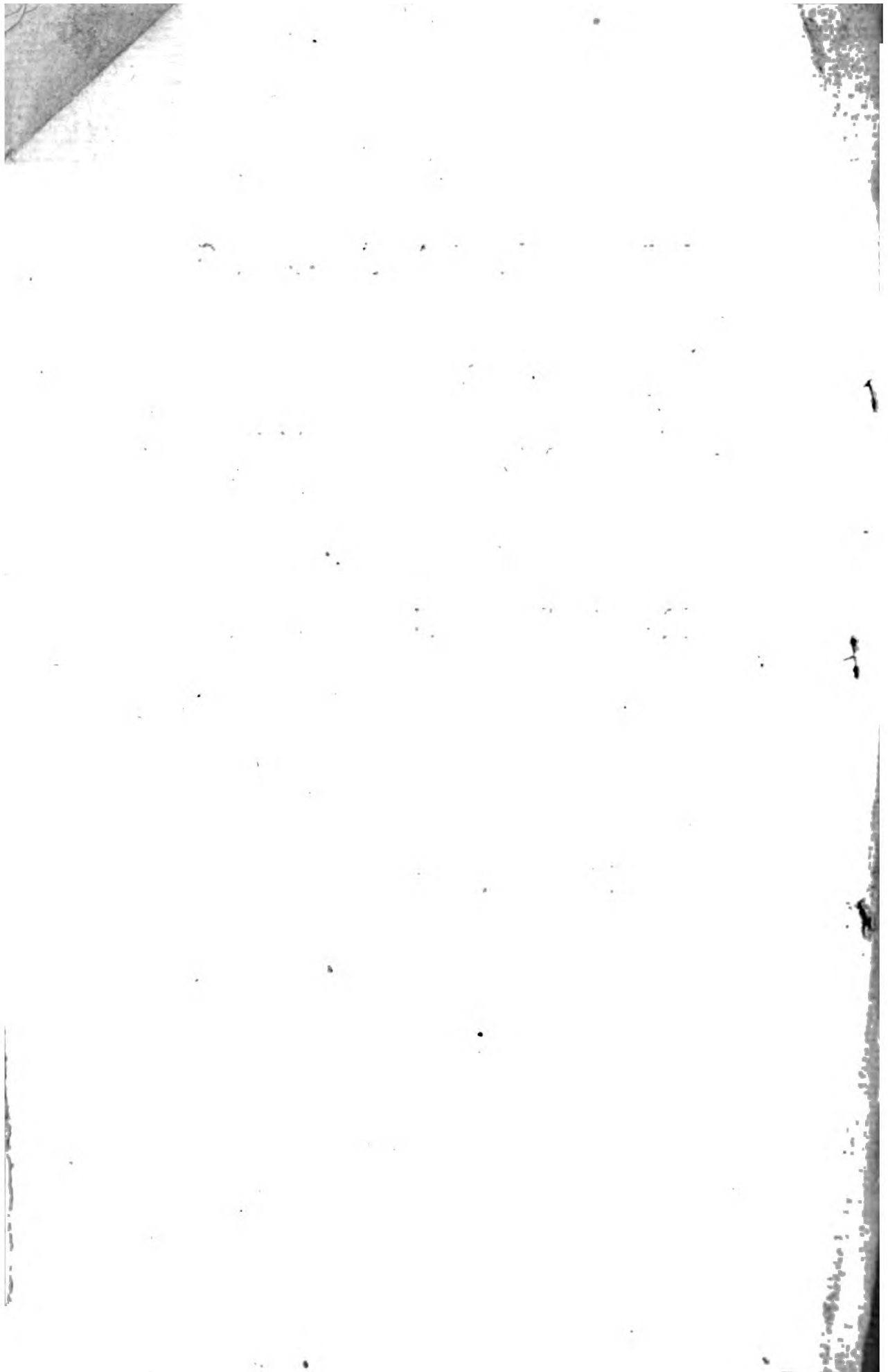


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

OBSERVATIONS
ON
NATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS
IN
RELIGION.

[Price Eighteen Pence.]

(5)



OBSERVATIONS
ON 397
NATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS
IN
RELIGION IN GENERAL,
AND ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT
OF
CHRISTIANITY IN PARTICULAR.

TOGETHER WITH

Some Occasional REMARKS on the CONDUCT and
BEHAVIOUR of the TEACHERS of it.

In a LETTER to the AUTHOR of

AN ESSAY ON ESTABLISHMENTS IN RELIGION.

“ When the Cardinals in Rome go abroad without flocchi on their
“ horses heads, it is understood that they will then be incognito ;
“ and they expect nothing of that respect which is paid to them
“ on other occasions.” BURNET.

L O N D O N,

Printed for S. BLADON, in PATER-NOSTER-ROW.
M DCC LXVII.



Madeline Coffey

...

[1]

OBSERVATIONS

ON

NATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

IN

RELIGION IN GENERAL,

AND ON THE

ESTABLISHMENT

OF

CHRISTIANITY IN PARTICULAR.

S I R,

AS you have hazarded your reflections on establishments in general, and on the establishment of Christianity in particular, you will not, it is presumed, be offended, if a stander-by makes some remarks on them, as well as on a few other parts of your performance.

WITH regard to establishments in general, you are pleased to observe, that

A

“ the

“ the alliance between government and
 “ religion is as old as government it-
 “ self. At the first appearance of Chri-
 “ stianity, this alliance subsisted every-
 “ where, having descended without inter-
 “ ruption from the first ages. Corrupt as
 “ religion then was, yet every government
 “ in the known world drew succours from
 “ it, without which they could never have
 “ attained to any considerable degree of
 “ greatness or Power^a.”—And in answer
 to the observation of the excellent writer of
 the Confessional, that whatever right Chri-
 stian legislators have to establish what reli-
 gion they chuse for the best, the same had the
 Pagan legislators: you say, “ True. And yet, so
 “ far from considering this as a refutation of
 “ our principles, we rather look upon it as a
 “ strong confirmation of them. We are far
 “ from being ashamed of the company of
 “ Turks and Heathens in such a cause. Nor
 “ shall we reject the benefit of an establish-
 “ ment because we enjoy it in common with
 “ them. Had our arguments arisen from some-
 “ thing peculiar to our own system, had they

^a Essay, p. 10.

“ been

“ been local and appropriated to ourselves,
 “ there might have been cause to suspect, that
 “ they borrowed much of their force from
 “ our partiality to our own case. But when
 “ we find them prevailing in every state, and
 “ spreading over the whole globe, we are no
 “ longer at liberty to doubt of their vali-
 “ dity^b.”—Thus an universal consent of all
 ages and nations, in your opinion, is a founda-
 tion sufficient to build an establishment
 of religion on.—If this universal consent
 be a fact,—which yet admits of some
 doubt,—will you abide by the conclusions
 drawn from the same premises in other
 instances?—Idolatry and superstition, for
 instance, have prevailed in every state, and
 spread over the whole globe:—but are
 idolatry and superstition for that reason to
 be introduced, countenanced, encouraged,
 or established by any legislature?—In what
 state, in what part of the globe almost has
 not tyranny been erected? Where has not
 liberty been extirpated, and the free-born
 sons of the Almighty and Benevolent Pa-
 rent of the universe obliged to submit to
 vassalage and chains? In what state, what

^b Essay, p. 95.

part of the globe, have not priests, of various denominations, endeavoured to blind the understandings of men, and lead them into every thing which is weak, absurd, foolish, and hurtful? Surely, Sir, you will not think these examples will any way justify similar actions in this or any other country? Turks and Heathens often have done, often do, what is right;—but it is no argument that a thing is right, because Turks and Heathens have done or do it. Universal consent then, supposing it real, you see is nothing. No argument can be drawn from it, but what will countenance every species of folly and wickedness.

BUT you say, corrupt as religion was from the first ages, every government drew succours from it, without which they could never have obtained any considerable degree of greatness or power. You would have done well, Sir, to have pointed out the succours government drew from corrupt religion. Corrupt religion is a false or superstitious religion. Can falsehood or superstition be advantageous to government, or advance the real happiness of society? the only end for which government was instituted,

tuted, or for which it is worth preservation. Corrupt statesmen and atheistical priests,—a tribe in many countries no way miraculous to behold,—may think to avail themselves of lies, frauds, deceits; they may impose on the credulity, simplicity, and honesty of the *many*, and erect themselves into heroes or dæmons, scattering terror and horror through the unhappy regions in which they reside: but societies, instead of being bettered, are cursed by these means.—Which would a wise man chuse, which a good man prefer, a country where the exterior of religion hardly ever appears, or a land where fopperies, austerities, and cruelties are practised, under all the solemnities of a corrupt ritual? The priesthood would, I know, argue for the latter, because they thereby get gain, they obtain influence, power, pre-eminence, and wealth. Add to this, that a corrupt and superstitious religion enervates the mind, fills it with vain hopes, foolish fears, and deprives it of the resources reason and philosophy afford. Besides, this corrupt religion corrupts the tempers and morals of its votaries. For it is not wisdom or goodness which are venerated by them, but their opposites: consequently,

quently, wisdom or goodness will not be cultivated; but the conduct will be directed by whim, humour, caprice, violence; and penances will be the sole atonement for every crime.—Let us not rest, however, in general reasons. We read in the Jewish history, that, when that people fell into the manners of the Heathens round about them, “ they caused their
 “ sons and their daughters to pass through
 “ the fire^c :” and they are accused, by the prophet, “ of taking their sons and their
 “ daughters, whom they had borne, and
 “ to have sacrificed them to be de-
 “ voured, to have slain their children,
 “ and delivered them to cause them to
 “ pass through the fire^d.” The manners they imitated were probably those of the *Phœnicians* and *Carthaginians*, the latter of whom, “ by an antient law, were en-
 “ joined to sacrifice to *Saturn* only children
 “ nobly born. This not being observed
 “ for some time, grew into disuse, the
 “ children of slaves and foreigners be-
 “ ing substituted in the room of the
 “ others. But when *Agathocles* reduced
 “ *Carthage* almost to the last extremity,

^c 2 Kings xvii. 17.

^d Ezck. xvi. 20.

“ it

“ it revived, the inhabitants imputing all
 “ their misfortunes to the anger of *Saturn*;
 “ who, as they imagined, was offended
 “ at the non-observance of this law. How-
 “ ever, to atone for this crime, two hun-
 “ dred children of the best families in the
 “ city were offered up to that deity ^e.”——
 “ And at such a pitch of frenzy, or rather
 “ savage barbarity, were they arrived, that
 “ mothers made it a merit to view their
 “ own offspring thrown into the devouring
 “ flames, without so much as a groan.
 “ They even, by kisses and embraces,
 “ hushed the cries of their children, be-
 “ fore they were cast into the flaming sta-
 “ tue of *Saturn*, imagining that the effi-
 “ cacy of the sacrifice would have been
 “ entirely lost, if any thing that might
 “ have been interpreted as a mark of the
 “ least reluctance or regret had been shewn.
 “ They used a drum or a tabret, among
 “ other instruments, to drown the shrieks
 “ and outcries of the unhappy victims ^f.”
 See here, Sir, the succours government drew
 from religion, corrupt religion, and how
 it promoted by depopulation, or rather

^e Universal History, Vol. XVII. p. 257.

^f Idem, p. 292.

murder,

murder, its greatness or power!—And Dr. *Potter* observes, “ that examples of
 “ this sort were very common in most of
 “ the barbarous nations. Concerning those
 “ who bordered upon the Jews, as also
 “ concerning the Jews themselves, when
 “ they began to imitate their neighbours,
 “ we find several testimonies in the Sacred
 “ Scriptures. *Cæsar* witnesseth the same
 “ of the *Gauls*; *Lucan* in particular of
 “ that part of *Gallia*, where *Massilia* stands.
 “ *Tacitus* of the *Germans* and *Britons* .
 “ And the first Christian writers do, in
 “ many places, charge it on the Heathens
 “ in general. Nevertheless, it was not so
 “ common in *Greece* and other civilized
 “ nations, as in those which were barba-
 “ rous. Among the primitive *Grecians* it
 “ was accounted an act of so uncommon
 “ cruelty and impiety, that *Lycaon* king
 “ of *Arcadia* was feigned by the poets to
 “ be turned into a wolf, because he offered
 “ an human sacrifice to *Jupiter*. In latter
 “ ages it was undoubtedly more common
 “ and familiar: *Aristomenes*, the *Messenian*,
 “ sacrificed three hundred men, among
 “ whom was *Theopompus* one of the kings
 “ of *Sparta*, to *Jupiter* of *Ithome*. The-
 “ mistocles,

“ *mistocles*, in order to procure the assistance
 “ of the Gods against the *Persians*, sacrificed
 “ some captives of that nation, as we find it
 “ related in *Plutarch*. *Bacchus* had an altar
 “ in *Arcadia*, upon which young damsels
 “ were beaten to death with bundles of rods;
 “ something like to which was practised by
 “ the *Lacedæmonians*, who scourged their
 “ children (sometimes to death) in honour
 “ *Diana Orthia*. To the Manes, and in-
 “ fernal Gods, such sacrifices were very often
 “ offered: hence we read of *Polyxena's* being
 “ sacrificed to *Achilles*; and *Homer* relates
 “ how that hero butchered twelve *Trojan*
 “ captives, at the funeral of *Patroclus*.
 “ *Æneas*, whom *Virgil* celebrates for his pi-
 “ ety, is an example of the same practice:

Sulmone creatos

*Quatuor hic juvenes, totidem quos educat Ufens,
 Viventes rapit; inferias quos immolet umbris,
 Captivoque rogi perfundat sanguine flammæ.*

“ Four youths of *Sulmo's* race,
 “ As many bred by *Ufens*, victims doom'd,
 “ Living he snatches, victims to the ghost
 “ Of *Pallas*; with their captive blood to
 “ drench
 “ His funeral pile, and on its flames expire.”

TRAPP.
 POT-

POTTER has not related *Themistocles's* sacrifice with sufficient exactness. We will give it, therefore, as it is told by the historian to whom he refers, in order that the reader may be satisfied of the succours government drew from the *Grecian* religion. —“While *Themistocles* was sacrificing,” says the writer, “upon the admiral galley, there
 “ were three very beautiful captives brought
 “ to him, richly dressed and adorned with
 “ gold, said to be the children of *Autarctus*
 “ and *Sandace*, sister to *Xerxes*. As soon as the
 “ soothsayer *Euphrantides* saw them, and ob-
 “ served that at the same time the fire blazed
 “ out from the offerings with extraordinary
 “ brightness, and that one sneezed to the
 “ right, which portended some fortunate
 “ event, he took *Themistocles* by the hand,
 “ and ordered that the three youths should
 “ be consecrated, and sacrificed to *Bacchus*
 “ *Omestes*, or the Devourer; for hereby the
 “ *Greeks* would not only save themselves,
 “ but also obtain victory. *Themistocles* was
 “ startled at a prophecy that carried so much
 “ cruelty and inhumanity in it; but the
 “ populace, according to their manner in
 “ all pressing difficulties, trusting more to

‡ Antiquities of Greece, vol. I. p. 218.

“ any

“ any absurd and extravagant means of safe-
 “ ty, than to such as are reasonable, with
 “ one voice invoked *Bacchus*, and, bringing
 “ the captives to the altar, compelled *The-*
 “ *mistocles* to perform the sacrifice as the
 “ soothfayer had commanded ^h.”—And the
 same author tells us, “ that the *Romans*, on
 “ account of the *Gallic* war, in obedience
 “ to some prophecies contained in the
 “ books of the *Sibyls*, thought themselves
 “ obliged to bury alive, in the place which
 “ is called the beast-market, two *Greeks*, a
 “ man and a woman, and likewise two
 “ *Gauls*, one of each sex ⁱ.”

MR. *LOCKE*, in disputing against in-
 nate practical principles, says, “ Have there
 “ not been whole nations, and those of the
 “ most civilized people, amongst whom the
 “ exposing their children, and leaving them
 “ in the fields, to perish by want or wild
 “ beasts, has been the practice, as little con-
 “ demned or scrupled, as the begetting
 “ them? Do they not still, in some coun-
 “ tries, put them into the same graves with
 “ their mothers, if they die in child-birth;

^h Plutarch, in *Themist*.

ⁱ Id. in *Marcellus*.

“ or dispatch them, if a pretended astrolo-
 “ ger declares them to have unhappy stars ?
 “ And are there not places where, at a cer-
 “ tain age, they kill or expose their parents
 “ without any remorse at all ? In a part of
 “ *Asia*, the sick, when their case comes to
 “ be thought desperate, are carried out and
 “ laid on the earth, before they are dead, and
 “ left there, exposed to wind and weather,
 “ to perish without assistance or pity. It
 “ is familiar among the *Mingrelians*, a
 “ people professing Christianity, to bury
 “ their children alive without scruple. There
 “ are places where they eat their own
 “ children. The *Caribes* were wont to geld
 “ their own children, on purpose to fat and
 “ eat them. And *Garcilasso de la Vega* tells
 “ us of a people in *Peru*, which were wont
 “ to fat and eat the children they got on
 “ their female captives, whom they kept as
 “ concubines for that purpose ; and when
 “ they were past breeding, the mothers
 “ themselves were killed too and eaten.
 “ The virtues whereby the *Tououpinambos*
 “ believed they merited paradise, were re-
 “ venge, and eating abundance of their
 “ enemies. No acknowledgment of any
 “ God, no religion, no worship. The saints,
 “ who

“ who are canonized among the *Turks*, lead
 “ lives, which one cannot with modesty re-
 “ late. A remarkable passage to this pur-
 “ pose, out of the voyage of *Baumgarten*,
 “ which is a book not every day to be met
 “ with, I shall set down at large, in the lan-
 “ guage it is published in. *Ibi (sc. prope*
 “ *Belbes in Ægypto) vidimus sanctum unum*
 “ *Saracenicum inter arenarum cumulos, ita ut*
 “ *ex utero matris prodit, nudum sedentem.*
 “ *Mos est, ut didicimus Mahometistis, ut eos*
 “ *qui amentes et sine ratione sunt, pro sanctis*
 “ *colant et venerentur. Insuper et eos qui*
 “ *cum diu vitam egerint inquinatissimam, vo-*
 “ *luntariam demum pœnitentiam et pauper-*
 “ *tatem, sanctitate venerandos deputant. Ejus-*
 “ *modi verò genus hominum libertatem quan-*
 “ *dam effrœnem habent, domos quas volunt in-*
 “ *trandi, edendi, bibendi, et, quod majus est,*
 “ *concumbendi; ex quo concubitu, si proles se-*
 “ *cuta fuerit, sancta similiter habetur. His*
 “ *ergo hominibus, dum vivunt, magnos exhi-*
 “ *bent honores; mortuis verò vel templa vel*
 “ *monumenta extruunt amplissima, eosque con-*
 “ *tingere ac sepelire maximæ fortunæ ducunt*
 “ *loco. Audivimus hæc dicta et dicenda per*
 “ *interpretem à Mucrelo nostro. Insuper sanc-*
 “ *tum illum, quem eò loci vidimus, publicitus*
 “ *apprimè*

“ *apprimè commendari, eum esse hominem sanctum, divinum, ac integritate præcipuum; eo quod, nec fæminarum unquam esset, nec puerorum, sed tantummodo assellarum concubitor atque mularum* ^k.” Whether this writer was too credulous of stories told by travellers, as *Voltaire*¹ will have it, or no, is of little consequence in the present argument: suffice it, that many of his relations are known facts, and as such attested by the best informed historians. And if these are facts, some at least of them, what advantages have *Turks* or *Heathens* reaped from their several establishments of religion?

AND indeed with regard to Heathenism, it is impossible any government could avail itself by an alliance with it. It is well known that the poetical accounts of the gods were received and believed by the bulk of the people. These gods were drunkards, whoremasters, adulterers, effeminate, without natural affection, and, in short, perpetrators of the most infamous actions. What then could be expected from their wor-

^k On Human Understanding.

¹ *Philosophe Ignorant*, p. 102.

shippers,

shippers, but vice and wickedness in the highest degree? Nothing is more natural than to imitate characters held in the highest veneration and esteem. That some of the antient Pagan commonwealths arrived to considerable degrees of greatness and power, is not to be disputed. But greatness and power in a state do not always argue happiness. On the contrary, instances may be produced where the power and greatness of government is founded on the misery of subjects, and where mediocrity of power is attended with the happiness of such as live under it. That *Greece* and *Rome* made such a figure, is not to be imputed to their superstition, or religion, if you will so call it; but to their legislators, their philosophers, their generals, who, for the most part, were men of understanding, who despised the superstition of their country, and inculcated on the minds of those they had influence over, the noble principles of the love of virtue, their country, their friends, and a contempt of every deviation from honour. This, with the little dread of death these heroes held, that fortitude and magnanimity with which, in consequence of it, they were inspired, rendered them and their respective commu-

communities, respectable in the eyes of all around them, and caused their arms to be in general victorious. Superstitions, on occasion, may have been serviceable. But if they were serviceable on some occasions, they were as hurtful on others, and filled the minds of men with panic fears, as often as they inspired them with hopes. For such idle things as soothsayers and diviners dealt in, could not but have a very uncertain effect on weak and credulous minds.

Do you believe the apostle *Paul*, Sir? I hope I may answer for you that you do. Hear then his account of the benefit men received from corrupt religion in his time.—“ Pro-
 “ fessing themselves to be wise they became
 “ fools: and changed the glory of the in-
 “ corruptible God, into an image made like
 “ to corruptible man, and to birds, and
 “ fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
 “ Wherefore God also gave them up to un-
 “ cleanness, through the lusts of their own
 “ hearts, to dishonour their own bodies be-
 “ tween themselves: who changed the truth
 “ of God into a lie, and worshipped and
 “ served the creature more than the Creator
 “ who

“ who is blessed for ever. Amen. For
 “ this cause God gave them up to vile af-
 “ fections: for even their women did change
 “ the natural use into that which is against
 “ nature: and likewise also the men, leav-
 “ ing the natural use of the women, burned
 “ in their lust one toward another, men with
 “ men working that which is unseemly,
 “ and receiving in themselves that recom-
 “ pence of their error which was meet.
 “ And even as they did not like to retain
 “ God in their knowledge, God gave them
 “ over to a reprobate mind, to do those
 “ things which are not convenient. Being
 “ filled with all unrighteousness, fornica-
 “ tion, wickedness, covetousness, malicious-
 “ ness; full of envy, murder, debate, de-
 “ ceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters,
 “ haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters,
 “ inventors of evil things, disobedient to
 “ parents, without understanding, covenant
 “ breakers, without natural affection, im-
 “ placable, unmerciful^m.” Is the picture
 overcharged? If not, must not you give
 up your opinion of the utility of the esta-
 blishment of corrupt religion to govern-

^m Rom. i. 22—31.

ment? A sensible, sprightly writer has attempted to prove private vices public benefits; and it must be confessed, he has said many lively, plausible things on the subject: but it was beyond his imagination, fertile as it was, to endeavour to prove the corruption of a whole people in point of morals, as you see the Heathen was, by means of its idolatry and superstition, the occasion of their advancement to greatness or power.— Here, Sir, I rest the consideration of the utility of religious establishments in general, of which you have with much art discoursed, though with little solidity, in my apprehension. I will only add, by way of corollary, “ that it must be highly mischievous to society for a magistrate, after he hath chosen *his* religion, to incorporate it with *his* governmentⁿ.” For, as experience has shewn the magistrate almost every where has chosen a corrupt, that is, a false, idolatrous, superstitious religion, if he incorporates it with his government, he will establish a religion productive of the greatest evils to his subjects.—He should let these things alone, as he is not a competent

ⁿ Essay, p. 42.

judge for others, though he has undoubtedly a right to practise conformable to his own sentiments; if indeed, at any time, he has sentiments of his own on this subject.

LET us now see the utility of *Christian* establishments of religion. Jesus Christ taught men a pure spiritual religion. He aimed at rectifying the hearts and regulating the actions of his disciples, in order to render them good men, good citizens, children of God, by imitation, and meet to be partakers of happiness in a world they were taught to look for when they departed hence. These were the ends Jesus proposed to himself, by calling men to repentance, by preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel, that God, by his ministration, was reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their past trespasses unto them, but pardoning what was done amiss, in order to excite them to such a behaviour as might intitle them to larger shares of his favour and benevolence, in the kingdom of heaven, prepared from everlasting, for the happiness of the good and virtuous. Now, as these were the ends, it is evident the means must be suited

unto them. Accordingly, we find the great distinction made by the Christian legislator between the righteous and the wicked; the things morally good inculcated, the things morally evil prohibited; men's attention called off from the world, and their pursuit directed to the attainment of the world to come. The sermon Christ preached on the mount; his account of the actions for which men are to be judged, in the most solemn manner, before angels and men; and his discourses to his disciples, as they are recorded by a beloved disciple, are full proofs of this.—On the same plan the apostles acted. They called on all men every-where to repent, declared the terms of acceptance, took men off from a reliance on things ritual and ceremonial, preached righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, and very plainly taught what things were acceptable, what displeasing to Almighty God.—

“ The works of the flesh are manifest,
 “ which are these, adultery, fornication,
 “ uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,
 “ witchcraft, hatred, variance, emula-
 “ tions, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
 “ envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-
 “ lings,

“ lings, and such like : of the which I
 “ have told you in time past, that they
 “ which do such things shall not inherit
 “ the kingdom of God. But the fruit of
 “ the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suf-
 “ fering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meek-
 “ ness, temperance : against such there is
 “ no law. And they that are Christ’s,
 “ have crucified the flesh, with the affec-
 “ tions and lusts. If we live in the spirit,
 “ let us also walk in the spirit. Let us
 “ not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking
 “ one another, envying one another °.”—
 And St. *Paul* directs *Titus*, who was left
 in *Crete*, “ to ordain elders in every city, to
 “ speak the things which became sound
 “ doctrine. That the aged men be sober,
 “ grave, temperate, sound in faith, in cha-
 “ rity, in patience : the aged women like-
 “ wise, that they be in behaviour as be-
 “ cometh holiness ; not false accusers, not
 “ given to much wine, teachers of good
 “ things ; that they may teach the young
 “ women to be sober, to love their hus-
 “ bands, to love their children, to be dis-
 “ creet, chaste, keepers at home, good,

° Gal. v. 19—26.

“ obedient

“ obedient to their own husbands, that the
 “ word of God be not blasphemed. Young
 “ men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.
 “ —Exhort servants to be obedient to their
 “ own masters, and to please them well
 “ in all things; not answering again, not
 “ purloining, but shewing all good fide-
 “ lity; that they may adorn the doctrine
 “ of God our Saviour in all things.—Put
 “ them in mind to be subject to prin-
 “ cipalities and powers, to obey magif-
 “ trates, to be ready to every good work,
 “ to speak evil of no man, to be no
 “ brawlers; but gentle, shewing all meek-
 “ ness unto all men.—This is a faith-
 “ ful saying, and these things I will that
 “ thou constantly affirm, that they which
 “ have believed in God, might be careful
 “ to maintain good works. These things
 “ are good and profitable unto men. But
 “ avoid foolish questions, and genealogies,
 “ and contentions, and strivings about
 “ the law; for they are unprofitable and
 “ vain.” Is not all this very plain? have
 we not here, and in other places, every
 thing necessary for the purposes of govern-

‡ Titus ii, iii.

ment

ment and social life? and is there any thing which needs rectification or enlargement?

“ Revelation was intended (says an ingenious writer) for the use of all mankind. “ The book therefore in which it is recorded, is a popular work. The rules of faith and practice are delivered in such a manner, as to be clear to the plain and untutored mind, without observing always a metaphysical precision, or pursuing a logical method. Those books of morality and religion, which have been composed by the greatest merely human understandings, are studiously worked up into a regular system; where principles are laid down, remote consequences deduced from them, truths built upon truths, and where we are at first struck with the just disposition of the parts, and the symmetry of the whole. Revelation is a work of a different kind. All its precepts arise naturally out of the occasions on which they were delivered; and these, we know, were extremely various, apparently incidental, and unconnected. Its doctrines lie scattered about in a rich profusion, like the productions of na-

“ ture. The most unskilful hand can take
 “ from this store to supply his wants, and
 “ learns to bless the goodness of that com-
 “ mon Parent, who hath made this ample
 “ provision for all. And thus the lowest
 “ and the busiest part of mankind, they
 “ who have neither leisure nor ability to
 “ digest a whole system, may reap the
 “ greatest benefit from the Scriptures,
 “ whilst they cannot look into a single
 “ page, without returning the wiser from
 “ it, and without meeting with many
 “ lessons of instruction, whose force they
 “ may fully comprehend. Thus much
 “ was necessary to render the Scriptures fit
 “ for common use ⁹.”—You, Sir, seem
 to agree with this writer, when you say,
 “ As single and individual Christians, they
 “ may enjoy the right of private judgment
 “ in its full extent, and each may pursue
 “ his own opinions without controul,
 “ whilst each with a Bible in his hand
 “ (if he pleases to take it in his hand) is a
 “ church to himself.” The meaning of
 which, I suppose, is, that as private Chri-
 stians, we all may think and act for our-

⁹ Rotherham on Faith, p. 5. 2d edit.

elves

selves in matters of religion, and be endowed with the same authority with respect to each of ourselves, as the *Ladies Church*, in different countries, are authorized by the magistrate, to exert over their servants, slaves, or children, and, I apprehend, with equal advantage.

BUT, you add, “ Good God ! what
 “ chance is there that the knowledge of
 “ religion should long survive on this foot-
 “ ing ; where no provision is made for in-
 “ structing the people in their faith or
 “ their duty, and where every one is left
 “ to pursue, at his will, the cares or the
 “ pleasures of this life, without any stated
 “ call to think of religion ?—Either then
 “ all the advantages of public and social
 “ religion must be lost, or it must be
 “ men’s duty to join in society, for the
 “ obtaining of those advantages. This
 “ necessarily leads to the appointment of a
 “ power to provide for the wants of that
 “ society, one of the chief of which is
 “ the means of public instruction in the
 “ truths of religion. Fit persons must be
 “ appointed to convey these instructions ;

D

“ and

“ and if fit persons, then there must be
 “ some to judge of that fitness †.”

BUT who, Sir, is to judge of the fitness of the persons for instructing the people in the truths of religion? The magistrate? Alas! the magistrate knows as little of the matter, in many places, as the most ignorant of his subjects. Is it the chief priests constituted by him for that purpose? These, every one knows, in most countries, have preferred rites and ceremonies to moral virtue, have sought gain † more than godliness, and the establishment of their

† Essay on Establishments, p. 62.

† The teachers in National Establishments are undoubtedly under great obligations to the writer of this Essay, for informing the public, “ that there is nothing
 “ in the Christian laws to restrain them from accepting
 “ the provision made for them by the magistrate.” He would add much to these obligations, if he would write a short, or a long comment on the following words, which, though often read, are, as it seems, little understood. “ And he lifted up his eyes on his
 “ disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours
 “ is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger
 “ now, for ye shall be filled.—Wo unto you that
 “ are rich: for ye have received your consolation.
 “ Wo unto you that are full: for ye shall hunger.”

own wealth, power, and pre-eminence, rather than the happiness of the community they have taken on them to instruct. Ill judges, then, are these of the qualifications of such as they are appointed to place as instructors of mankind; and full as well is it to leave it to the people to instruct themselves, or chuse their own instructors, as to give power to others to chuse for them.

You have observed, and I think justly,
 “ that had there been a necessity of ad-
 “ hering to any particular outward form
 “ of Christian society, that form would
 “ have been as distinctly delineated in the
 “ New Testament, as the temple was in
 “ the Old; and the plan would have been
 “ laid down with such precision, that we
 “ could not easily mistake it: whereas
 “ nothing of this kind hath been done.
 “ But the original plan is in reality so in-
 “ distinct, that the most learned enquirers
 “ into antiquity differ about every part of
 “ it .” What you would infer from

· Essay, p. 84.

D 2

hence

hence is, that as no plan is plainly laid down in the New Testament, therefore every government has a right to adapt such a one as is most suitable, in their own apprehensions, to their situation and circumstances.

But I freely confess, that, from your observation, I should naturally conclude that Jesus Christ and his apostles, by giving no directions in this matter, and setting no example which can be certainly traced out, evidently shewed of how little value things of this nature were in their eyes, and how little men should trouble their heads about them. Christ has bid us to call no man master in matters of religion, and he tells us we are all brethren, on a foot of equality, and consequently, ought not to be subject to men, ought not to own their authority, or submit to their commands. It is enough that we are Christians, that we do whatsoever he hath commanded us, without embracing the traditions of men. And very observable it is, that, however zealous our modern churchists are about rites, and modes and forms, how-

ever active in compassing sea and land, to make profelytes to a party, or bring men to look on and treat trifles as realities: very observable, I say, it is, that every thing of a ritual nature is slightly spoken of, or lightly passed over, in the New Testament. How little stress is laid on Baptism and the Lord's Supper comparatively? How few rules or directions are given about them? How few exhortations to the performance of them? And even with regard to the observation of the Lord's-day, though it seems of much more importance to the cause of piety and virtue, and is serviceable to the cause of humanity, yet what command has Jesus given about it? In the times of the apostles, there were disputes about the observation of days, we know: but the apostle, with his wonted liberal spirit, would give no directions in this matter, lest his authority should be opposed to that liberty whereunto Christians were called by the Gospel. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

^t Rom. xiv. 5.

“ no man judge you in meat or in drink,
 “ or in respect of an holy-day, or of the
 “ Sabbath-days, which are the shadow of
 “ things to come; but the body is of
 “ Christ.” And in another place he very
 severely handles those who lay stress on such
 matters, as being ignorant of the nature of
 Christ’s religion. “ Now, after that ye have
 “ known God, or rather are known of God,
 “ how turn ye again to the weak and beg-
 “ garly elements, whereunto ye desire again
 “ to be in bondage? Ye observe days and
 “ months, and times and years. I am
 “ afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon
 “ you labour in vain*.” Can any thing
 be more in point than these words to the
 subject in hand? The truth is, matters of
 a ceremonial nature have a tendency to
 take men off from morality; they lull the
 conscience, and dispose us to think we may
 be religious, though our characters are not
 virtuous.

LET us appeal now to facts for the utility of Christian establishments.

* Col. ii. 15.

* Gal. iv. 9.

WHEN *Constantine* professed Christianity, he loaded its teachers with wealth and power. This inspired them with pride and ambition, and caused them to be desirous of lording it one over another. Had the emperor been contented only to keep the peace, things might have been tolerable. But he was not contented herewith. He confirmed the creeds of blind and passionate men by his authority, and banished such as had either honesty or obstinacy enough to oppose them. Thus, for the sake of unintelligibles, for the sake of what the Gospel taught nothing about, love and peace were cashiered, and envy and hatred took place.

The following emperors proceeded on the same plan;—sometimes favouring one sect, sometimes another; now establishing one set of doctrines, then abolishing them, and placing new ones in their room. At times *Arianism* was orthodox, a little afterwards *Athanasianism*; now images were objects of devotion, soon afterwards of destruction. In short, by means of the establishment of religion in the eastern empire,
 religion

religion itself became wholly unknown, and the people were as ready to be called by another name as that of Christ.

WHAT Christians do you think, Sir, must have been in *Syria*, and the regions round about, who submitted so readily to the religion of *Mabomet*? They were invaded, they were conquered, it is true; but this put them under no necessity of renouncing their faith, or embracing that of their conquerors. Tribute, a small tribute, would have satisfied for their religious liberty, and they might have peaceably enjoyed their opinions and practices. But the truth seems to have been, they had no real religion at all; but had lost it amidst contentions about nonsense and foolish superstitions. This was the effect of establishing Christianity there.

NEED I point out the pernicious consequences of it in the western empire? There, you know, “ that man of sin was
 “ revealed, the son of perdition: who
 “ opposeth and exalteth himself against
 “ all that is called God, or that is wor-
 “ shipped

“ shipped [above kings and emperors]; so
 “ that he, as God, sitteth in the temple
 “ of God; shewing himself that he is
 “ God.” There it was, by the fraud of
 the priests, and the folly and tyranny of
 princes, countenancing and authorizing
 them, that Christians departed from the
 faith, “ giving heed to seducing spirits,
 “ and doctrines of dæmons; speaking lies
 “ in hypocrisy, having their conscience
 “ seared as with an hot iron; forbidding
 “ to marry, and commanding to abstain
 “ from meats.”

POPERY, you know, overspread this em-
 pire, and put an end to the virtues, the
 arts, the reputation of its former inhabit-
 ants. So that government, instead of at-
 taining any considerable degrees of great-
 ness or power by its establishment, was
 much weakened, and the bravest nations
 were reduced to the weakest condition.

THAT was a fine religion, indeed, that
 recommended and authorized croisades, the

† 2 Theff. ii. 3.

* 1 Tim. iv. 1—3.

drains of *Europe*, and the disgrace of human nature! That an excellent religion, that canonized the infamous *Becket*, and compelled a great king to submit to the most servile penance, for a supposed or real concern in his assassination!

OF great use must the establishment of a religion be, which allowed the institutions of monks and nuns, which, if their vows are observed, hinder population, the source of power and greatness, and if not observed, occasion lewdness, adultery, murder, and many other vices hurtful to society.

THE inquisition alone will shew us what diabolism may be established, under the pretence of securing religion, the Christian religion forsooth, and how wicked men may be, though they conform to the religious laws of the community. What need of a further detail?

THE *Parisian* and *Irish* massacres, the cruelties exercised in the *Low Countries* by the Duke of *Alva*, the revocation of the edict of *Nantz*, and the bloody transactions of *Tborn*, are demonstrative proofs, that

the establishment of Popery has been productive of the most fatal effects to society, and that the inhabitants of *Kamschatka*, or the *Cape of Good Hope*, have a much better chance to be virtuous, and consequently happy, than those who conform to such a religion.

“ THESE religious establishments, then, have no right to a being: and they can have no right to defend their being, if they have no right to the being itself; for they are in their nature and constitution unlawful.”—But have not Protestant establishments promoted the cause of truth and virtue, and produced much happiness to the communities where they are introduced? Protestant establishments are undoubtedly better, though perhaps more inconsistent with the fundamental Protestant principles, than Popish ones; because they contain fewer errors and absurdities, and leave open a door for free enquiry and examination. Hence truth is more and more discovered, bigotry be-

^a Essay, p. 55.

comes ridiculous, and honesty and sincerity are found to be the alone foundation for expecting the favour of God, or the rewards of the Gospel. But, if we will speak freely, I think, we must say, that Protestant establishments have not in very many places promoted the public utility; for by drawing up articles, creeds, forms of confession of faith, and requiring subscriptions to things incredible, absurd, unscriptural, or plainly false, as well as uniformity in public worship; I say, by doing this, the progress of truth hath been hindered, a narrowness of thinking contracted, hypocrisy countenanced and encouraged, charity destroyed, and hatred and variance taken place. Witness the persecutions among all who have had the power,—almost all,—of establishing their own fancies here in *England*, from the time of the Reformation down to the Revolution. What heats and animosities, what evil treatment, what fines and banishments (to say nothing of the burnings some underwent) do our histories make mention of? And for what? Because men did not see with the same eyes, nor commend or blame with the magistrate.

TILL

TILL toleration took place, *limited* and *confined* toleration, every iniquity was practised, under pretence of bringing men to the knowledge and practice of what, for fashion's sake, was called orthodox religion; and thousands of families were deprived of their ease, and the fruits of their industry, for fear they should become impious, and go to the devil. In such circumstances, we may well suppose government to arrive at power and greatness, and the happiness of the community greatly to be advanced! witness the annals of the *Stuarts*!—And even now, Sir, you cannot but know, that there are many mischiefs arising from the present establishment, many hardships put on honest men, and a variety of things enjoined, which have no other tendency than to take men off from the practice of piety and virtue, and make them rely on things very foolish and ridiculous. You will easily suppose I mean confirmation, absolution, ordination, &c. &c. But I forbear.—I mean not hereby to condemn the *English* establishment alone. The establishments in *Scotland*, in *Geneva*, in *Germany* among the Protestants, and in
the

the Northern kingdoms, are all of them very exceptionable, and have been, and are productive of many mischiefs. Who knows not the evils excited by the magistrates authorizing the decrees of the synod of *Dort*? Who is ignorant of the miseries different establishments of religion, in different times, have caused in *North Britain*? What squabbles have there been between *Lutherans* and the *Reformed* in *Germany*, what quarrels between *Lutherans* and *Lutherans*, *Calvinists* and *Calvinists*? The establishment of particular tenets as religious, and the countenance and encouragement given by the magistrate to the profession of them, have occasioned all these woes, and will be productive of the like in all places. For as long as men think, they will differ; and, unless honesty wholly takes her flight from amongst men, there will be those who will speak their sentiments, whatever may be the consequence. Let the magistrate be silent, no hurt to society will accrue; but the moment he interferes, and becomes a party, peace vanishes, and religious hatred, the worst and most bitter hatred, takes place.

BESIDES,

BESIDES, all establishments may be deemed hurtful to societies, as they take some men off from industry, and give them maintenance at the expence of others. All the good society ever reaped from religious institutions, they would have reaped without heaping any emoluments on the ministers of those institutions. For if men were virtuous, they would teach their neighbours to be virtuous likewise, by words and actions; and they would have a thousand times more influence on the conduct of those around them, than such as are known to talk for hire, and minister in what is called holy things, merely because they have their maintenance for it.

ALLIANCES between church and state have been much talked of, and our polemical, selfish, ambitious divines, have attempted to set forth the good and benefit of society from them. But “ we do not
 “ find, since the arts of government and
 “ mysteries of religion have been thus
 “ suited together, that either has been
 “ much advantaged by the union; it
 “ having

“ having never yet appeared, that divinity
 “ has been greatly bettered by policy ; or
 “ that policy has been any-where amended
 “ by divinity ^b.”

I EXPECT, Sir, it will be said, that by throwing up establishment, we throw up religion itself, and occasion men's return to barbarism and heathenism. This is the common objection. But may it not be asked, what good in fact the establishment of the Christian religion, in the manner it has hitherto been established, has done ? *John Wesley* declares, “ that a few years ago, *Great Britain* and *Ireland* were covered with vice from sea to sea. Very little of the form of religion was left, and still less of the power of it ^c.” *John* possibly may not be admitted as a legal evidence. Let us call others, if you please: We have books, you know, of “ the causes of the decay of Christian piety, and of the corruption among Christians ;” in

^b Preface to *Whichcot's Select Discourses*.

^c Letter to the Author of the *Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists*, p. 42.

these their great enormities are set forth, and means pointed out for their amendment. But all to no effect, if we may believe our clergy, who are continually exclaiming against the enormous sins and vices of the age.

DR. Thomas Burnet, speaking of the manners of Christians, says, “ *Hæc cum
 “ ita sint, quid si à mortuis resurgerent
 “ apostoli, atque orbis Christiani faciem in-
 “ tuerentur: vitiis obteclam, & magni no-
 “ minis umbram? Ipsos puderet, & tantum
 “ non pæniteret suorum laborum. Vel si,
 “ quiescentibus apostolis, resurgerent philo-
 “ sophi & gentilium sapientes: & perlustrato
 “ terrarum orbe, à nobis quærerent quid pro-
 “ fuerit humano generi religio Christiana,
 “ quoad mores & vitæ probitatem? Quoad
 “ pacem & bonum publicum? Nos utique
 “ appellatis barbaros per opprobrium; sed
 “ nobis barbaris quid præstatis vos Chri-
 “ stiani? His dictis factisque respondeant
 “ illi, qui apud nos præsides sunt rerum hu-
 “ manarum & divinarum^d.”*

^d De Fide & Officiis, p. 98.

DR. *Prideaux*, speaking of the difficulties of converting the people of the *East Indies* to the Christian faith, says, “ The *English Gentiles*, among whom our best harvest is to be expected in this attempt, are much more exact in their morals, than either the *Portuguese* or the *English Christians* that live among them ; and on this account they have a very bad opinion of Christianity, for the sake of those who profess it. For the great end of all religion being to make men more holy, just, and righteous, it is a very obvious and common practice among most men, to judge of a religion by the lives of its votaries ; and therefore it will be a very difficult task to make it believed in those parts, that Christianity is the best religion, as long as the vices of our factors, and our communion, are daily, in the eyes of the *Indians*, an undeniable objection, in matter of fact, that it doth not make the best men.

“ The chief reason which made the primitive Christians so mightily grow upon the world, and at length draw in
“ the

“ the whole *Roman* empire to them, was,
 “ that they were (what our holy religion
 “ totally tends to make us), above all men
 “ else, the most exact in their morals,
 “ which gave them that reputation, as to
 “ make all men at last to come in unto
 “ them. And it is in vain to expect the
 “ same effect, where there is not the same
 “ cause to help to bring it to pass. For,
 “ to consider the religion abstracted from
 “ the professors, and the principles apart
 “ from the practices of those that hold
 “ them, and examine them truly as they
 “ are in themselves, and not only as they
 “ appear in the lives of men, is an operose
 “ matter, which few will be induced to at-
 “ tend to. The most part of men, without
 “ entering into such a scrutiny, are always
 “ apt to attribute to the religion, what they
 “ see in its professors; and therefore, there
 “ can be but little hope, that the *Indian*
 “ Gentiles will ever be induced to think
 “ ours the better religion, as long as the
 “ wickedness and vices of Christians, who
 “ live among them, give them daily so
 “ undeniable an evidence, that theirs
 “ breeds the better men. Possibly we may

“ draw over to us, by the advantage of
 “ having the government on our side, some
 “ profligate wretches, who will be ready
 “ to turn to any party, where they can
 “ find an interest better than they had be-
 “ fore. But, till Christianity gets a better
 “ reputation in those parts, from the con-
 “ versations of its professors, and the lives
 “ of the people there become better than
 “ the lives of the *Indians*, it will be very
 “ difficult, under so great a disadvantage,
 “ to make any of them true and sincere
 “ profelytes unto our holy Christian re-
 “ ligion.”

It may be supposed, the morals of Chri-
 stians, in the eyes of the *Gentoo*s, are not
 much mended by *Nabob-making*! And
 that these complaints cannot be without
 foundation, we may be assured from the
 account given us of the behaviour of our
 missionaries in *North America*, men who
 should be found in faith and charity, and
 willing to lay down their lives for Christ's
 sake.—Our missionaries are described,

• Prideaux's Life, p. 175.

many

many of them, “ as men of ruined fortunes; such, whose impotency of mind have shewn them to be unable to bear either poverty or riches,—or warm-headed zealots, totally unfit for every sober and important work^f.” No wonder, then, at the constant ill success of these indigents, or enthusiasts; no wonder that, when numbers of the savages have been baptized into the faith, such converts have never long persevered, nor were able to propagate among their tribes, the Christianity they had been taught; but successive missions have found, that the work was ever to begin anew^g.”

HOWEVER, for the sake of truth, I must make the following quotation, though in opposition to my own opinion, as well as to the authority of my Lord of *Glocester*. —“ Commerce has been the occasion of communicating the knowledge of Christ from nation to nation; but persons en-

^f Warburton's Sermon to the Society for Propagating the Gospel, p. 15.

^g Ibid. p. 18.

“ gaged

“ gaged therein have not been the com-
 “ municators of it; their business is of an-
 “ other sort. But this has been done by
 “ *other men, detached from worldly affairs,*
 “ *and zealous and skilful in divine know-*
 “ *ledge;* who, taking advantage of the in-
 “ tercourse opened by them with other
 “ views, have preached the Gospel, where
 “ it was before unknown. In this way
 “ our planters have excelled, having given
 “ double occasion of propagating Christi-
 “ anity among the native heathen of those
 “ regions, and among themselves also, who
 “ soon became heathen ^b.”—Of what ad-
 vantage, then, are the missions?

WELL, but things are better at home; here much civility and virtue are introduced and propagated by our religious establishment. The clergy, by their wholesome doctrines and exemplary lives, instruct the ignorant, reform the vicious, and cause those who have begun well to persevere in the paths of piety.—Would to

^b Bishop of Llandaff's Sermon before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Feb. 20, 1767.

God

God it were so!—But ask, Sir, ask the people of higher rank, what are their sentiments of the professed preachers of religion? Possibly they will tell you, that those they know are levee-hunters, gapers after preferment, now following and flattering one, then betraying the secrets of another patron, in order to make court to the minister of the day, for the first good thing that may fall to his disposal. This, possibly, may be their account; and if you object to this, their writings in behalf of religion, they will, perhaps, smile at your ignorance of the world.

How much religion is at heart with many of our clergy, is evident by their attention to tithes; their loving good fellowship; their soliciting to be justices of the peace; their frequenting horse-races, cock-matches, plays, cardsⁱ, and assemblies.

Do you think, now, the country can be the better for the instructions of these

ⁱ “ Many of my brethren have *carded* themselves “ into good bishopricks.” A saying of Bishop Coney-beare’s.

kind

kind of men? or rather, would it not be better if the people were left to their own meditations? You wish, no doubt, Sir, things were otherwise, and hope the instances of such clergymen are but few. But your hope is ill-founded, as thousands can testify. Nor will it ever be otherwise, as long as there is an establishment, in which preachers are legally provided with a maintenance, merely for conforming to a ritual.

THUS have I, Sir, considered the utility of establishments; and, by a deduction of facts, evinced that you are much mistaken in what you have advanced concerning them. That I have not attended, as much as you may expect, to your reasonings, is owing, in some measure, to an observation of a late sensible writer, who, speaking concerning disputants and disputes, says,
 “ Error is various and changeable; a cir-
 “ cumstance of which a skilful adversary
 “ will not fail to take the advantage.
 “ When his opinion is ready to be wrested
 “ from him, he will take entire possession
 “ of it again, under another shape. He
 “ will

“ will lead us through all the mazes of
 “ controversy, and, whilst we press hard
 “ upon him, will still find a way, amidst all
 “ its intricacies, to escape the pursuit ^k.”

I WILL now make a few remarks on some passages in your Essay, which sound at least oddly in the ears of many. What mean you, Sir, by saying, “ Considering things in a political light, even this hypocrisy [of bringing many into the church, who have an eye only to temporal advantages] is an advantage to society. The hypocrite regulates his outward conduct in the same manner as if he were really moved by the inward principle of good. And therefore, the dissimulation of goodness, were there the same security for its continuance, is, to political society, the same thing as goodness itself ^l?” Notably observed, truly; but whether most like a disciple of *Machiavel*, or a follower of *Christ*, the reader will determine.

If the hypocrite regulates his outward conduct in the same manner, as if he were

^k Preface to Rotheram on Faith.

^l Essay, p. 28.

really moved by the inward principle of good, Jesus Christ has given a very wrong account of him.—“ Wo unto you (says he) scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore shall you receive the greater damnation. Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land, to make one profelyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and fidelity.”

Was this regulating their outward conduct in the same manner as if they were really moved by the inward principle of good? Were these masked villains advantageous to society, or was not society really hurtled by their secret knaveries? You know how to answer.

“ Matt. xxiii. 14, 15, 23.

I WILL

I WILL only observe farther, that hypocrites, though they sometimes impose on the credulity or ignorance of mankind, are much mistaken if they think they can be concealed, or the world be at all bettered by their grimaces. There are numbers of standers-by, who, from various motives, look very sharp after these precise and formal gentry, and are seldom so much out of luck, as not to discover the vanity of their pretences. These once discovered, gives a disgust against them and their discourses, and they are not believed when they utter truths. From these solemn hypocrites religion has received deadly wounds; by these the state has been deprived of that outward good conduct of its subjects, which tends to its health and vigour, its reputation and greatness. “ I have seen so much amiss in churchmen, that I am always inclined to think ill of them, till I see cause to think otherwise,” was the saying of Bishop *Burnet*, though by the editor left out of his history.

You censure the author of the Confessional for “ handling with great severity

the

G 2

“ the

“ the characters of many eminent men,
 “ both in our own and former times ;
 “ whose whole crime (you say) seems to
 “ have been, that they have embraced
 “ and acted in support of principles dif-
 “ ferent from his ”.—You have not been
 pleased to mention the names of these
 much-injured worthies, that your readers
 may judge whether his censure of them,
 or yours of him, be most equitable. I will
 supply your defects.—*Whitgift*, *Bancroft*,
 and *Laud*, are spoken of in the Confes-
 sional in no very honourable terms : but
 this, surely, in your eye, who plead for
 the right of private judgment, can be no
 fault. These men, you know, were in-
 tolerant, bigots, persecutors, that is, the
 meanest, the vilest of the human race.
 What think you of the base flattery of
Whitgift to *James I.*, at *Hampton-Court* ?
 Could such a man believe the great truths
 of the Gospel ? or, believing them, must he
 not properly hold the truth in unrighteous-
 ness ? *Bancroft's* ° character can deserve no
 respect ; and for *Laud*, he was so mean,

• Essay, p. 28.

° See Osborn's Works.

waspish

waspish an animal, so swollen with pride, so insolent with power, so vain, tyrannical, and cruel, that no man, who has the feelings of humanity, but must despise, hate, and curse his memory.

As for *Wake*, we remember the man, and his conversation; a motly divine: at times adhering to the cause of liberty, and by his writings endeavouring, as was thought, to promote it. But this was whilst there was something to be hoped for. When hope was at an end, the mask was thrown off, and the arrant priest appeared, to the astonishment of his promoters.—What merit, then, had these men? what claim to be treated different from their brethren in the inferior walks of life? Might not wicked ministers of state plead for a like exemption from censure? Believe it, Sir, the world is not to be imposed upon. An ecclesiastical tyrant is a hateful character. Love and charity, meekness and humility, words frequently in his mouth, render him detestable. The fear of incurring the penalties of a certain statute, or experiencing the
confe-

consequences of rough phytic, administered by spiritual hands, for the time restrains the tongues and pens of many; but, when the influence of these ceases, their memory will be handed down to posterity with infamy.

As for the mere doctors, they will be soon dispatched. What was *Waterland*? A commentator, forsooth, on the *Athanasian Creed*, which he insisted on was sense, Lord *Peter* like, though ten thousand, on the evidence of reason and Scripture, swore to the contrary. What, pray, *Stebbing*? did he not assert church authority, daringly and openly? Did he not plead publickly for the *Mahometan* doctrine, of laying mulcts on Dissenters from national establishments? And was he not characterized by the learned *Whitby*, as “labouring under a deplorable want of honesty?” *Bennet*, *Nichols*, *Chapman*, and their fellows, were sons of contention, and laboured much to defend, what no wise man would wish to be defended, the power and prerogative of the priesthood, and the excellency of human inventions. Why should such
such

such men expect gentleness and mildness of correction, who every-where shewed themselves void of moderation ?

THE characters of these worthies, then, have had no injury done them by the author of the Confessional ; and you might have spared your censure of him on that account. But mark, Sir, mark, he has not spared his friends, the lovers of truth, liberty, and mankind ! *Clarke, Sykes, Hoadly*, honoured names with him, are blamed, and their sentiments on subscriptions freely canvassed. An example worthy imitation by all controvertists ! For hereby it appears men write not through party prejudice, but for the sake of truth, which should be dearer to them than every other consideration.

As I have mentioned subscriptions, I will observe, that it is a melancholy proof of the depravity of human nature, that there should be men of sense, learning, and reputation in the present age, who, notwithstanding all which has been said on the subject, will still pretend to defend
 them.

them. As to the subscriptions to our own articles in particular, who sees not they are formed on *Athanasian* and *Calvinistical* principles? Yet *Arminians*, yet Anti-Trinitarians, yet Deists subscribe, and many of the former have pleaded for the utility of subscription to them; and, which is more, have, in opposition to plain sense, argued, that they are not *Calvinistical*.

MANY of these men make a figure in the *Biographia*; many of them are there celebrated as patterns of excellency; and their friends and followers have laboured hard to heighten their virtues, and diminish their faults. But, alas! the matter will not bear. Superficial readers may believe, readers of understanding laugh and contemn.—It may reasonably be thought, that were it not for certain emoluments, which are most earnestly coveted, there would not be a sensible man found to plead the cause of subscriptions in *Britain*.

You allow there are defects in the church of *England*^p; but, at the same

^p Essay, p. 132.

time,

time, you give us to understand, that there is little room to hope for a reformation of them.—I agree with you, that there are not only defects, but faults, and such as need a very great reformation. If we expect this from the clergy, we shall certainly be mistaken. These men hate the name and thing. If ever a reformation takes place, it must have its rise from the legislature. From it we expect it, though, probably, for the present, we may be disappointed. It is not trifles, however, will satisfy. If an establishment must be continued, the abolishment of that huge code of ecclesiastical law^a ought to take place; pluralities ought no more to be known; and the clergyman, as much as possible, should be put upon the *quantum meruit*; subscriptions must no more be required: but every man of morals, who understands Christianity, should be permitted to instruct those who were willing to hear him, and be contented with what they think

^a “ The ecclesiastical law of England is compounded of the civil law, the canon law, the common law, and the statute law.” Burn’s Preface to Ecclesiastical Law.

proper to give him.—These, it will be thought by many, are hard laws. But on whom are they hard? Not on the wife, the good, the virtuous clergyman,—and many such there are;—but on the covetous, the ambitious, the self-seeking one.

To teach piety and virtue, to raise the hopes of men to immortality, and to inculcate the several branches of social duty, is an honour to men of the first understanding. Many of these, with pleasure, will engage in the work. These will be attended to, and believed; and, I am persuaded, will never be suffered to want. Whereas the *bolder-fortb* for hire, the mere reader of what, from the same motive, other persons have composed, and which he himself hardly understands, falls naturally under contempt, and is exposed to neglect. The laws, indeed, the laws are on his side; and, armed with power, he can compel the disobedient, and the unruly, to pay him what he calls his due. But with regard to his ministry, his Christian ministry, as he will dare to call it, it has just as much effect as it would have
i
amongst

amongst savages, whose tongue he knows not, nor is desirous of knowing.

WE are fallen in times, “ when (to use
 “ your own expressions) corruption pre-
 “ vails so far, that the distemper is visible
 “ to every eye; when every good prin-
 “ ciple is in danger of being lost, and
 “ when the cause of religion calls loudly
 “ upon every one, to whom its interests
 “ are dear, to rise up for its preservation :
 “ times which admit of no delay, and
 “ which are clearly and strongly marked out
 “ for a reformation. Let then the hearts
 “ and endeavours of all good men be
 “ thoroughly united; let them forget all
 “ their party feuds and separate interests,
 “ and fly to remove the instant danger;
 “ and may the great object of the public
 “ safety fill their whole attention.”

THE clergy, it is true, will not, as a body, fall into this scheme. But we are not to be wholly discouraged. Many of them are liberal, learned, and good; they

‘ Essay, p. 141.

groan

groan under the corruptions of the church, and wish for amendments; the laity are intelligent, and talk of absurdities in the communion they usually adhere to; sects, new sects abound, who, sooner or later, will strike into the road of common sense, and join the cry for abolishing fooleries and absurdities; and not a little have we to hope for from the moderation and temper of our most excellent metropolitan, who, being bred amongst the Dissenters, cannot but love and value those principles of liberty, on which a rational religious dissent from national establishments is founded.

I am,

S I R,

August 24, 1767.

Yours, &c.