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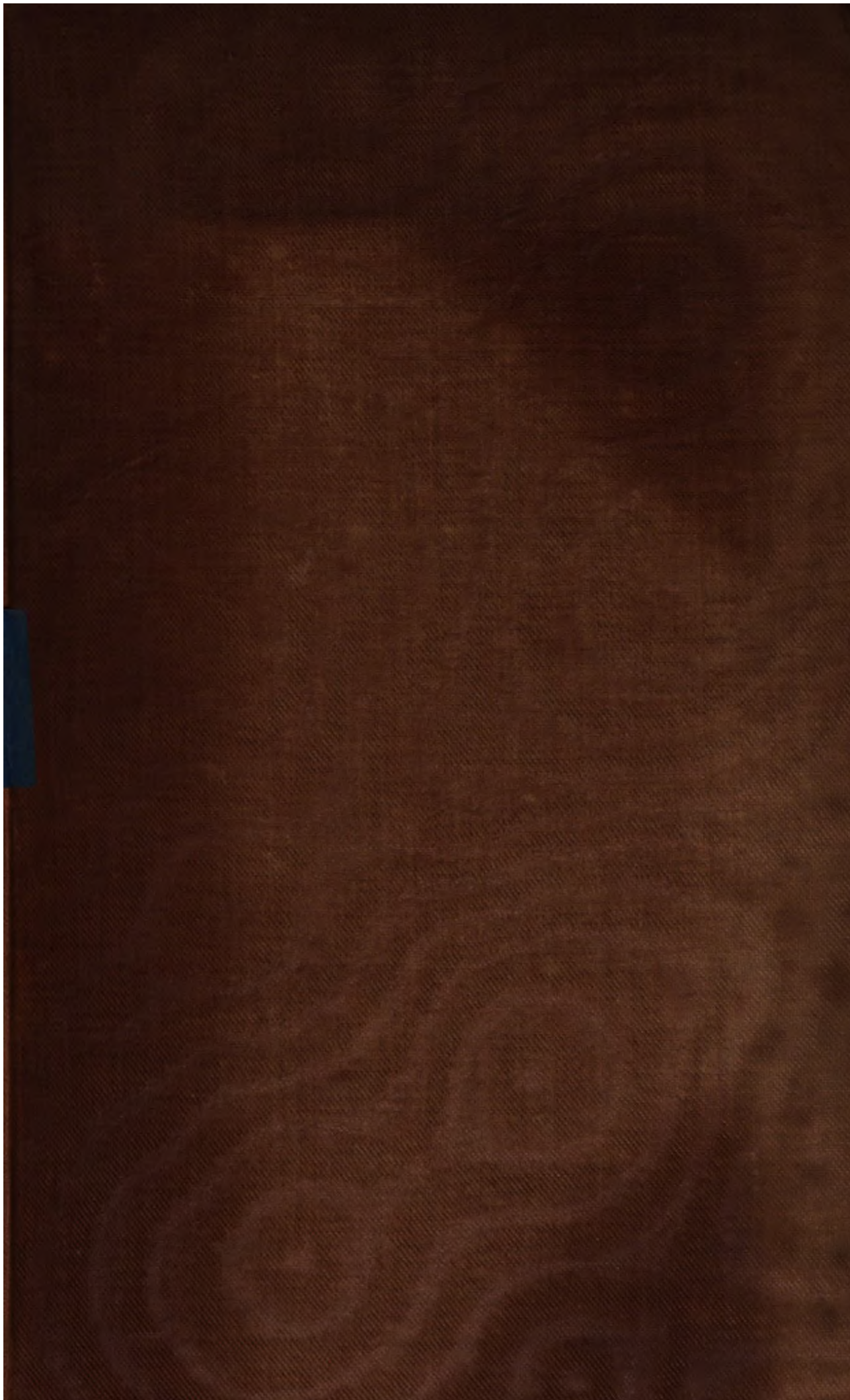
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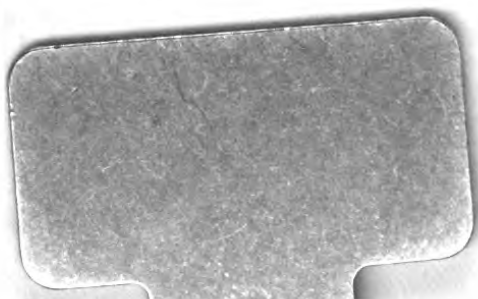


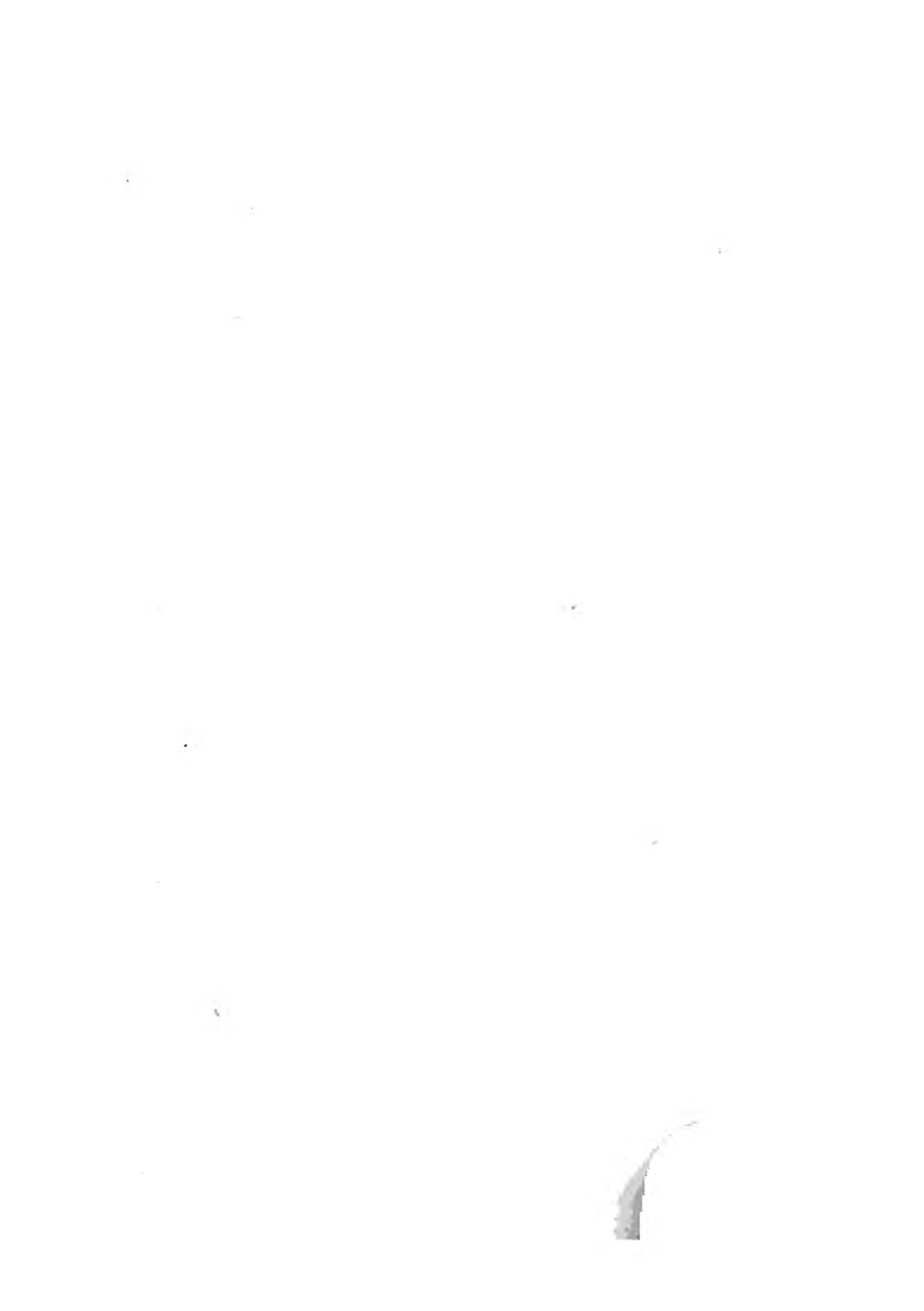


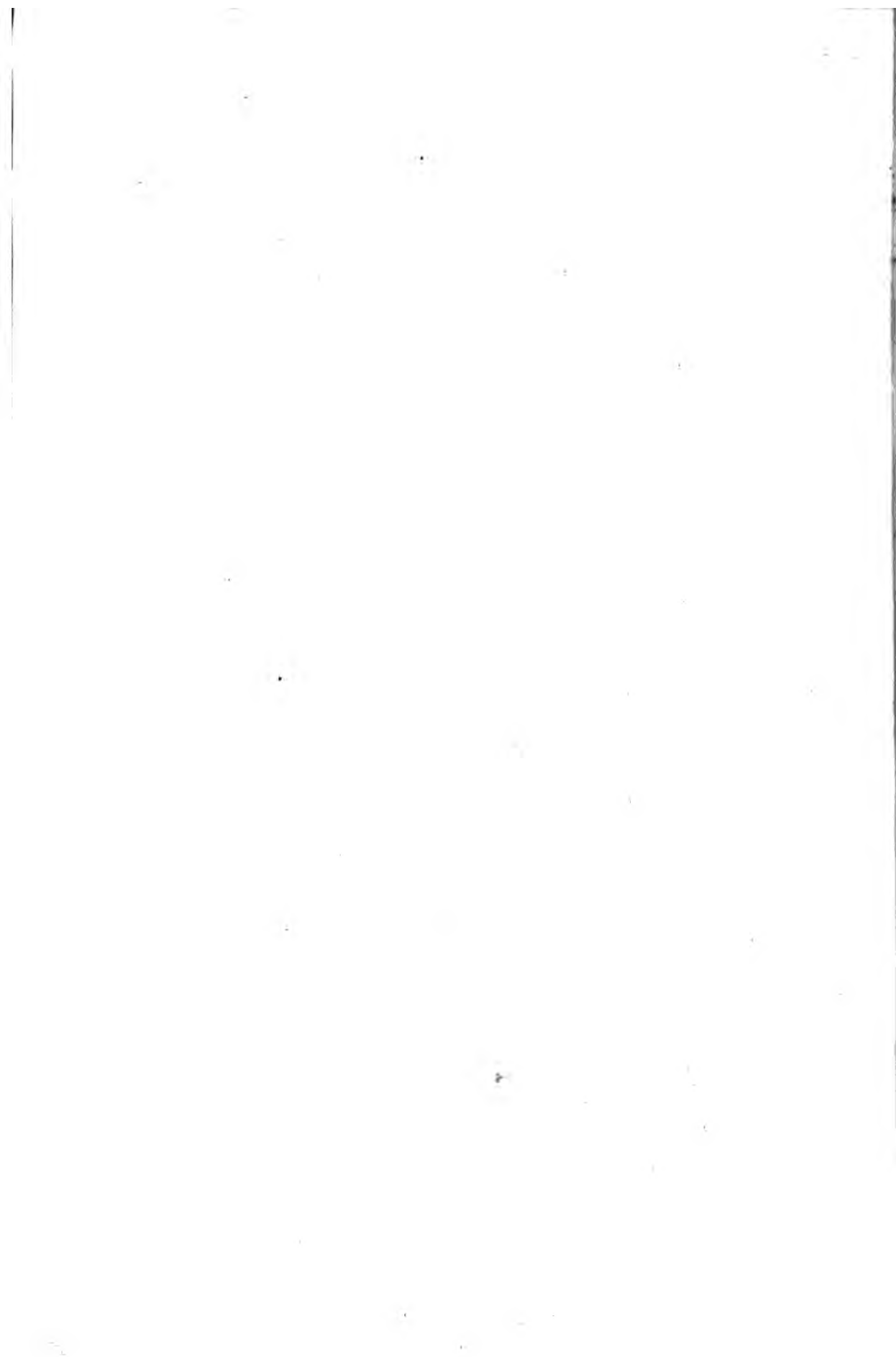
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AN
ESTABLISHED CHURCH

SHEWN TO BE

IN UNISON WITH REASON,
WARRANTED BY EXPERIENCE,

AND

AUTHORIZED IN SCRIPTURE.

BY THE REV. J. HEALY, B.A.

“Prove all things—hold fast that which is good.”—1 Thess.
v. 21.

“Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk
therein.”—Jer. vi. 16.

“The Scripture cannot be broken.”—John. x. 35.

LONDON:

J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

MDCCCXXXV.

75.

KETTERING:
PRINTED BY W. DASH.



TO THE
REVEREND SIR G. S. ROBINSON, BART.

MY DEAR SIR GEORGE,

I am glad of the opportunity of prefixing your name to the following sheets, not only on account of the uninterrupted harmony and general coincidence of opinion, that have subsisted between us, during an intimate and delicate connexion of several years, but, also, because I feel sure an introduction by you, will secure my work a much more general primâ-facie recommendation, than it could, otherwise, possess. All who know you, will, at once, be satisfied that the opinions, approved by you, as regards the subject of this book, must be characterized, alike, by decision and moderation—*by decision*, in their accordance with sound prin-

principles, and subserviency not only to the interests of religion, in general, but to those of our own revered Church, in particular—*by moderation*, in being, at the same time, maintained with all *due* deference to the views of others.

I am happy to find my opinions, in some particulars, prevented or confirmed, by several eminent writers, of the day. At the same time, I am anxious to testify, that I am hardly aware of having borrowed any sentiment of importance, without a distinct acknowledgment. For the entire work, whatever it be—I feel myself, wholly, responsible.

It will be evident to every reader, as well as to yourself, that the vindication of the *principle* of a Church Establishment, constitutes the *single object* of the present treatise.

I am well aware, that the subject demands to be treated, much more, at large, as well on account of its own essential importance, as because, from the very nature of the thing, much historical detail is called for. I have, however, suppressed all extraneous matter, and carefully employed the whole space upon the subject in question, not allowing of the slightest reference to anything, that does not bear, immediately,

upon it. Particularly, I have kept in mind, that *The principle of an Establishment of Religion* and *The nature and organization of our own Church* are perfectly distinct subjects of consideration. This, I cannot but feel, with yourself, is too little regarded, by advocates, on either side of the question, to the great prejudice and detriment of truth, in so confounding things that differ.

It will, perhaps, be thought, with respect to one or two considerations, advanced in the first part of the book, that I have been too little mindful of my own definitions, and trenched, in some way, upon the third part. The truth is, however, the considerations, in question, belong, in a degree, I conceive, to both parts. I have preferred bringing them forward, in the first.

How far, upon the whole, I have succeeded, the event must determine. Thus much I may venture to say of myself, "If I have done well, and as is fitting the subject, it is that which I desired, and if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto."

Of another thing, moreover, at all events, I am quite certain, viz. that my *cause* is *good*. It is my heart's desire and prayer to God, that a cause so

excellent may suffer nothing, from the insufficiency, or unskilfulness of its advocate. "O Lord, prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us—O, prosper Thou our handy work!"

I am, my dear Sir George,

Your's, very faithfully,

JOHN HEALY.

Cranford, near Kettering,

May 30, 1835.

INTRODUCTION.

WE live in extraordinary times. Perhaps the records of the world afford nothing so remarkable, in the history of our species, as the present era. When, before, has science attained such a wonderful eminence, and commanded, as she now does, the attention and admiration of mankind? When was there such a general diffusion of knowledge, as at the present? Whenever had commerce so extended her arms, and almost united, into one, the various and most distant kingdoms of the earth? When did the benign genius of philanthropy exert so much energy, for the benefit of the afflicted, and the relief of the miserable? And lastly, though it be far from being of the least importance, when were the bright and cheering beams of the Sun of righteousness so extensively diffused, over a world of darkness and sorrow, as they now are?

Roll, backwards, the history of our country, only a hundred years, and compare those times with the present. What a change! What a contrast, do we

behold! Were it possible for our forefathers to visit again this scene of their earthly pilgrimage, they would hardly be persuaded, that it is the same world—they would doubt its identity with that, in which they, themselves, once laboured and enjoyed—and in which they employed, or neglected—used, or abused, their brief term of sublunary existence. There would be much, no doubt, in arts and science, in benevolence and religion, to excite their admiration, and they would not be able to withhold the confession, that, in many things, their descendants have left them, at an immeasurable distance, behind, yet, in our love of novelty, and disposition to depart from principles, which by them and in all preceding ages, had been considered self-evident, necessary, and unchangeable, they would, surely, be not a little astonished and perplexed. How would they account for such a change? They would say that “knowledge puffeth up,” and that man, in religion and morals, left to the resources of his own reason, is incapable of coming to any just conclusion, and as prone to error, as the untaught Indian would be, on any subject of natural science.

Among other occasions of surprise, indignation, and sorrow, to those of the olden time, it would not be the least, to be told that some professing Christians,

and more *religious professors*, had received so much new light, on the nature and dispositions of man, in respect of things spiritual and eternal, that they condemn the ancient pillars of religion, as an useless incumbrance, or an unjustifiable burden to the state—a *Church Establishment*, in short, as a dead weight, of which the sooner we get rid, the better. For the question at issue, between us and many of the modern Dissenters, is, no longer, one of circumstantials, but of life and death—we contend, now, for first principles—for every thing.

This *new doctrine*, so contrary to all the prejudices, and received notions of the people of God, during so many past ages, not to say, thousands of years, it will be now my object to combat, and, in humble dependance upon the divine blessing, to refute, whilst I vindicate *that* of Church Establishments.

It may, perhaps, not be amiss to state, here, in a few words, what is meant by an Established Church. *An Established Church is a system of religion, which is not only tolerated and protected, but supported and maintained, by the state, throughout the country at large.* This may be done in various ways—when it is done, in any way, there is, thereby, constituted *an Established Church*—and, if Chris-

tianity be the subject of it, then, it is a *Christian Church Establishment*.

In pleading in behalf of such an Institution, it will be my desire and aim, if not to make us all church people, at least, to confirm those that are such, in their love of, and attachment to, that venerable and scriptural Establishment, to which they belong, as also to narrow the ground of controversy, betwixt us and our Dissenting brethren; whilst I shew that, though, no doubt, there are other fair and legitimate subjects of dispute, this, on the existence of Religious Establishments, is one, upon which he must be a bold man indeed so to venture, as to aim at nothing less than their utter ruin and destruction.

There are three great branches of evidence in favour of Church Establishments, which, in my opinion, are entirely sufficient for the settlement of the question.

These branches of evidence I shall denominate. *Presumptive, Historical, and Scriptural*.

PART I.

PRESUMPTIVE TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

OUR attention shall be directed, in the first place, to the evidence derived from the Presumptive Testimony, in favour of Church Establishments.

Presumptive Testimony is that evidence, arising from the very nature of things, and the consideration of the case, independently of example and positive authority, that is to say, of experimental and divine testimony upon the subject.

This sort of evidence, though of small weight, perhaps, in its several parts, is, in their accumulation, little short of demonstration itself, to the man of reflection. How far it is in our favour, on the present question, we shall now proceed to shew, by the following considerations.

I. *There is a general, if not universal agreement of mankind, in the adoption of the system of Religious Establishments.*

Cast your eyes over the length and breadth of the inhabitable earth. Consult the records of the past, or the present age. What is the result? What your

discovery, upon the subject? Is it not this, that, with hardly any exception, where the knowledge of any higher or Supreme Being, is attained and felt, there the principle of an Establishment of Religion is re-recognized and received? You see it in China—in Hindostan—amongst the savage tribes of Africa, and the half civilized nations of Mexico and Peru. It holds good in the new world, as well as in the old—and in ancient, as well as in more modern times—witness Persia—Egypt—Greece—Rome—Gaul and Britain—to mention no more.* It is no objection that the religion of these several countries was, or is bad—our simple object is an inquiry after the sense of mankind, upon the subject of Religious Establishments. What that is, and ever has been, is indeed plain enough. The question is, then, how shall we account for this? What plain and intelligible reason can we give, why men, inhabiting regions so distant from each other, as to be utterly unknown to one another, even by name, and not only distant in their place of habitation, but equally separated in the several periods of their existence, should, nevertheless, meet here, as on common ground, and agree, in their conclusions and practice, upon this important subject? Does it not appear to be, if not actually an innate idea,

* Of course, the limits of a treatise, like the present, do not admit of any lengthened detail of proofs, as to the acknowledgment of the principle of Religious Establishments, by the various nations of the earth. I must be content to refer my readers to the histories of the several countries.

yet a natural and necessary deduction of the human intellect, admitting of no dispute or doubt? I confess this is my own opinion, and granting such to be the case, all is plain and satisfactory—but, on any other principles, I am at a loss to conceive, how we shall give any reasonable account for the general consent of mankind, upon the subject in question—we have a phenomenon of agreement and unison in the human mind, of which no explanation is afforded.

On other subjects, where our passions and prejudices are not concerned, we readily allow its proper and legitimate weight to this sort of incidental and collateral evidence. In our theological systems, for instance, we know that the general consent of mankind is constantly advanced in proof of the existence of God, whatever erroneous views are formed of His nature and attributes, and that the obscure and disfigured traditions, to be found in most heathen nations of the earth, on matters of revelation, are considered so much additional and collateral evidence, that the account we have of those things, in the Holy Scriptures, is founded in truth, nature, reason, and fact. Let us, then, be consistent with ourselves, and apply the same rule in all cases, where the word of God does not forbid it, as well as in those in which it suits our purpose, or does not offend our pride, and prejudice, to do so. Let us apply it in the present case, and we shall see much reason to conclude that, as the common consent of mankind (the deductions of the world's intellect and experience,) is in favour of Establish-

ments, they must be founded in the natural fitness of things, and therefore right. *They are, almost, as universally accredited in the earth, as the institutions of government itself, we infer, therefore, that the foundations of each are, alike, in reason and nature.*

II. *Our opponents, themselves, throw the weight of their example into our scale, when it suits their purpose to do so.*

What do they mean by engaging king Pomare* to act, as they have done, in the South Sea, for the furtherance of the cause of the Gospel? What is the meaning, I say, of their conduct in this respect? Is it not, in reality, the recognition of Establishments? Thus, in the more genial and quiet clime of the Southern Pacific, they approve themselves men of like feelings and like principles, with ourselves. Where the din of political strife no longer stirs up angry passions, and so disturbs the calmness of their judgment—where envious and grovelling desires no longer obscure the clearness of their vision, they see things, and determine upon them, like other men—where the medium is not so disturbed, the rays of light and reason fall upon their minds, exactly as they do upon our own, whilst they revert to the principles of their

* Under the influence of the agents of the London Missionary Society, he abolished idolatry, and established Christianity, as the religion of Tahiti and its dependencies.—ELLIS'S POLYNESIAN RESEARCHES.

revered and excellent Fathers.* Do we find fault with them for this? By no means. In doing as they do, they act, as best becomes both men of understanding and true believers. We only lament they should hold our principles true, on the other side of the earth, but refuse so to acknowledge them, at home—yea, they impugn and condemn them, as though, with our antipodes, truth itself, which is unchangeable, could be inverted. But, though we lament this strange, and, as appears to us, unreasonable course of conduct, in our opponents, we, nevertheless, find in their inconsistency, additional confirmation of our own principles. They are opposed to Establishments,

* The Puritans, and earliest Dissenters never entertained, for a moment, the thought of the non-establishment of religion. In any conference, to which they were invited, such an idea was never breathed by any of them. All their difficulties respected the ceremonials, and other details of the Establishment, and not the principle itself. On the contrary, we know that when they were dominant, during the Protectorate, they insisted, in the strongest terms, possible, on the duty of government to support and maintain religion. I need only quote, in proof of this, the well known words of the excellent Dr. Owen, in a sermon preached before the parliament. “Some think if you (the parliament) were well settled, you ought not, in any thing, as rulers of the nation, to put forth your power, for the interest of Christ. The good Lord deliver your hearts, from that apprehension. If once it comes to this, that you shall say you have nothing to do with religion, as rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest, that He hath nothing to do with you, as rulers of the nation.” Can any thing be more express or stronger than this upon the subject? And these opinions, it should not be forgotten, were expressly confirmed by this celebrated divine and venerable christian, in a letter, published two or three years before his death.

only, when they are, themselves, in depression. In other circumstances, they are with us. We thank them for this weapon out of their own armoury, which, though it may be insufficient to reach the heart's blood of associated prejudice, (for that is a beast cased in the scaly coat of leviathan,) we shall, at all events, find of the most important use, in repelling the attacks of those, whose maddened shout, against the venerated fabric of our Establishment, is, "down with it—down with it, even to the ground." From the same fountain, they draw both sweet water and bitter—salt water and fresh. Out of their own mouths—by their own excellent practices, in other lands, we will refute and condemn them, at home. *Their inconsistency is so much testimony, in our favour.* It says neither more nor less, than that *an Establishment is good for religion, whatever it be for Dissent!*

III. *It is, confessedly, the bounden duty of every government, to promote, in the greatest degree possible, the well being and happiness of the community at large.**

* In this acknowledged duty of governments, we find an answer to the objection, urged against Establishments, on the score of injustice, and interference with the rights of conscience. The state must act by laws of general application. If it be essential to good government that due instruction be provided for the people, the state has a right to demand the assistance of all in providing it, so long as it does not enforce all to partake of it. If men, who are members of a body politic, were so many independent beings in a state of nature, separated from all connexion

The general good is the end and object of all political establishments—a wise government will, therefore, by every available means, on the one hand, discountenance and suppress wickedness and vice, and, on the other, uphold and promote virtue. For the least knowledge, or experience, of the general and moral economy of the world, will assure us, that sin and misery, in communities, as well as with individuals, are inseparable associates, in the long run. They are necessarily bound together, whilst, on the contrary, correct principles and virtuous behaviour, constitute the surest preparation and best provision for success, prosperity, and happiness. Who denies, or calls in question, the truth of these positions? Where is the nation?—where, the family?—where, the individual, whose history does not fully attest the truth of them? Now the obligation to pursue the end, entails the duty of using whatever means, may be in our power, calculated to attain it. And what, let me ask, opposes such a barrier against the overflowings of sin?—what affords such security for virtue, as religious

with others, they might complain of being compelled to contribute their quota of assistance to the support of an Establishment, or any other object, but as things are, as we cannot and would not put ourselves out of the pale of the state, it surely is the most preposterous thing in the world, to cry against that, as unjust and oppressive, which the state believes to be, and which is essential to good government. On this principle, no doubt, the Apostle says, “render to all their dues—custom to whom custom—tribute to whom tribute.” Even though the tax, in part, at least, was applied to the maintenance of Pagan abominations.

instruction? Is not true religion the very basis of all virtue? But if this be true, I would further demand, what provision can the state make for the moral and spiritual welfare of the people, except by the instrumentality of an Establishment of Religion, call it by what name you may? Let those, who are of a contrary opinion, declare how this can be done, in any other way. Or, will any one be absurd enough to maintain, that we make the best provision, when we make no provision—that we teach best, when we withhold instruction altogether—or that those scholars are likely to be the greatest proficient, who are deprived of the benefit of masters! I cannot conceive how any reflecting and candid person can doubt, for a moment, that as public virtue and general happiness call for general instruction, both moral and religious, so they do also for the public establishment of religion, by every good, and paternal government, as a necessary means to an end. In short, we may say, with a great man,* *that Religious Establishments are not only lawful, but that it is unlawful for a state to be without one. They are not convenient, but essential.*

IV. *England, under the influence of an Established Church, stands pre-eminent, amongst the nations of Christendom, and the world at large.*

In proof of this, I do not desire to point to her fleets, which sweep, in triumph, every sea, to her armies covered with glory, in destroying the gigantic

* Burke, on the French Revolution.

power of him, who, but for the opposition that England presented to his ambitious designs, had, probably, been the conqueror and master of the world. I do not tell you of our country's commerce, carried into every civilized nation of either hemisphere. I point not to her extended colonies—immense possessions, and many tributary millions. I boast not that her merchants are princes, or that the very name of Englishman, bespeaks superiority, in every land, like the Roman name, of old time. I will not detail to you the excellence of our national constitution and internal regulations, so that reputation, property, life, and liberty, are, one and all, secured to us, in a way, which never has been known, in any other land, before. These things I will not dwell upon, though, in them, England is, confessedly, the wonder and envy of the world. There are higher grounds of eminence and glory, which our beloved country occupies. Look at the education and intelligence, diffused, like a flood of light, over the length and breadth of the land. Further, contemplate the superior tone of moral conduct established among us. See the innumerable exhibitions of Christian charity, for preventing or relieving the various wants and woes of human kind, whether they be bodily or mental. And, which is more than all besides, consider our state in religion! Where do the refreshing waters of the Gospel flow, in such pure and plenteous streams, as among ourselves? Where is the grand standard (according to Luther's opinion,) of a scriptural and spiritual church main-

tained, so completely, as in this favoured land, whilst, in the services of our church, every little cranny of the kingdom resounds with the solemn, and constantly repeated declaration, that "we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings?" And where, I may also ask, are the energies of Christians so called to bear upon the cause of the Redeemer, as in England, the land of Bibles and Missions? When contrasted with the other kingdoms of Christendom, methinks, surely, that England occupies the place, or represents the character of the good Samaritan, leaning in tender pity and compassion, over an ignorant and perishing world, and, with an outstretched hand, endeavouring to pour the oil and wine of evangelical relief and consolation, into the wounded spirits of the whole family of man. This is our characteristic position as a nation, and an eminent one it is. "Not unto us, not unto us." be the glory, I know, it becomes us to say, but "the Lord be praised." Still, let me beg you to consider, under what state of things this eminence has been attained! Whether it were with, or without an Established Church, we all know well. I would draw this inference, then, and say, that (with such an institution as that of our Established Church, which is so intimately associated with the entire frame-work of our constitution, and must of necessity, from her general extension over the whole face of the country, possess such a near and lively connexion, with the

feelings and habits of the land,) their minds must be of no ordinary constitution, who, can discover in an Establishment, such as ours, an hindrance to prosperity, and unfriendliness to religion, or do not confess that it has been to us, under God, the main-spring, the source, and support of our distinguished temporal and spiritual blessings. What, if Eton—or Winchester—or Rugby, were, any one of them, for a long course of years, distinguished for general eminence in scholarship? Now, how would you account for it? Would you consider such intellectual fruits, the produce of accident, the effect of a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances?—or would you say it was owing to the influence of the minor and secondary academies of the place? No one, but an idiot, would think of ascribing it to either one cause or the other. The only satisfactory and reasonable account that could be given, of the matter, would be, to refer it to the natural influence of those engaged in, and presiding over, the literature of the place. Our country is one great school. Our Established Church, in her ritual, ordinances, and ministers, is, as it were, the head master, the chief teacher of it—(whether for good, or for bad, this is the case)—and under her care and instruction, we have reached the eminence, we, at present occupy. Can we then forbear ascribing our progress in religion, in a great degree, at least, to the weight of her influence, and the power of her instrumentality?

I am aware, it may be here objected by those, that reject the doctrine of Establishments, that surely

Dissenters have had their influence, in raising our country to the pitch, we have described. I grant it—but I add that, in the progress of our country towards the zenith of her glory, Dissent, at all events, possessed but a very subordinate influence. The great, presiding, influential, and controlling power must have been, in the Church.

I know also, there are those, who will point with triumph to America, as exhibiting a practical refutation of what has been advanced. America is the rival of England, though destitute of an Established Church. Are deserted churches—forsaken congregations—swelling heresies, and spiritual desolation, reigning over so great a portion of the extended dominions of America? Are these the unequivocal signs of successful rivalry with us? For this is the state of America, generally, though I am aware that, in the larger towns, much religion is to be found.*

Besides, America is, as yet, only in the crucible. The experiment is making. In what other light can we regard a system, which has scarcely been in full play above half a century! And, hitherto, America may not have wholly lost the impulse derived from her late connexion with England. The wild theorist,

* On the Presbyterian side of the question, Dwight's Travels in New England, &c. On the Episcopal side, the same testimony has been furnished by various luminous statements of Americans, themselves. See a Sermon by the Rev. A. Potter, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Boston, 1829, and one by the Rev. W. Richmond, Rector of St. Michael's and St. John's Churches, New York, 1830.

only, and not the cautious and the wise, will appeal to America.

I may observe too, that the Paradise of America, (the part in which religion thrives most luxuriantly,) is that, in which, till of late, at least, an Establishment of Religion has been, in point of fact, maintained.*

The case of America is, virtually, this. In some states, in which Christianity has been established, religion has flourished, and good morals prevailed in a remarkable manner. In the other states, in which Christianity has been left to take care of itself, religion and its interests have declined, most deplorably. So far, America is, surely, for us and not against us—is it not?

The super-eminent state of our country, therefore, attained, under the influence of a Church Establishment, is not to be neglected, in our search of argument, in favour of the latter. *In our case, at all events, an Establishment has been, most intimately, connected with whatever exalts one nation above another.*

CHAPTER II.

The very general, and, I may almost say, universal acknowledgment of the principle of Religious Establishments—the conduct of our opponents, under fa-

* Hamilton's Men and Manners in America, chap. vii. vol. 1.

vourable circumstances, on, the same subject—the evident duty of governments upon it, and our national pre-eminence, attained under the existence and influence of such a state of things—these considerations have, hitherto, engaged our attention, and I hope they have been felt not to be destitute of weight and reason. But they are not all we have to advance, in the same line of evidence, I shall proceed, therefore, to the statement of others.

I. Through the corruption of our fallen nature, we are incapable of making provision ourselves, for our spiritual necessities.

What are our state, condition, and tendencies, as respects our eternal concerns? “To the law and to the testimony.” Let us consult the Bible. There we are described, in respect of things spiritual, as dead, lost, and alienated. Indeed, every conceivable expression, almost, is employed, that can be supposed to designate the spiritual ruin and destitution of our nature. “Let the dead bury the dead.” “This my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found.” “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Such are our Lord’s own words, to mention no more, when he would describe the state of man, naturally, or the change he must undergo, upon becoming a real Christian. St. Paul, applies the words of the Psalmist, as descriptive of the whole family of man. “There is none righteous, no not

one—there is none that understandeth—there is none that seeketh after God—they are all gone out of the way—they are together become unprofitable—there is none that doeth good, no, not one—their throat is an open sepulchre—with their tongues they have used deceit—the poison of asps is under their lips—whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness—their feet are swift to shed blood—destruction and misery are in their ways—and the way of peace have they not known—there is no fear of God before their eyes.” Again, he says, that we are, by nature, “dead in trespasses and sins,” “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them.” What need we more to assure us of the utter corruption of our nature, and of our complete indisposition to spiritual things? *Man is very far (quam longissime) gone from original righteousness, and is, of his own nature, inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit.*

Now, consider, will the dead man, of his own accord, or by any power of his own, raise himself to life again, so as to engage in its pursuits of ambition, pleasure, or business? No, dead he is, and dead he must remain, till some external and independent energy quicken him afresh. But will he so much as ask, or petition for some life-giving cordial, that he may be recovered from the pit of corruption, and numbered again amongst the living? No. If ever such an antidote of death be administered, it must be brought to the subject of it, freely, unasked, unsought, unso-

licited. Our observation and experience of man concerning religion will, I am convinced, entirely coincide with this.

Search and inquire among the dark places of the earth, and tell me, where there is any well authenticated example of man, by the influence of his own nature, seeking out a pure and undefiled religion? Yea, does not the united testimony of nearly six thousand years amount to this, that the tendencies of our nature are, in religion, backwards. We are "turned aside like a deceitful bow." We are prone to degenerate—to retrograde from the Creator to the creature, from truth to error, from light to darkness, from the right knowledge of God to ignorance and forgetfulness of Him. So we find the earth, in the very morning of its existence, was quickly filled with violence. "The imagination of man's heart" was, soon, shewn to be "only evil continually," and "it" therefore repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth." And though, by the flood, the human family was again confined within the compass of one holy patriarch's tent, yet, how soon, true religion became well nigh extinct, retreating as it were before the idolatrous tendencies of our corrupt and depraved nature! If the light of heaven be not to be altogether extinguished, it is necessary to call Abram from his kindred, and from his father's house, and to surround him, as it were, against the assaults and corruptions of idolatry, with special revelations of the will, the purposes, and the goodness of God. It were needless to

pursue the history of Abraham's descendants, in pursuit of a confirmation of the same truth. We all are well acquainted with the story of that stiff-necked and backsliding people. And surely, if there be any one lesson it teaches more distinctly than another, it is *this*, that we are in our own nature, taken either individually, or collectively, prone to depart from the living God, in preferring every error, (impious, extravagant, and absurd as it may be,) to the unchanging principles of true religion. Is not this enough, then, to convince us of the need, in which we stand of regular ordinances, and means of grace, in short, of an Established Church? Can any stronger evidence of our necessity, on this head, be conceived or desired?

Man, from the pressure of want, and the sensation of enjoyment, will never be unmindful or careless of his temporal supplies. In respect of them, he is possessed of an appetite—he is influenced by an exciting cause. It is not so, with his soul's concerns. Here his energies are dead, or dying. They must be continually quickened, revived, and invigorated, otherwise they will either remain extinct, or, ere long, become so.

To be brief, does not *our very nature*, considered as *it is*, in itself, and as it is *exhibited*, in the moral and religious history of our species, *call aloud for a standing testimony—an unceasing witness—an unwearyed herald*, to keep alive our slumbering faculties on the subjects of the service of God, and the salvation of our souls? This must be an Establishment, of one kind, or another, by whatever name it

may be called. *Surely, the contrary opinion argues either an utter ignorance, or most culpable forgetfulness of what human nature is, as respects spiritual things.*

II. The theory, which would dispense with an Established Church, is an almost unheard of novelty, among Christians.

That Establishments are, in themselves, unnecessary and hostile to the interests of religion, is a position new, and, till of late, almost unheard of. I believe it was hardly brought to light, and never openly advocated, before the period of the French Revolution. It is therefore something more than forty years old. It is the offspring of that blackest of the dark eras of the world. It is a spark, of ominous light, struck from that infernal anvil—a deceptive ray, emerging from the regions beneath, at the time, when men, presiding over a great kingdom, conspired to extinguish the light of revelation—trampled under foot whatever was divine in authority, or venerable from antiquity, and adored, in the person of a wretched courtesan, the goddess of reason.

Now, if it be true, that Establishments are, as is maintained by the present advocates of the new theory, unfriendly to religion—if this be true, I say, it is, doubtless, a truth of the greatest importance. Next to the essential doctrines of the Gospel, that, which should most engage the attention of any reasonable and Christian man, is the best mode of

maintaining and propagating them, in the world. But see, this branch of knowledge, so essential to the glory of God and the best interests of mankind, has been left to the discovery of these later ages. Generation, after generation, has passed away, and men have been in the dark, in respect of that, which it, most of all, became them to be aware of, whilst, remember, at the same time, every other essential truth has been fully discovered to them. How shall we account for this, in any way, at all, satisfactory? The grand remedy of a lost and ruined world has been given us, but the knowledge of applying it to the greatest advantage, has been withheld. Is not this impugning, in a most fearful manner, the wisdom and goodness of Him, from whom alone proceeds every good and perfect gift? Is such a notion, at all, in accordance with the general economy of the universe? Surely, as in most other cases of a religious nature, so here, especially, novelty must be error—deception—falsehood. For, granting the contrary, what is the consequence? We have this corner stone of Christianity, this pillar of truth, (according to the shewing of our opponents,) we have this, the knowledge of which is so essential to mankind at large, hidden under the rubbish of human ignorance and folly, for nearly two thousand years, though, at the same time, be it borne in mind, every other important doctrine of religion has been brought to light, has flourished and prevailed—yea, though the arm of the Lord has been stretched out, again and again, in a most striking manner, for the mainten-

ance, the support, or recovery of other essential truths.

How is it that Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, and their associates in the work of reformation, were left in the dark on this most important point, that of the best means of sustaining and propagating divine truth in the earth, whilst they were confessedly raised up of God, to enlighten the church on every other. Again, I ask, how shall we account for this? Why is the providence of the great head of His church (if I may be allowed such an expression,) so contradictory with itself, in this respect? Why has the notion of non-establishments in religion, contrary to the general rule, been so long suffered to lie dormant? Why has the discovery of this truth, alone, been left to these latter days? My own mind can untie this Gordian knot of the divine procedure, in no other way than this, that the assumption itself is founded in error, and is, therefore, at variance with the divine will.

Perhaps, the state of the Christian Church, for three hundred years, and upwards, till the reign of Constantine, may be objected, against the truth of the views here taken. But were Establishments of Religion disapproved, or condemned, during those primitive times? No. All that can be inferred, from the then state of things, is, that a Christian Establishment, till the time of the emperor alluded to, was neither practicable nor needful. It was not *practicable*, because the powers of the world were arrayed against Chris-

tianity. It was not *needful*, because the church at that time was supported, not by ordinary, but by extraordinary means. She was strong in the power of present, or recent testimony of past, most stupendous miracles, and, by means of these, was working her way to the adoption of those ordinary means, which have ever since been employed.

We see, therefore, that in the use of, or in preparation for, Religious Establishments, the system, for which we are contending, is as old as the church itself, and that the opposite opinion, in spite of all that can be said to the contrary, is characterized by novelty, and must therefore, as has been shewn above, be considered false and untenable. In other words, *the presumption, arising from the consideration of novelty, on the opposite side of the question, is greatly in favour of an Established Church.*

III. *The source, or origin, of the new theory, with respect to the mind, the spirit, the character, and party of those, from whom it sprang, is as bad as possible.*

This origin has, already, been glanced at, in considering the novelty of the thing.

The men, who could conspire together for the utter extirmination of the Christian religion—who had nothing so much at heart, as that, to us, appalling object, and who, in their vain attempt to execute the hellish purpose they had devised, overthrew the altar and the throne of their own country

—these men, and the fiend-like executors of their dark and satanic plans (the Philosophers and the Terrorists of France, of revolutionary notoriety,) were the venerable fathers of the child, which is now adopted, and fondled so much, by many among ourselves.

For my own part, if I were one of them, I should distrust its origin. Hatched, as it was, amidst rebellion and blasphemy, I should be afraid of its near relationship to the enemy of God and man, and should therefore, to say the least, doubt its capabilities, disposition, and tendency, to promote the cause of virtue, holiness, and religion.

Let us bring the matter to the bar of common sense. Now suppose the conduct of a momentous war, to be committed to some experienced commander. Shall we find him going into the camp of the enemy, to seek there his advisers, in the plan of his operations? Will he seek his friends, among his decided enemies? Does he inquire, of his foes, the best mode for their destruction? Or is it to be expected that they, intent upon success against him, will volunteer their services for his good, shew their own weak points, or communicate any unfavourable circumstances, so as to insure their own defeat? The supposition is idle and monstrous. Again, when factions unfortunately prevail, and divide the state, shall you ever find the heads of one party weak, or mad enough, to conspire against their own political power and influence, for the advancement of their opponents?

Such suppositions are, one and all, an insult to common sense. I will, therefore, forbear to urge them further.

Only let me apply this reasoning to the case before us. Some forty years ago, a combination of infidels, Socinians, and other heretics, commenced a crusade against Religious Establishments. In one unhappy country, they prevailed, to the subversion of the throne and altar. To these very people, or their abettors and successors, we are now to be sent to school, to learn the best system of maintaining the interests of true religion! Unbelievers are to be our guides, in the support of the Christian faith! The bond slaves of the devil, (I allude to the more secret or avowed actors, in the tragic scene of the French Revolution,) these are to be regarded the best and staunchest friends of the Redeemer's cause! The confessed, and accredited agents of the world beneath are enlisted into the armies of the living God, to fight under the standard of the cross! We are to betake ourselves to the powers of darkness, to be taught by them how we may best promote the kingdom of God! And shall this be? Is this reasonable? Shall such advisers guide our conduct? Shall our ark be subjected to their pilotage? They will drive us on the rocks of destruction, and despise us for our folly. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" "Be ye not" (and least of all in any thing in which the interests of religion are concerned,) "unequally yoked together

with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial!"

Mark the men—the fathers of the notion we combat—and say, on which side is the truth of God more likely to lie? With them? Or with those opposed to them?

CHAPTER III.

The indisposition of our nature to things spiritual, the novelty of the notion, advocated by our opponents, together with the character of its originators, occupied us, in the last chapter. Upon the last mentioned head, I desired to confine my observations, principally, to the first movers of the new scheme, but I would, here, suggest, whether the greediness, with which these opinions are received, by all of liberal, loose, and infidel sentiments, in religion, of the present day, should not have its weight with many, to whom we willingly give the right hand of Christian fellowship, and dispose them, at all events, to hesitate, before they join issue, so decidedly, with us?

I propose to offer another consideration, or two, on this subject, and then to conclude.

I. Notwithstanding the means of grace, supplied by the Established Church to every individual parish, throughout the land, with the efforts of Dissent to boot, we find the wants of our countrymen, as respects the ordinances of religion, very inadequately provided for, in many parts.

I need only remind you, in proof of this, of the state of several of our parishes, in and about London, as well of most of our large, commercial, and manufacturing towns. What accommodation is provided, in either church or chapel, in the places alluded to, at all proportional to the number of the people? What do the inhabitants generally, know of the benefit and blessings of ministerial superintendence? I believe it would be hardly saying too much, to assert, that there are immense and dense masses of population, in various parts of the kingdom, where the comforting and cheering influence of the Christian minister is, almost, as little felt, as in a heathen land. And this, let it be observed, is not attributable to any lack of zeal, energy, and activity, on the part of the Established Clergymen, so much as to its being absolutely, and physically impossible, for one or two men to minister to the spiritual wants of ten, twenty, and sometimes thirty thousand souls. Oh, it grieves me to the heart, to think how many, within the narrow bounds of this favoured land, may justly, (though of dire necessity,

and not, so much, by wilful neglect, on the part of the ministers of religion,) take up the lamentation and say, "No man cares for our souls"—or again, "upon us is executed one of the most terrible curses of the Lord"—in that a famine is sent upon us, "not a famine of bread nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord!" Now, if this be, confessedly, the state of things, where the two schemes are found in operation together, what might we not expect! What spiritual desolation! if all were left to be effected, by the single power of voluntary effort—If this latter be found to be so feeble an assistant—so inefficient a coadjutor, and ally, what would be the result and consequence, if it were made a principal, or rather, if, as it affects to be, it were left to itself, alone! If it can now effect so little, in proportion to the demand, how should it ever accomplish much? If it be, as it proves itself to be, insufficient to supply the wants of a fraction of the population, on what principle of reasoning, shall we persuade ourselves of its ability to satisfy the *whole*? Christian friends, ye who are engaged in the pursuit of truth, and spurn the thought of hiring out yourselves as the slaves of prejudice, or partisans of faction—to you I appeal—to your candid judgment, I am content to refer the matter, for decision. The part is less than the whole—a thousand than a million—a river than the sea—and, surely, it is also equally self-evident, that a system, ineffectual for supplying the spiritual wants of only a small part of the community, is much less capable of

coping with the whole mass of society. This, I think, is reasoning, irrefragable—a conclusion, unavoidable.

Let it not be thought, for a moment, that the argument, just urged, is a two-edged sword, and cutting, at once, both friends and foes, in that, by what has been said, we equally impugn the efficiency of an Establishment, for the purpose of supplying the spiritual wants of a nation. We confess and lament, as much as any can do, the spiritual destitution of our country, in many districts, but the principle of an Establishment is not, thereby, at all affected—no, its necessity is, on the contrary, further proved and confirmed. The fact is, the fault lies, not with the *principle*, but with the *too partial application* of it—in short, in not lengthening the cords, and strengthening the stakes of our church, with the augmented, and daily increasing, numbers of the people.

Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason at all, why we should listen for a moment, to any apologies for the inefficacy of the voluntary system, as though the energies of it could be checked, and suppressed, by the weight of an incumbent Establishment. For, surely, it is contrary to all experience, to say that, with that exciting cause removed, which now influences the voluntary party so much, (I mean the stimulous of anxious and panting rivalry,) it would be more likely to bestir itself, with zeal and energy.

Upon the whole, then, we may be fairly warranted in concluding, that, (since, with all that the church

does, much ground is, nevertheless, uncultivated, on the voluntary principle, and that the aggressive system is, evidently, carried into very partial operation by it,) *without an Established Church, our country, though like the garden of Eden before, in spiritual blessings and religious privileges, would soon become a desolate wilderness.*

II. *An Establishment of Religion, in the spiritual provision which it makes for all—poor as well as rich—thereby, especially, falls in with the genius of the Gospel.*

“To the poor the Gospel is preached.” This is described by our Lord himself, who certainly must be supposed to have best understood his own cause, as one of the peculiar features of the Christian dispensation. So, too, it was spoken of, in ancient times, by the spirit of prophecy. “Wisdom crieth *without*, she uttereth her voice *in the streets*—she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates.” “*The poor among men shall rejoice, in the Holy One of Israel.*” “Ho every one that thirsteth, and he, *that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat.*” I know these passages have, more especially, a spiritual application, but we must not, therefore, reject their literal meaning, viz. a particular welcome to the poor.

Every other system of religion and instruction, almost, without any exception, is narrow, confined, and exclusive.

The ancient sages of Greece, (with whom wisdom in the old heathen world was identified,) were, generally, the instructors of the favoured few, whose situation, and circumstances of life, gave them admission to, or enabled them to bear the charge of the Academy, the Lycæum, or the Portico.

The Brahmins, of modern India, regard, with the greatest scorn and contempt, the more numerous body of the people, who are of the lowest caste, and would as soon think of instructing the beasts of the field, as them, in all the circumstances and mysteries of their religion. Unhappy men, they are scattered over the dark mountains of error, as sheep without a shepherd—their teachers, such as they are, instead of communicating to them what they know themselves, proudly regard them as the filth of the earth, and the off-scouring of all things.

The Scribes and Pharisees, such of them, especially, as occupied the chair of Moses, in the capacity of public instructors, kept aloof from, and frowned to a distance, their poorer and more humble brethren. “Stand by thyself,” was their haughty and repulsive notion, “for I am holier than thou.” I do not mean that this was any real, or necessary, part of the Mosaic economy—but only, that such was the fact, in its latter days of degeneracy and departure from the living God, when our Saviour poured forth such severe rebukes against its teachers, or contrasted in that striking manner, their conduct and his own.

For very different indeed, is the genius of the Gospel;

like its Divine Author, it is, most especially, the friend of the friendless, and the guardian of the poor and destitute. It invites to a participation of its blessings, the poor, the halt, the maimed, the blind, and those in the high-ways and hedges. Indeed, whether we consider the express declarations of scripture, the parabolic representations, the dispositions which the Gospel enjoins, and tends to generate, it is impossible not to perceive the benevolent aspect, which it wears towards the poor and needy. Witness the summary of our duties, "Love one another." Witness the whole life of our Redeemer. Witness the parable of the good Samaritan, in which his tender and considerate compassion of the man, fallen among thieves, contrasted with the conduct of the Jewish teachers, beautifully depicts the more condescending character of Jesus, and the superior benignity of that dispensation, of which he is more especially the subject. Witness, to say no more, the assigned reasons of the respective decisions of the great day. The righteous are welcomed to heaven, and it is added, "For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat—I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink—I was a stranger, and ye took me in—naked, and ye clothed me—I was sick and ye visited me—I was in prison, and ye came unto me Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The wicked (on the other hand,) are doomed to hell, with this charge, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat—I was thirsty, and

ye gave me no drink—I was a stranger, and ye took me not in—naked, and ye clothed me not—sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” So much, assuredly, is this care of the poor, a part of the very nature and essence of the dispensation of Jesus, that it cannot be going too far, to say there are few stronger proofs, or better tests of a true church, and of one constituted on right principles, than its possession of this very character.

And do not Establishments, as Establishments, so far, particularly, answer to this feature and spirit of the Christian religion? They do—in that, their object is to provide spiritual instruction for all—poor as well as rich—nor only so, but, generally, in their mode of support likewise. For in this respect, under what other system is the benevolent aspect of the Gospel towards the poor equally well maintained? Is it by calling upon them, out of the depths of their poverty, to support their own spiritual teachers? Is it by wringing, without remorse or pity, the poor man’s hard-earned penny from his hands? Is it by a never ceasing tax upon his piety, to draw off, as by a holy drain, the ill-spared surplus of his wants? Is this the plan we should choose, as best promoting the object in view, that of accommodating the system of our church to the spirit and genius of the Gospel? Or, shall we not rather frankly confess, that the open door of an Establishment, inviting the

poor man to a participation of spiritual ordinances, without money and without price, best accomplishes it?

It has been well said, by one of no little celebrity or notoriety,* that *Church Establishments are the patrimony of the poor*. In their being so, we cannot but recognize *their accordance with the genius of the Gospel*, and, thence, derive an argument in their favour.

Here, I close the discussion of the *Presumptive Evidence*, on the subject of Church Establishments.

In my own humble opinion, the considerations, advanced above, are, most of them, if not every one, worthy of attention, but all of them taken together, and as it were, united and combined, I would flatter myself, can hardly fail to produce, in the minds of the candid, an impression, in favour of Establishments, which it will be difficult to efface.

I had almost said, when considered thus, *en masse*, they constitute a firm and compact arch, along which we may pass, in confident security, over the shallow, though noisy and foaming torrent below.

At all events, I hope, they will tend to put the question at issue, on the right footing, and shew that, in any further appeal to evidence, upon the subject, the reason of the thing is with us, and that the *onus probandi*, ought to rest with our adversaries—in other words, that, independently of more positive authority,

* Cobbett.

if the union of Church and State, or a system of Church Establishment, be not forbidden—if it be not condemned—it is, *ipso facto*, enjoined and authorized—for, where revelation is silent, other things being equal, reason is our guide.

I will only add, that, if what has been said, shall prove at all instrumental in establishing, in the conviction of the truth of the principle of Establishments of Religion, any of the members of that church, of which I am myself one, or, lastly, in softening the prejudices of any of my Dissenting brethren, and clearing the way for them of a more just and impartial examination of the question, I shall be content and thankful, as not having, so far, bestowed my labour in vain.

END OF THE FIRST PART.



PART II.

THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENCE,
OR
HISTORICAL TESTIMONY.

CHAPTER I.

On the abstract questions of the necessity for, and of the fitness of, Church Establishments, for accomplishing their object, the deductions of reason are, decidedly, in our favour. The theory of the thing is with us. But, as theory and practice, expectation and experience are not, always, found to coincide, we may, very fairly, be required, in reference to the subject, in question, to shew that those stubborn proofs, the facts of history, are, also, favourable to us. This, I now, propose to do.

I shall not, indeed, as I might do, take the field of universal history, and shew you how the records of every heathen land, almost, ancient or modern, bear testimony in our behalf, in that we learn, from them, how the many and various schemes of false religion have been successfully propagated or maintained, in their respective countries, through the medium and

instrumentality of Establishments. There could, indeed, be no objection to this line of argument, on the ground of the errors and falsehood of the religions. For the question is not, which system of religion is true, but, what is the most efficacious instrument, what the best means of influencing the mind of man, on the subject of religion, generally?

Whilst I forego further reference to Profane History, I shall, also, not insist, at any length, upon the evidence, which the history of the Jewish church presents to us. Though it may, indeed, be asked, with triumphant confidence, by us, why was the knowledge of the true God preserved, in that nation, for so many ages, whilst every other people sank, deeper and deeper, into the depths of moral depravity, and spiritual darkness? And the only satisfactory answer that can be given, is, *The true religion was established among the former.* This is the only solution of what would be, otherwise, an inexplicable human phenomenon. The Jews, as a nation, were no better disposed to adhere to the truth than others, nor can it be assigned, as a reason for their moral and religious superiority, that they had made any greater progress in civilization, or the knowledge of arts and sciences—indeed, they were, confessedly, behind a great part of the heathen world, in respect of the latter, and to their stiff-neckedness, and astonishing proneness to depart from the living God, their history bears ample testimony. The truth is, that, partaking, with us all, of the lost and ruined nature of man, their tendency

was, continually, from the centre of holiness and excellence, whilst their Establishment constituted that superior gravitating power, which kept them within the sphere of true religion.

On this subject of the Jewish religious economy, I would, further, just observe, that no objection can, with any shew of reason, or any degree of fairness, be raised against the efficacy of the system of an Establishment, for the propagation of truth, because the Jews did not, generally, aim at diffusing the knowledge of the true God, in the earth. For it was the object and genius of their Establishment, to maintain pure religion and undefiled, among themselves, and not to propagate it, in the world at large.

With these observations, I shall waive further reference, either to Profane History, or to the Sacred History of the Jews, and enter, at once, upon the consideration of the evidence, afforded by the records of the Christian Church, after the time that the gifts of miracles were, confessedly, withdrawn, and it was left to the operation of ordinary and secondary causes, for its maintenance and support.

I shall not think it necessary to institute any very minute inquiry, as to the particular or exact time of the cessation of miracles. Whether they were actually performed or not, by those engaged in the promotion and spread of the Gospel, through the whole of the three first centuries of the Christian era, I do not pretend, at present, to decide. But, thus much is evident, that the pillar and support of the truth,

throughout that period, was miraculous evidence, either immediate or more remote. If the working of miracles were not absolutely continued among the ministers of the church, so long, it cannot be doubted, but that, up to the commencement of the fourth century, when Christianity, under Constantine, became the religion of the state, *the power and influence of miracles*, which were of no long date, or were fresh in remembrance, must have been great and convincing, perhaps, little less so, than the actual exhibition of them. The testimony of a father, or a grandfather, as to any matter of fact, of which he was, at once, both a fit and capable judge, and more especially, in such things as the miracles, wrought by the first teachers of our holy religion, would be considered by most of us, as little short of the evidence of our own senses, (at least, for the purpose of confirming us in the principles of our education, if not of actual conversion from idolatry to Christianity,) though, it may be, that a tradition of longer date, originating with those, whose personal influence we never felt, would, comparatively, have little weight with us.

We may therefore, at once, without further investigation, or the fear of being very far wrong, assume the fact, as one, which, I believe, indeed, is generally agreed upon, viz. that the voice from heaven, in the performance of miracles, or, in their more direct and powerful evidential influence, did not cease, till about the fourth century, and that the church, with a foundation, thus solidly laid, was, then, left to sustain and

propagate itself, with the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of human and secondary means.

Our inquiry, therefore, will be after these means. What have they been? What say the records of the church respecting them, as regards either its prosperity or adversity, its maintenance or ruin, its progress or the contrary? What has been the visible and external instrumentality of sustaining, or propagating the Christian faith? We believe that history proclaims, in terms so distinct, that it is impossible to mistake their tenor, that the chief *means have been Established Churches.*

This opinion I shall endeavour to maintain, whilst I demonstrate the truth of the two following Propositions, viz.

I. *Since the cessation of miracles, at least in the sense mentioned above, the progress of Christianity, in the world, is, mainly, to be attributed to the influence of Establishments.*

II. *The Christian Religion has continued permanent, where Establishments have existed and been protected, and, on the contrary, has become, well nigh, extinct, where they have either not existed, at all, or been subverted by violence.*

If I be able fairly to substantiate the truth of these propositions, we shall, at once, be in possession of evidence, on our side of the question, such as must

be felt, by all, to amount to little short of moral certainty. For let it be observed, Christianity is a final dispensation. It contains a full and complete revelation of the mind and will of God to man. Nothing now remains to be added. On this account, it is not, like the Jewish economy, of partial application, or of a temporary nature, but is designed for the use and benefit of the whole world, throughout all ages. It is the leaven, which, however small in its beginning, shall, at length, leaven the whole lump, in the infusion of its doctrines and precepts into the whole mass of mankind. For this reason, in reference to the Gospel of Christ, it is said, "His name shall endure for ever—his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him—all nations shall call him blessed." "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." That system, therefore, which the experience of past ages has proved to be best calculated to continue Christianity, where it exists, and to promote its general diffusion, in the earth, must be the best, as, in those effects, the nature, genius, and design of the Gospel are realized.

We go now, however, to the proof of the Propositions themselves.

CHAPTER II.

PROPOSITION I. *The progress of Christianity, since the cessation of miracles, is to be attributed, mainly, to the influence of Establishments.*

The propagating principle is, more especially, vested in Established Churches.

My readers are, no doubt, aware that, after the first ages, the Christian Religion made, comparatively speaking, but little advance, in that part of the heathen world, which lay beyond the limits of the Roman Empire, and particularly, as respects, the more western parts, until the favourable turn of affairs for the Christian Church, in the reign of Constantine. The leaven of the Gospel, which, through the ministry of the Apostles, and their more immediate successors, had spread itself so far and wide, in the earth, ceased, for a time, to operate. At least, its operations were, more especially, confined to the masses of superstition and heathenism, in which it had been deposited, and it no longer wrought its silent, irresistible, and rapid way, from city to city, and country to country.

What an effect, however, the Establishment of Christianity, as the religion of the state, produced in the Roman world, and among the nations bordering upon it, is well known!* The general aspect of the

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. iv. pt. i.
Gibbon's Roman History, Chap. xx.
Newton on the Prophecies, Revelations, Chap. vii.

empire, itself, then, at once, became Christian, while the religion of our crucified Redeemer was dominant, on every side. I am, indeed, well aware that the rapid progress of Christianity, under such a change of circumstances, may, to a great extent, be attributed to the selfish and worldly policy of our nature, which disposes too many to shift their sails for every wind, and to take any shape in religion, that best comports with their temporal interests. But, after all due allowance of this sort be made, it is impossible to consider, with serious attention, that portion of the history of the Church of Christ, without the conviction that a fresh, vigorous, and expansive principle, which had for a time, at least, been dormant, seemed, then to be communicated to it.

Still, however, vast portions of the habitable earth continued to sit in darkness, and to dwell in the valley of the shadow of death, being the seats of the darkest, most debasing, gross, and cruel superstitions. Upon many of these lands of ignorance and wretchedness, as they then were, the light of true religion has, more or less, since shone, and the Sun of Righteousness arisen, with healing in his wings. In other words, they have been converted to the Christian faith.

By what instrumentality, then, we may inquire, have these moral, or, rather spiritual fields been won? Under what superior, and commanding, visible influence, have the borders of the Redeemer's kingdom been thus extended? How have these fresh provinces been brought to yield subjection to Him, and acknow-

ledge Him, their Lord? Have new commissions been issued from the court of heaven? Has the God of nature, again, endowed his servants with supernatural gifts, to stay, or alter, the established order of things? Have the servants of Christ, thus equipped, fought his battles, and prevailed, in those, which were, once, the regions of darkness? No. Miraculous powers had long been withdrawn from the church, ere the countries, alluded to, were included in it. Perhaps, then, it may be thought, they are indebted to the free and spontaneous zeal of pious individuals, for their spiritual inheritance. These excellent individuals heard of their sad and pitiable condition—sympathized with them, in their darkness and ignorance, and depth of misery—of their own free will, forsook the land of their fathers, and, aided and abetted, only, by private Christian charity, succeeded in bringing the objects of their pious solicitude, within the pale of the holy catholic church. No, this was not the case. For, though it becomes us gratefully to honour the memories of those excellent persons, who were the more immediate instruments of bringing the nations out of darkness to light, and, from the power of Satan unto God, still, we cannot be justified, whilst we trace the present condition of the countries, in question, to its origin, in referring that to the efforts of individual and voluntary charity.

But if, then, these moral and religious changes, in the circumstances of nations, which have, confessedly

taken place, be to be attributed neither to any directly miraculous influence, nor to the effect of the voluntary principle, to what can we attribute them? The effect is evident. What has been the cause? What the originating and influential human agency? We say, *Established Churches*, without all doubt.

Under God, the little stone, which has approved itself so effective, in demolishing the vain images of heathen superstition, and reducing the nations into obedience to the Gospel of Christ, derived its momentum from the source, to which we have alluded. Of course, I say this of the latter days of the Church, in which it has been left without the gift of miracles.

But, as being better calculated, on the ground of personal interest, to bring home the subject with power to our minds, I desire to predicate this more particularly, of England and Ireland.

As to England.* The Gospel light of England, (which was lighted very early in the history of the church,) had become extinguished by the streams of British and Saxon blood. Years of murderous warfare had reduced unhappy England, at least, though not Wales and Scotland, to primitive ignorance and darkness. The demon of a cruel and gloomy superstition, again brooded over the land. To the Christian's eye our heaven was then overspread with the blackness of darkness. At length, however, towards the end of

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. iv., Pt. i., Chap. i.—
Rapin's History of England, Book iii., State of the Church.

the sixth century, a twinkling star of hope again rose upon us. Ethelbert, King of Kent, married Bertha, daughter of Charibert, King of Paris. Bertha was a Christian—the daughter of a Christian monarch. In her marriage contract, the free exercise of her religion was an article, stipulated upon, on her part, and agreed to by her heathen husband. Here a door was opened, and an opportunity offered for the exercise of pious zeal, and the diffusion of Christian knowledge.

This occasion was not let to slip unimproved. Gregory, at that time bishop of Rome, gladly seized upon it, and sent Augustine, the monk, at the head of forty fellow-labourers, to rekindle the holy fire, upon our altars, and re-evangelize the land.

The chosen missionaries, accordingly, set out upon their pious errand. On the way, their hearts failed them, for fear. The head of the Romish Church again encouraged, exhorted, and commanded them to proceed. They were not disobedient. They pursued their journey. They arrived safely in England. They announced their purposes. A favourable reception was granted them. Ethelbert became their convert, and established the Christian Religion, in his dominions. His example was followed, till, at length, the whole land rejoiced, as it does this day, in the enlightening and cheering beams of the Gospel of peace. This is a brief outline of our Church History.

To what cause, then, or means, under God, are we

indebted for our religion? Whence originated? What influence effected, humanly speaking, that glorious work of converting our country into a Christian temple? I need not answer, particularly, these inquiries. The facts speak for themselves—they still echo Establishments. *An Establishment originated, an Establishment seconded, and an Establishment gave success to, and consolidated the work.*

As to Ireland.* Ireland was a barbarous and heathen land. Celestine, the Roman Pontiff, in the 5th century of the Christian era, sent an eminent minister, named Palladius, to attempt the conversion of the inhabitants. The mission failed. Celestine, however, was not a man to be diverted from his purpose. He despatched, therefore, on the same errand of mercy, the famous Saint Patrick. St. Patrick met with the greatest success. Through his means, by the divine blessing, the darkness of idolatry disappeared, and yielded to the brighter beams of the Gospel of peace. The Christian religion was planted, and established—it flourished, and St. Patrick became to be regarded, throughout all ages, *The Apostle of the Irish*. It is no objection to this view of the origin of Christianity, in Ireland, that that country is now writhing under the cruel and iron grasp of Papal Rome. England did the same, at one time. This is

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. v. Pt. i. Cap. i.

Lloyd's Church Government of Great Britain and Ireland
Cap. ii.

the accident of circumstances, and affects not, at all, the question of the presiding influence, through which the conversion of either country, from Paganism to Christianity, was accomplished. We know Ireland became a Christian country, degraded and debased, as she now is, by the means we have described. And were not these means none other, than the very same referred to, in the case of England? *They were Establishments.*

Further proof of the kind might be adduced. I verily believe, indeed, that the Church History of every country of Northern Europe would be found to speak the same thing. These facts, however, already alleged, declare, in terms too distinct to be mistaken, that the elastic and expansive principle of Christianity has, more particularly, manifested itself, through the medium of Establishments. Our own country is a lasting monument of this, as are the wondrous effects of Constantine's day. What has Voluntaryism, let me ask, effected, worthy of a comparison with these?

We are so much, generally, the slaves of names, that I feel afraid, lest the very mentioning of the Romish Church, even in an argument of this sort, should be thought, by some, to subserve the cause of that most awfully corrupt system of religion, called Popery. But, not to say that the Church of Rome, at the period more particularly referred to, was not what she has been, since, and is, at the present time, we should, besides, bear in mind, that our object is an appeal to

facts, upon the superior tendencies and efficiency of a Christian Establishment, in propagating the Christian religion, and not an inquiry, whether this church, or that, be the purer.

Nor let it be advanced, in reply to the broad facts, stated above, that the voluntary principle has, of late, achieved much, in the Redeemer's cause, in Asia, Africa, the South Seas, and other parts. For—however much we may be the friends of missions, however highly we may appreciate them, (and they constitute indeed an angelic work)—or however intensely, we may pray for their prosperity, and rejoice in their success—it is impossible not to consider that success, as, upon the whole, comparatively small. Nor do I suppose that, whilst the cause relies so much upon individual zeal, or the voluntary principle, the present state of things will be, very materially, altered. The truth is, the work is not carried on, upon the most effective principles, possible, though, it may be, upon the best, at present, available. Perhaps, the most correct view, we can take of the missionary efforts of our day, in general, is that of pioneering the way, for the grand army of the Church Militant, when the various Establishments shall arise from their slumbering lukewarmness, shake off the dust of their worldliness, and realize their true position, or other Christian Establishments rise up into being.

Thank God, the first has been, already, in a degree, the case, with respect to our own church. The mighty engine of our Establishment has been brought

to bear upon the superstitions of India—(Oh, that her powers were increased in that land of darkness a hundred fold!) And, whilst due praise, for zeal and charity, should be yielded to all, engaged in the same pious work and labour of love, who does not perceive, in India, the superior efficacy and adaptation of an Established Church, for doing its work, on a large scale, and in a permanent manner?

Surely, then, all things considered, the truth of the proposition, relating to the progress of the Gospel, admits of little question. *That progress, whatever it be, since the cessation of miracles, is, mainly, to be attributed to the influence of Establishments.*

CHAPTER III.

PROPOSITION II. *The Christian religion has continued permanent, where Establishments have existed and been protected, and, on the contrary, has become well nigh extinct, where they have been, either wanting altogether, or subverted, by violence.*

It may, perhaps, seem superfluous to say anything, upon the former part of this proposition. It may be thought a self-evident truism, that the Christian religion has continued in countries, where Establishments, for its maintenance, have existed, and been

protected from the assaults of external violence. Some will be ready to say, it is begging the question, in dispute, and arguing in a circle, to propose the continuance of Christianity, under such circumstances, as an argument in favour of Establishments. But, if any do so, I can only say, they do not rightly understand the case. They are labouring under a misapprehension. It should be borne in mind, that there is not any unavoidable co-existence of a Christian Establishment and the general diffusion of the Christian religion in a country, nor, independently of external causes of destruction, any necessary and absolute permanency in a Religious Establishment, and, therefore, no positive certainty, through such an instrumentality, of the continuance of that religion, for the support of which, that instrumentality was instituted.

It is possible that the temples, the priests, the services, and all the complete paraphernalia of an Establishment, may exist, in a country, whilst the religion itself is, virtually, extinct, among the people. Something of this sort seems to have been the case, in some parts of the Roman empire, in respect of the Establishment of the day, as Pliny testifies, in his well-known letter to the Emperor Trajan.* It is, certainly, too, within the range of things conceiv-

* Pliny declared, in this letter, that the contagion of the Christian superstition had spread, to such an extent, in his province of Bithynia, that there was a general desertion of the public rites.

able and possible, that a nation should become so indifferent to its religion, as, by common consent to dispense with its Establishment. But the records of the Christian world afford no example of either one thing, or the other. To be sure, something, like the latter, took place, in France, at the time of the great revolution. But it was not a national act, so much as the mad and frantic zeal of an infidel band, that, for a time, possessed the chief power of the state. It was a suspension, through the force of faction, not an absolute and permanent abolition of the Christian religion, or of the Establishment, as a means of sustaining it. Whatever the design might be, the attempt, in reality, failed and was abortive.

We may, therefore, confidently appeal to facts, those irresistible arbitrators of questions of this sort. Do they not declare the adaptation of Establishments to the human mind, for the maintenance and preservation of religious truth?

Look at England. By means of an Established Church, or, at all events, *with one*, she has been a Christian country for upwards of a thousand years. Look at all and every one of the continental nations. They have been circumstanced similarly to ourselves, with respect to Established Churches, and the result is the same. Their character is, still, Christian.

Cast your eyes over the length and breadth of ancient Christendom, and tell me, indeed, where can you find a single example, opposed to our general position? Where is the land, in which a Christian

Establishment, protected from the destructive assaults of external force, has not continued to be a witness of the truth, and, so far as its particular constitution admits of it, a means of maintaining the light of true religion, among the people?

It may be, that an Established Church, badly constituted and arranged in its several parts, as the Romish Church, will be very partial, in the benefit it confers, in comparison of what it might be. But this argues nothing against the principle of an Establishment, generally.

We need, therefore, say no more on this point, than that *history proclaims, with one voice, the efficacy of Christian Establishments, in the universal connexion, observable between them and the Christian religion. There is no record of an Established Church, dying, as it were, a natural death, or of the Christian religion doing so, under an Establishment.*

We proceed, now, to the consideration of the converse of this, which is the other point of the proposition, under discussion. *Without the assistance of Establishments, the Christian religion has, well nigh, gone out, in, almost, all countries, where it has been so circumstanced.*

It is very necessary we should have a right understanding of the matter, in this respect. It is said Christianity has maintained its ground, as it has done, in Christendom, not so much through the influence of Establishments, as by the native power of truth, itself, on the human mind. Now, this is not the place to

insist upon the contrariety, involved in such a statement, to the whole analogy of nature, but, a sufficient answer to it will be found, and the fallacy of the notion proved, in a way, adapted to the comprehension of all, if we can shew, satisfactorily, that, while *the Christian religion has always flourished, more or less, as has been shewn above, with Establishments, without them, it has, very generally, declined, and become extinct.*

If such be the state of things, the power of truth upon the human mind, at least, in matters religious and spiritual, must be allowed to have an intimate connexion with, and near dependence upon, Establishments, as a medium or means of its operations. To be forced to allow the premises, and, yet, to deny the conclusion, seems to me, well nigh, as unreasonable, as to reject the truth of some mathematical problem, which has been fully and fairly demonstrated, because, by admitting it, we may be led to results, at variance with the preconceived notions, and prejudices of our childhood. Indeed, it is just like a person maintaining that, though he sees that, whenever a certain specific, for the Asiatic cholera, or any other disease, be given, the patient survives the attack, and on the contrary, whenever it be withheld, or refused, collapse and death, generally, ensue, nothing shall, nevertheless, persuade him of there being any virtue in that medicine, more than in any other. How unreasonable and preposterous this would be!

Premising these things, on the nature and weight of

the evidence, we come now to the allegation of the evidence itself.

It is acknowledged, on all hands, that there are vast portions of the earth, where the Christian religion once flourished, though it be, now, almost unknown in them, by name. The vine, under whose shadow we now rejoice, once grew in, and gladdened, those dark and unhappy regions. *There*, the aged composed themselves to rest, in death, with Simeon's song, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word—for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people—to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel." *There*, the infant lisped its Saviour's name, whilst its little heart was touched with sympathy, at the tale of his sufferings, overwhelmed by the exhibition of his mighty power, or delighted with the assurance of his love and goodness, even to little children. *There*, the sons and daughters of sorrow found consolation in Christ, and learned, through him, to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." *There*, too, the guilty found forgiveness, and peace with God, "which passeth all understanding." *There*, all were blessed, even the wicked and unbelieving, in the softened and improved features of society at large, in that, through the silent influence of Gospel principles, oppression was checked—property and life secured—vice, in its more appalling forms, discountenanced, and a charitable concern, for the comfort

and welfare of all, promoted and encouraged. But these rich fruits, spiritual — moral — social — civil — (whatever they were,) which once abounded in these unfortunate climes, have perished, and are gone. The tree, itself, on which they grew, is no more. The Almighty, in his just displeasure, has cut down their vine, or permitted the wild boar of the forest to root it up. Or, to change the figure, He has turned into a dry ground the water springs, which, in happier times, flowed here and there, all the land over, clothing it with beauty and luxuriance, or filling it with plenty and happiness. “A fruitful land God has turned into a barren wilderness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”

The immense district of Asia Minor is one example, of the truth of the above remarks. It was the favoured field of the labours of Apostles, Confessors, and Martyrs. Through their instrumentality, many churches were founded there,* which, under the administration of succeeding bishops, in conjunction with the influence of the Establishment, instituted by Constantine, continued for many ages. I do not say they sustained the character of primitive purity: still, however, they continued as Christian churches. But now, there are hardly ruins enough, in the few scattered Christians, to tell the story of their former greatness and grandeur. Their candlestick has been

* Acts of the Apostles.

Book of Revelations.

Gibbon's Roman Empire, Chap. xv.

removed, and spiritual darkness has, almost entirely, covered the land. What assignable cause does history afford for this spiritual desolation? What have been the ostensible means of effecting it? We answer, without fear of contradiction, the loss of their Religious Establishment. When the victorious followers of Mahomet took, from the Eastern empire, the countries in question, they, at the same time subverted the Establishment of Christianity, and left it to the support of voluntary effort. The result was, at length, the extinction of Christianity itself. Whilst that pillar of truth stood, which the Mahometans destroyed, Christianity continued—when that fell, the temple, which it sustained, was speedily reduced to ruins.*

Look, again, at Africa. The whole of Northern Africa was, once, a flourishing Christian community. The irruptions of barbarians, and the victorious arms of the Saracen and Turkish infidels, entirely wrested it from the influence of its Christian governors, and subverted its Established Church. And there also, the voluntary principle shewed its weakness, and insufficiency, in as much as the adoption of it was followed by the almost total ruin of the cause of Christianity.

I might, in further proof of the same thing, refer to

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. vii. Pt. i. Chap. ii.—
Also, Cent. x. Pt. i. Chap. ii.
Newton on the Prophecies, Revelations, Chap. ix.
Gibbon's Roman Empire, Chap. li.

the history of many churches, besides, (both of earlier and later times,) which have been left to the operation of the voluntary principle, for their support. For a time, a holy light, more or less brilliant, was emitted from their respective altars, and then it gradually died away, subsiding into total darkness. Nothing, generally speaking, now remains, in those countries alluded to, to tell the tale of brighter times, except the mouldering ruins of Christian temples, or the distorted doctrines of true religion, that are mixed up with their corrupt and superstitious systems.*

Now what is the meaning of facts, like these? What their tenor, on questions like the present? The Christian religion prevailed and flourished, more or less, wherever Establishments were maintained—and, where they were destroyed or not instituted, it quickly declined and came to nothing. Is this any thing less than a voice from heaven, proclaiming to mankind the *inutility and inefficacy of the voluntary principle*, on the one hand, and on the other, *the necessity of national Religious Establishments*. Its language, as addressed to the former system, is, “Tekel—Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” To us, the abettors of the latter, it says, “God is on our side.”

Objections may, and will, no doubt, be urged against such views, as these—some, upon the general question, and others, as arising from the peculiar circumstances of the churches, referred to above.

* Dr. Buchanan's Researches in the East.

It will, perhaps, be said, that many of the ancient churches of the east were devoted to destruction, and that, therefore, in that event the divine decrees were, necessarily, fulfilled. I allow this to be true. But it cannot be alleged, with any reason at all, against the views advanced above. For the same thing may be said of every other event. The truth is, that, as the divine decrees do not at all trench upon our duty, as moral and accountable beings, neither do they, as respects the infliction of his anger, preclude the operation of ordinary and secondary causes. Christ, our Saviour, was ordained of God, to die for the sins of the world, but that did not prevent the agency of the disappointed pride and worldliness, or offended self-righteousness of the Jews, in bringing about the tragic event.

Again, it may be objected, that, in the countries referred to, particularly Asia Minor and Africa, Christianity had not a fair chance given it. It was not merely left to itself, but persecuted also. But, if the voluntary principle were not sufficient to encounter the milder persecutions of the Mahometans, how can it be said, with any thing like consistency, to have proved itself superior to the systematic and cruel persecutions of heathen Rome? * Yet, this is what its advocates boast of. These zealous friends of Voluntaryism are too Proteus-like, assuming any shape or colour, that suits their purpose. They apologize for

* Rome slaughtered—Mahomet degraded and taxed, Christians.

the inefficacy of their system, at one time—at another period, still less favourable to it, they boast of its power and sufficiency, and tell us that the primitive church was sustained by it, for three hundred years and upwards, in spite of all the troubles it had to encounter, or the storms it had to pass through. Now whilst we are ready to admit the apology, in the one case, we cannot consent to the truth of the notion advanced, in the other. We do not affect to blow hot and cold, with the same breath, nor are we willing so to stultify ourselves, as to make the less superior to the greater, by asserting that the lighter persecutions of the church, at a later period of its history, were more difficult to be borne up against, than the severer ones of an earlier date. Nor, indeed, dare we presume to honour the native and spiritual energies of man so much, as to ascribe to them that, which is obviously traceable to miraculous influence. We believe it to be, at once, in accordance with reason, with facts, and with the dictates of religion, to say, *The Primitive Church was powerful in miraculous gifts, and therefore it subsisted, spread, and flourished, in spite of all the powers of the state that were arrayed against it—on the other hand, the church, in later times, when destitute of the gift of miracles, and spoiled of the assistance of an Establishment, was not able to maintain its ground, and thereby, manifested its need of help, in either one way or the other.*

I have known it to be observed, that the unparal-

leled circulation of the scriptures, since the art of printing was discovered, makes all the difference between churches of former days and the present. Those went out through want of scriptural fuel, these continue, and must do so, (independently of other aid,) because they are so abundantly supplied with it. Now, no doubt, it is scarcely possible to estimate too highly the blessing of the general circulation of the word of God. But if the great cause of the extinction of former churches were, really, in their want of more numerous copies of the scriptures, how shall we account for its so partial operation? Why did it not produce the same consequences in one country as another? Why are all the exceptions of its supposed effects to be found in Established Churches? Why did it not operate in England, as well as in India, Asia Minor, and Africa? Or, if the mere possession of so many bibles—if the multiplication of copies of scripture, constitute the support and pillar of truth, we may fairly demand, in what ratio, as respects the population, they ought to exist: and also, how far the primitive churches, which are no longer in being, came short of their due proportion—for they had, we must remember, their bibles. Hence the objection, derived from this particular difference, between the extinct churches and ourselves, must resolve itself into a mere question of degrees, which no man, surely, can pretend to solve, except by the help of inspiration. Again, it should not be forgotten, the scriptures were not wanting among the

Jews, and yet God gave them a Church Establishment. And is there any lack, comparatively speaking, of Bibles in America? yet immense districts without churches, and innumerable congregations without ministers, proclaim the wretched state of religion, in that country, at the present,* as well as its sad prospects, for the future, (under the benign influence of the voluntary system,) when the power or momentum of Christian feeling is no longer sustained, as it now is, in a degree, by the full tide of emigrants from Christian lands. To all this, I may add the inquiry, whether it be possible to believe that the art of printing should have been hidden from the world, till the fifteenth century of the Christian era, if the increase of the number of bibles be of so much avail, as to supersede the use of other means, in sustaining the church of Christ, in the earth? But I really feel almost ashamed of occupying so much time on an objection, which can hardly be seriously maintained by any, except those, who are themselves ignorant of the contents of scripture, as well as of the past and present history of the Christian church. The bible tells us that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him," and

* See note, page 16.

"I wish to record my conviction that those, who adduce the state of religion, in the United States, as affording an illustration of the inutility of an Established Church, are either bad reasoners, or ignorant men."—HAMILTON'S MEN AND MANNERS IN AMERICA.

that he "cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned"—in short, that the contents of that Holy Book is bread for the hungry, and water for the thirsty, or that a spiritual appetite must be generated in any man, ere he can understand and love the scriptures, which testify of Jesus.

Lastly, it may be said, with respect to Dissent, at home, it has existed, in its present shape, for upwards of two centuries, yet religion has not perished in it, and, consequently, that the non-necessity of an Establishment is proved. I do not insist, in reply, upon the fact that very many of the anciently endowed Dissenting chapels have become the strong holds of Socinianism: though this very circumstance may well be regarded as a remarkable example of the erratic tendency of the human mind, when freed from external restraint, and so manifesting the necessity of a public standard of faith—an unchanging or unchangeable creed—in short, of an Established Church. But I beg all, who are fond of alleging the case of the Dissenters, in the present instance, to remember, the question is not about the power of voluntary churches *to co-exist with Establishments, but to exist without them.* We say to our Dissenting brethren, you may, we know, *keep your fire alive at our altar,* but we ask you, whether your's *has burned, will burn, or can burn, without ours?*

The same observations will apply, more or less, to all communities of Christians, that have existed, for

any length of time, in various parts of Christendom, without an Establishment—*They have co-existed with an Establishment.*

Upon the whole, therefore, we may feel ourselves fully satisfied of the truth of our position, it being fairly borne out by the facts of history, without any thing of weight being alleged against it. That position is this, “*The Christian Religion has continued permanent, where Establishments have existed and been protected, and, on the contrary, has become well nigh extinct, where they have been either wanting altogether, or subverted, by violence.*”

Here then, again, let us stop, for a moment, to review our situation and circumstances, as a church, by the light, which such truths as these afford us.

We see how venerable is our Establishment, in its principle as such. It is coeval with the Christian church itself, when left of heaven to the support of ordinary principles, with the endowment only of the spiritual operations of the Holy Ghost, in the hearts of its living members. If hoary hairs, found in the way of righteousness be a crown of glory—that glory, (is the figure allowable?) belongs to Establishments. Yes—we plead not for any untried theory. We advocate no novelty—that, which, of all other things, is most to be deprecated in religion, because of the vastness of the stake, at issue, in the glory of God, and the present as well as eternal welfare of man. The system, we vin-

dicate, is sanctioned by the use of many ages, in the Christian church, and approved by its efficiency throughout them. *History declares that the propagating and sustaining principle of religion is, especially, vested in Establishments.* The weapons of our warfare are such as have been proved, in many a well fought battle. Their temper is most excellent, durable, heavenly. Their power mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of Satan, and rearing or maintaining the spiritual temple of His dear Son.

All that distinguishes us, as a Christian nation, we owe to the instrumentality of Establishments. Had not their principle been recognized, and carried out into practice, among us, we should have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah. Our happy land, as is the case with many an one, that was once as blessed and favoured as our own, had presented, to the eye of the beholder, nothing, but scenes of spiritual desolation, moral degradation, and physical suffering. And shall we now discard the venerable parent of our distinguishing mercies? Shall we cut off the hand that has conferred such benefits upon us? Shall we cut down the vine and the fig tree, whose shade and fruit have yielded us so much refreshment and delight? And shall we act the part of heartless, base, and despicable changelings, who, through mere love of novelty, or absence of all settled principles, prefer the company of every stranger, almost, however

untried and unknown, to the society of a tried, constant, and faithful friend? Let them advise it, who may. In that deed I would not participate. I would publicly wash my hands of it. If popular cry, excited, principally, by a combination of Popish aspirants and Radical infidels, or heretics, were to be yielded to, in the rejection of the principle of an Establishment altogether, and the destruction of our own, I would say, with respect to those, accessory to the fact, "O my soul, come not thou, into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" And, again, "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them, that are given to change."

END OF THE SECOND PART.

PART III.

—
SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY.
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CHAPTER I.

WE come, now, to the consideration of the last point of evidence, that we propose to insist upon—but, though last, it is not least important.

We have already disposed of the question, as far as regards the evidence, derived from presumption and facts, in a way, it is hoped, most favourable to the principle of an Establishment of Religion. Should scripture also be found to bear the same testimony, on the subject, (which, we are confident, will be seen to be the case, if we come to it, without prejudice and without partiality) then we shall have the principles, we advocate, tied and bound together with a threefold cord of truth, that cannot be, easily, or quickly, broken.

But again, I say, in coming to the word of God, let us do so, without partiality and without hypocrisy, throwing off, as much as possible, all preconceived notions and ancient prejudices, of the foundation of which in reason and fact, we are not fairly and tho-

roughly convinced. Let us not regard ourselves so much the stubborn partisans of faction, as sincere and sober inquirers after truth. When the one is the case, we see every thing through a distorting medium, and light, itself, loses its own essential nature, in leading the mind further astray, and enveloping it in deeper darkness—it is only, as we fairly sustain the latter character, that we are duly qualified for examining into any question, and more particularly into one, like the present, which bears such an intimate relation to the glory of the Almighty, as well as to the best interests of man, and rests, so much, upon a candid, and fair interpretation of the word of God, itself.

If we be ready to act up to this rule, which I most earnestly wish to do, myself, and anxiously desire others to do, likewise, I think the two more common and general objections, drawn from the scriptures, on the subject of Establishments, will be readily got rid of.

1. ONE is that the *Gospel decries the aid of the powers that be.*

THIS is deduced from the expression of our Lord, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” Now what is the meaning of this expression? What, in the least, has it to do with the question, at issue? It is merely a rejection, by our Lord, of all pretensions to worldly dominion. It was evidently spoken to quiet any apprehensions, conceived in the mind of Pontius Pilate,

of a rising, or rebellion, against the Roman authority.

The charge brought against our Lord, that he designed to make himself a king—the consequent question of Pilate, “art thou a king then?”—the general expectation, at that time, of a prince to arise out of Judea, who should break the yoke of Rome—and the known disposition of the Jewish people, to rally round the standard of every pretender to that long expected character—these are, surely, the master keys of discovering, and clearly unfolding, the meaning of the passage. “My kingdom is not of this world,” interpreted by these considerations, can, therefore, be understood to signify neither more nor less than an assurance to Pilate, that he had nothing to apprehend from his prisoner, against the right and title of the Roman emperor.

The kingly pretensions of Christ, constituted the only charge against him, that had any weight with the mind of the Procurator. Upon this subject, therefore, he was anxious to receive some satisfactory explanation. What our Lord said, did satisfy him, (which is another plain proof of the meaning of the words,) for Pilate, immediately after the answer, openly avowed his conviction of the prisoner’s innocence, and proposed, at once, to discharge him.

Now I appeal to any man, who will be at the pains to read John xviii, from verse 33 to the 39th inclusive, in collation with Luke xxiii. 2, whether the above is not the only reasonable interpretation

of the passage, in dispute! And, this being the case, the weight of the objection to the principle of Establishments, as derived from these self-same words, will be evident. The truth is, the argument, as professed to be deduced from them, is a mere play with the words, themselves, independently of other considerations, that can, alone, determine their meaning. Indeed, this same canon of interpretation, will warrant any heresy, however unscriptural and wild. The Romish deduction of transubstantiation, itself, from the words, "this is my body" "this is my blood," or that of the Antinomians, from "ye are not under the law, but under grace," is quite as fair and reasonable, as THIS of the scriptural illegality of an Established Church, from the declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world."

I think, then, we have rased this objection to its very foundations. In exhibiting the fallacy of the premises, we must, in this case, have proved *that* of the conclusion. Is it not the baseless fabric of a vision? A mere vagary of the brain, and no reality?

2. *The other objection*, which, to the unprejudiced and candid mind, must appear as untenable, as the former one, is drawn from the *silence of the New Testament, with respect to Establishments.*

In reply to this, consider the circumstances of the world, at the time, when the later scriptures were written. All the dominant powers were Pagan. Their influence and authority were ranged, not on the

side of, but in direct opposition to, the Gospel. The heathen gods, which mingled, in friendly fellowship, with one another, would, on account of its exclusive character, give no quarter to Christianity. "Down with it—down with it, even to the ground," was their cry. Their votaries, the monarchs of the world, were not slack to obey the injunctions of their spiritual monitors, since they persecuted the religion of Jesus, every where, with fire and sword.

Now, in books, written expressly, for the comfort, the instruction, and general edification of Christians, thus circumstanced, how could any directions about Church Establishments, be introduced, with any shew of reason or propriety?

Bring the matter to the test of an individual's case. Suppose you have a friend groaning under oppression and cruel treatment, in the cause of loyalty or religion. It is your endeavour, to soothe him in his sorrows, and to support and strengthen him in his principles. But will you attempt to effect these goodly purposes, by addressing to him lectures on the duty of his persecutors? Is this the course you will pursue. I know you reject the very thought of such a thing as quite preposterous, and the height of folly and madness. And do you not think that, considering the times in which the *books* of the New Testament were written, any addresses to the rulers of the world, or any detailed statement of their duty, in *them*, would have been quite out of place? Is not, in short, the

silence of the New Testament, on the question at issue, that which was to be expected? Is it not reasonable and natural?

Again, let us apply, to this subject, the touchstone of consistency, as far as regards, at least, the New Testament. Now we know that the Gospel is designed for all—Gentile as well as Jew. Christ is hailed as “A light to lighten the Gentiles,” as well as “the glory of his people Israel.” But does the New Testament, on this account, take any special cognizance, by way of instruction, of the heathen part of the world? Or, as *it* lay out of the pale of the church, is it not for that reason, justly regarded as beyond the reach of scriptural instruction? Do the writers of the New Testament, make any application in their *writings*, of the known designs of mercy to the Gentiles, except incidentally, and as may serve the purpose of their argument, addressed to such as were already Christians? How then can we expect that the duty of rulers, at the time they were all opposed to the Gospel, should be explicitly enjoined in the New Testament? Would not such a course render it inconsistent with itself? The consequence would be that its undeviating purport and object, in seeking the edification of those within the pale of the church, would evidently be lost sight of and departed from. Whereas if the thing were represented as the subject of legitimate inference, or incidentally mentioned, (which, by the bye, we shall hereafter see to

be exactly the state of the case,) it is just what we should expect and look for, as essential to render all uniform, consistent, and satisfactory.

Besides, it should not be forgotten, that the support of the church of Christ, at the time the New Testament was written, as has been before observed, was not ordinary and human, but miraculous and divine. Had the thing been practicable, an Establishment was not needed, when Christians could point, with triumph, to the arm of the Lord, as displayed in those wondrous works, which the first propagators of Christianity every where performed.

This objection, therefore, must also fall to the ground, and so our way of scriptural investigation is cleared.

Let me beg my readers to consider, whether the weakness, not to say folly, of such objections as these, does not palpably betray the weakness of the cause they are intended to sustain! *What, indeed, must be the cause, as one of scripture, when such are the scriptural expedients for maintaining it!!*

CHAPTER II.

We have seen the futility and fallacy of the general objections, deduced from the authority of scripture, against the legality and propriety of an Established

Church. Had those objections been really valid, the subject must have been considered as settled for ever, because there is no arguing, on matters of religion, in contradiction to the Bible: but, as it is, the question remains entirely open for further scriptural investigation, and we may proceed, in it, with a clear course. From the futility of the scriptural objections against Church Establishments, as generally alleged, we conclude, that scripture, really, contains nothing against them. Let us see, now, what the same authority contains for them.

1. In adducing arguments from the scriptures, in favour of an Established Church, I think we should not pass over that, which is derived from *the analogy of faith*.

On other subjects, *the analogy of faith*, is, justly regarded as of great weight and importance. Why should it not, therefore, be so esteemed, on the question before us?

By the *analogy of faith*, is meant *a coincidence with the general testimony of God's holy word*, and, in the present case, particularly, with respect to the nature, the disposition, and spiritual capabilities of man.

What is the representation the word of God gives us of our fallen race? What is the tenor of the facts it communicates? What that of its express declarations on the subject?

As has been, in some measure, shewn before, man

is represented in the Bible, as continually declining, when left to himself, from truth to error—from the right knowledge of God, to the most gross and vain superstitions.

It is evident this was the case before the flood. For a while, indeed, the true religion was maintained, among the descendants of pious Seth, but the leaven of superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, gradually spread among them, till, at length, there was to be found only one family, in the whole world, where the worship of Jehovah was maintained. And, after God had manifested his indignation at such corruption of principles, and depravity of manners, in the universal destruction of the human species, together with all the terrestrial creatures, with the exception of Noah, his family, and that part of the animal race, which he had taken to be with him in the ark, we find no change to have taken place, in the nature of man. He still bears all the striking lineaments of his former self. It is true, indeed, that after such a terrible display of wrath against sin, on the one hand, and so distinct and manifest an interference, on the part of the Almighty, in behalf of his faithful servant, on the other, it might have been expected, that many ages would elapse, ere the succeeding race of men returned to the corruptions of doctrine, and vileness of living, that characterized the world before the flood. But what was the fact? The very opposite to that supposed. For we know well that the favoured family of Noah, in most of their

descendants, quickly forgot both the vengeance of God, towards the wicked, and his distinguishing goodness to their pious ancestor. Idolatry soon became very prevalent, again, in the world, and this too even in the line of Shem, upon whom was entailed the peculiar blessing of giving birth to the Saviour of mankind. Four centuries had scarcely rolled away, and the sons of Noah, the fathers of the second race of men, were hardly cold in their graves, ere divine wisdom saw it necessary to summon Abraham, from his country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, in order to preserve true religion in the chosen line of the Messiah. That the spark of divine truth be not utterly extinguished, by the flood of idolatry, Abraham must be separated, by the special interference of God himself, from all intimate association with others.

I might pursue this subject, to a great length, in tracing the history of Abraham's descendants. But I will content myself with appealing to all persons, of any discernment and reflection, whether this frailty, or proneness of our nature to depart from the living God, and to decline from true religion, was not strikingly exhibited by the Israelites, both before and after their settlement in the promised land. In the language of inspiration, "They forgot God their Saviour. They were defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions."

In perfect accordance with these facts of the history of our species, the word of God represents man, as,

naturally, at enmity with God, refusing subjection to the law of God, and morally dead in trespasses and sins. See Romans v. 10. viii. 7, 8., Galatians, v. 17., Ephesians ii. 1., with innumerable other passages, that might be pointed out.

With such data, may we not then most fairly argue from the analogy of faith, to the falsehood of the voluntary principle, on the one hand, and the truth of that of Establishments, on the other?

Would the harmony of scripture, and its beautiful consistency, with itself, be fully maintained, if, whilst it represents the nature of man in such a way as we have seen, it should yet leave him to himself, as being strong enough in moral principle, and love of spiritual truth, to maintain the interests of religion, in the earth? Or is it likely that, whilst, in every other respect, the whole tenor of the Bible is to humble and abase man to the very dust, it should, on a question like the present, so exalt and honour him, and so flatter, the spiritual propensities and powers of his nature? *This is the tendency of the Voluntary System.*

On the contrary, is not that state of things, in more perfect unison with the word of God, which supposes man to be destitute of all spiritual desires, or any natural relish for divine things, and accordingly, makes provision for the wants of his soul, and the maintenance of true religion, independently of him? *This is the nature and character of an Established Church.*

If it be objected, that the Voluntary System does not leave the maintenance of religion in the hands of man, so much as to the natural influence of truth itself; it may be said, in reply, this, really, amounts to the same thing, as it predicates that of man, in respect of his susceptibility of the operations of truth, which is inconsistent with the word of God.

Since, then, things are so, if nothing else could be found in scripture, on the subject, we should be fully justified in asserting, that every page testifies, in point of fact, there must be Religious Establishments, if you would maintain the interests of religion. In short, the *Analogy of Faith, or Consistency of Scripture*, as respects the nature of fallen man, requires them.

2. *Another argument*, of the same kind, and which, in my own mind, possesses no less weight than the former, *is the very silence of the New Testament on the subject.*

This, as we have seen, is an objection brought against us. But, whilst, as an objection, it is futile, trifling, and most unreasonable, which has been shewn, as an argument on our side, it is strong and valuable. This, however, is to be proved.

Christianity, it should be remembered, is not really a new religion. When it succeeded the old religious economy of the Jews, it did not do so, as a system opposed and contrary to that, which Moses established, so much as being the extension, completion, and perfection of it.

The religion of the ancient Israelites, taught them to acknowledge the one and same God, whom we ourselves adore as the object of worship—pointed out to them the same mode of acceptance with him, which we trust in, and called for the same spirit of devotedness, that is enjoined upon Christians. In the Christian system, these things are brought before us with greater clearness. We, comparatively speaking, no longer see the way of salvation, through a glass, darkly. Our views of divine truth are not obscured by the medium of types and ceremonies—We have “Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before our eyes,” and by one oblation of himself, once offered, making a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. We have “life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel.” Yet, strictly speaking, these things, and others, whatever they be, are not new subjects of revelation.

Our condition, when contrasted with that of the ancient Jews, is as the brightness of the meridian sun, with the glimmering twilight of its rising—or it may be said, we enjoy, in the perfection of manhood, that, which gladdened the hearts of the saints of old, only in the character of the promising infant. The Mosaic economy has, in the appointed course of events, and the fulness of time, grown into Christianity. Some of the peculiarities, adapted to the former state, it was to be expected, would come to an end with it. “When I was a child, I thought, as a

child—I spake, as a child—but, when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Accordingly, the daily sacrifice has ceased—the veil of the temple has been rent, and its privileges have passed away—the priesthood of Aaron has ended—and circumcision, no longer distinguishes the people of God. There was, evidently, no more occasion for these things. They were, either unnecessary, or inapplicable to the Christian state. We, therefore, find them in particular, pointed out by our Lord, or his Apostles, as temporary, in their nature.

Still we have a priesthood established—public worship ordained—the sabbath acknowledged—and initiatory and commemorative sacraments appointed. In all these respects, and others, that might be enumerated, we see so many *principles* of the ancient system, (the scaffolding of the temple, as it were,) retained and approved by the present, though, be it observed, as respects some of them, rather in a way of course, as in the case of the sabbath, for instance, than by any express declaration, or didactic authority. Can we, then, reasonably suppose that a part of the ancient system, so important as the national church was, would be dispensed with, and no notice be taken of it? no observation made upon it? Can silence be considered a sufficient warrant for its destruction? I say, did the church, as an Establishment, occupy so obscure and unimportant a place, in the old economy, that it should be treated in this way? The des-

truction and the breaking up of the material building,* as well as of the privileges “of the holy and beautiful house,” in which their fathers worshipped, were thought of importance enough to be the subjects of special prophecies. Shall then that wonderful system, to which the temple, with its various services, was but accessory, shall THAT be set aside, dissolved, and annulled, without a word in reference to it?

Surely, all things considered, the more reasonable account of the matter is, that, like other essential parts of the Mosaic economy, which are founded in nature, reason, and the unchanging necessity of man, this too is to be regarded as accredited, approved, and designed for use, under a modified character, whenever the circumstances of the world admit of it.

As in the case of the sabbath, so also, in this of Establishments, *silence*, confessedly, *is not abrogation, but approval, authority, and warrant for continuance.*

* Micah, iii. 12. “Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be ploughed as a field—and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the high places of the forest.”

Matthew xxiv. 2. “And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

John iv. 21. “Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall, neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

CHAPTER III.

The observations before mentioned, relating to Scriptural Testimony, on the subject under consideration, do, perhaps, present themselves, less directly, to the mind of the ordinary reader of the holy volume, than some others may do. They are written, with less clearness and distinctness, on the very face of it, so that, in order to the discovery and right understanding of them, it is necessary we should be able to go beyond the letter, and enter into the spirit of the divine records. But will they be thought less forcible, on this account, by scribes, that are well “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?” Certainly not. With the greatest confidence, for my own part, in their weight and importance, I leave them to produce their natural effect on those minds, that are capable of duly appreciating them, and proceed to other arguments, more direct and evident. In doing so, I shall pass over the consideration of the conduct of Abraham, Melchizedek, Jacob, and others, under the patriarchal dispensation, in whose practices, many think they clearly recognize the acknowledgement of the principle of an Established Church.

1. It appears to me, that, if there were nothing else to be collected from the word of God, upon the subject, *the example of the Established Church, which is presented to us in the case of the Jews, would be*

a distinct and intelligible divine warrant, for the adoption of the principle, in Christian nations.

I have known some, whose risible faculties have been not a little moved, at the very mention of the Jewish Establishment, as a pattern, in any respect, to us, under the Christian dispensation. But they were persons of more levity than judgment, of more ignorance and folly than discernment and piety, of more self-sufficiency, than humility and Christian docility. I would, therefore, forestal the merriment of such characters, and tell them that, when we look to the establishment of ancient Israel, as our pattern, in one sense, we do not propose to revert again to an hereditary priesthood, to altars, and the offering of victims, thereon. It is the *principle* of the Establishment we look at—we say nothing of the *detail*. That, upon the whole, has passed away, with the age to which it was adapted. Still, however, in the Jewish Church, we cannot but recognise the principle of an Establishment, as of an unchanging and universal obligation, upon the Israel of God.

Who was the author of that referred to? It was none other than God, himself. Now if Establishments be necessarily and fundamentally wrong, in the principle of them, their institution can never be justified, as right. If it be lawful to say so, even the Almighty, himself, is subject to the eternal laws of right and wrong, which he has himself ordained. Wrong cannot, in the nature of things, ever be right, any more than bitter can be sweet, or darkness light. But God has

raised his voice against the position of our opponents, that Establishments are wrong in principle, in that He has been pleased to be the author of one. He has, himself, instituted an Established Church, for his people of old. It follows, then, that either the Almighty, (with the utmost deference be it spoken,) or the advocates of the voluntary principle, must be wrong. Which must be right, I need not say. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." The broad argument, therefore, must be given up. The general position of scripture being adverse to Establishments, must be considered untenable. The ground of debate must be narrowed, and the question now must resolve itself to this—does scripture propose the principle of an Establishment, in such a way, as to warrant its being received, and acted upon, by Christians? We say—it does.

I think no one can read that portion of the Jewish history, connected with the foundation of their church, without feeling that it was, evidently, done, on the known and recognized principles of mankind. God, as the head of the Israelites, did that, which was done by the rulers of every kingdom. He organized the religion of the land, and in doing so, he certainly set to his seal of approbation of the system.

Again, there is no clause of limitation attached to the charter of the Jewish church, as regards the principle of an Establishment. Now it is impossible to conceive that the general application of this principle was intended to be deprecated, whilst no such restric-

tion is to be found. The Almighty, most certainly, knew well, how much his own example, in this respect, would be followed, and that, not by the profane and worldly, so much as by the devout, the holy, and devoted followers of the Saviour. He clearly foresaw the use and application, which would be made by his most favoured servants, of his own deed. Is it likely, then, think you, he should, in this way, leave them in ignorance and in error, on a matter of such vast importance? It cannot be. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

Further, the Apostles, and first Jewish converts to the Christian faith, by their backwardness to separate themselves from the Established Church, at that time in existence, evidently recognized the principle of it, in a manner in which, if Establishments be wrong in themselves, under the Christian dispensation, they never would have done. Acts ii. 42. 46, "And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship."....."And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple." Acts iii. 1. "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer....." Now, however much they brought into operation the principle of becoming "all things to all men, that they might, by any means, win some," it was utterly impossible that they should as a body become evil to any—or however intent they might be upon publishing, as much as possible, the glad tidings of the Gospel, they could not act upon the principle of doing evil that good might come, because, in their

collective capacity, they were under the immediate guidance of heaven. For my own part, I am free to confess that, (whatever other reasons may be assigned for the fact,) in the lingering of the Apostles and their associates about the courts of the temple, I cannot but perceive not only a recognition of the system, but a sort of anxious desire and longing expectation of seeing that ancient system, reformed, purified, and spiritualized, so as to be brought to bear upon the interests of the church of Christ.

Add to this, as "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," so it "is written for our learning, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But, if the application of its *principles* is to be thus restricted, as is proposed by the advocates of the voluntary principle, without any distinct authority for so doing, how can the scriptures be said to answer to their design and character? Instead of their being a safe and unerring guide, we make them a rule the most uncertain, unsatisfactory, and, comparatively, useless. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?"

The root of their error, whose notions we are combatting, seems, on the particular point before us, to consist in not distinguishing aright, between the *principle* and the *detail—truth*, and the *mode of its application*. By the very same means, the greatest heresies, both in doctrine and practice, have, from time to

time, arisen and disgraced the Christian church. We, however, I trust, have been better instructed, and know that, whilst scripture gives us *principles*, it leaves us to *apply* them, according to the ever *varying circumstances* of age and country.

Looking to the constitution of the Jewish church, therefore, we may be assured, we act *upon the authority of God*, when we are zealous for the support of an *Established Church*.

2. *There are many prophecies*, relating to the means, or particular instrumentality, of enlarging and maintaining the Christian church, *which*, taken in their signification, according to the fair and legitimate mode of interpreting scripture, *are decidedly favourable to Established Churches*.

The passages referred to, are more particularly to be found, in the Psalms, Isaiah, and the Revelations. Ps. ii. "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the son lest he be angry." Ps. lxxii. "The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea all kings shall fall down before him—all nations shall do him service." Ps. cxxxviii. "All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the word of thy mouth." Isaiah xlix. "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers." lx. "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee." Revelations xxi. "And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it."

No doubt, there are many more passages, of the same nature and tendency, with the above, that might be cited, but these will, abundantly, suffice for our purpose. And I am fully aware, indeed, that their application, at least as respects many of them, is not, primarily, to the Christian church, though it be so, principally, and chiefly, as is confessed by all the ablest commentators, without exception.

The question then occurs, how can those prophecies be said to bear a favourable testimony to the principle of an Establishment, in the Christian church? The answer to this is, they do so, in the use of the term *kings*, employed to denote the instrumentality of effecting, supporting, and consolidating the triumphs of that church.

To get rid of the force of this argument, it is objected that *king* is used *personally* and not *officially*, and that it implies influence of superior station and riches, in a private capacity, rather than the exertion of power and authority, vested in, or connected with, any official situation. But that there is no weight, in this objection, and on the other hand, that the term employed signifies all that we can desire, in support of our proposition, will be evident, from the following examination of it.

It is well known, that the Second Psalm is an inaugural poem, composed by David, on his accession to the throne of Israel. In it, as regards himself, (for I know it has a more special application to the Messiah,) David foretels the subjugation of the neighbouring kings to his dynasty. He declares the uselessness of resistance, and recommends submission. "Be wise now, therefore, O, ye kings." Now did the term kings here signify the sovereigns in their capacity of private individuals, though of high and distinguished station? What was the prophecy in its accomplishment? Was it confined to the respective *persons* of the princes? or did not the result declare that the *power* and *authority*, invested in them as *rulers*, were included in the term. We are sure it did, in proof of which, see the passages, subjoined in the note.* This, then, must be the meaning of the term likewise, in its application to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the prophecy must signify not only that

* 2 Samuel, viii. 1, 2. 6. 14. "And after this it came to pass that David smote the Philistines and subdued them."....."And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground."....."And so the Moabites became David's servants and brought gifts."....."Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts."....."And he put garrisons in Edom, throughout all Edom put he garrisons: all they of Edom became David's servants." xii. 31. "And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln, and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon."

the kings, themselves, should, personally, submit to Christ, but that they should, also, acknowledge, confirm, and support, his authority, in their several kingdoms.

Again, consider the expression as employed by Isaiah lxix. "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers." In the application of this passage to the Jews, to whom, no doubt, it primarily appertains, it will be agreed to by all, well acquainted with the scriptures, that Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, and other monarchs, who assisted in the restoration and settlement of Israel again in Judea, were intended in the term, *kings*.

Let us see, then, in what manner Cyrus and his successors, on the Persian throne, gave their assistance to the returning Jews. Was it by private munificence and kindness, as wealthy and influential individuals? No, but in the exercise of that authority and power, which they possessed, as the supreme heads of a mighty kingdom. In the prosecution of their charitable work, in behalf of the people of Israel, they passed edicts, they published decrees, they granted immunities, and exacted contributions. In short, they acted, respectively, as the representative heads of the nation, wielding their power and authority as such, in the accomplishment of the object in view. They acted officially as kings. See the references in the note below.* Of course, the same interpretation

* 2 Chronicles, xxxvi. 22, 23. "Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, (that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished,) the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation, throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

must be adhered to, in the application of the term to the *spiritual Israel*, the church of Christ.

“ Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth, hath the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah—who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.”

Ezra, i. 1. 4. “ Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia. (that the word of the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled,) the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, “ Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” “ Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.” “ And whosoever remaineth in any place, where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts.”

vi. 8. 11, 12. “ Moreover I make a decree, what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God, that of the king’s goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.” “ Also, I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon, and let his house be made a dunghill for this.” “ I, Darius, have made a decree, let it be done with speed.”

vii. 21. 26. “ And I, even I, Artaxerxes, the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily.” “ And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.”

In referring to Rev. xviii. 2., we find the language of prophecy still the same, with, confessedly, the same signification.

These observations will suffice to establish the meaning of the term "*kings*," as employed in the prophecies alluded to, and this, not in their more immediate application to Jewish affairs, but, also, in their more remote and enlarged signification, respecting the Christian church. *That term, we see, does not so much denote persons invested with the influence of the most exalted rank, as express the power and authority connected with, and belonging to their office.*

In the interpretation of those prophecies, therefore, we are to understand that kings shall employ their official powers in the support and confirmation of the Christian religion. How can this be done? Certainly not by the voluntary system, for that were a contradiction in terms—it must therefore be by the application of the *principle* of an Establishment.

We may regard it, then, as a demonstrated truth, that *Establishments*, in the Christian church, *are the testimony of prophecy*. They cannot therefore be wrong. In their *principle*, they must be right, because *they are in accordance with the mind of the Spirit*.

On the subject of Establishments, the evidence we have adduced from scripture, fully echoes the sentiment, *Vox Ecclesiæ, Vox Dei*.

An Established Church is not, as many, that vainly

affect popularity, represent it to be a system of priestcraft, founded in, and supported by the selfishness of the clergy. It is no cunningly devised fable, whereby to furnish the needy with "a piece of bread." It is no man-made system, for the benefit of the few. Its authority is *divine*. It is a fabric, whose strong foundations are laid in the deep recesses of the eternal mind. We contend for it, on no doubtful authority, and from no interested motives. We contend for it, as for other points of revelation, that involve the general interests of true religion, as "the faith, once delivered to the saints."

Hence, on the one hand, let us to take care, never, by laxity of expressions, inconsistency of conduct, and general indifference, to lessen public respect for an Establishment, or to swell the tide of opinion against it. When we do so, we are guilty of pulling down what the Almighty himself has built up, and do, as it were, sacrilegiously destroy the temple, which He has reared. And on the other hand, let confidence, in the excellence and heavenly origin of our principles, inspire us with a holy composure and courage, in every difficulty and danger.

Misguided and ignorant, or wicked men may decry our system—they may, under the influence of delusion, or an utter indifference to all religion, call aloud for the abolition of Established Churches—but, in doing so, as we believe, it is the puny creature resisting its creator—man warring against heaven—and when such is the case, we need not be over solicitous,

about the issue of the contest. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

"The word of God cannot be broken," by all the powers of earth and hell combined. The institution, therefore, which is grounded upon its authority, must be secure, and permanent, so long, at least, as the church militant shall be continued on its present footing—or till, the rule, which the Almighty has established, shall, by the same authority, be rescinded.

In short, we may address those, opposed to the principle of a Church Establishment, in the emphatic words of a distinguished statesman on a kindred subject, and exclaim in holy triumph, "*It is high as heaven, and you cannot reach it—it is strong as the Almighty, and you cannot overturn it—it is fast as the eternal, and you cannot unfix it.*"*

* Sir J. Graham in the House of Commons, March 30th—Debate on the Irish Church.

END OF THE THIRD PART.

CONCLUSION.

The proposed object of the present treatise was to shew that certain opinions on the subject of Church Establishments, (so rife in some quarters,) are as false, as they are new, and as contrary to reason, experience, and scripture, as the opposite opinions are agreeable to them all. This object, it is hoped, has been, in some degree, attained.

We have seen, that Voluntaryism is, entirely, at variance with rational deduction—the voice of the past, and the uniform testimony of God's word. Indeed, there can be no doubt, (notwithstanding the acknowledged excellence of some individuals, who are so hurried away into the vortex of the day, as to be converts to the system,) that it is based on ignorance, or grounded in infidelity—that it is a system, cherished and maintained, in a great degree, under the influence of envy, that decries every advantage, in which it does not itself participate—or of worldly ambition, that can brook no superior—or, lastly, of malignant hostility to the truth, as it is in Jesus.

On the other hand, we have beheld the edifice of an Established Church, resting on the strong and deep foundation of reason, history, and scripture, combined. A foundation, this, we may observe, than which the

staunchest advocates and warmest friends of an Establishment cannot desire a better, nor its enemies, as far as their cause is concerned, a worse.

“I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.”

It is needless, of course, to state that it does not comport with the nature and design of the present treatise, to enter at all into the detail of our own or any other Establishment. Whether ours be, or be not, the best possible, must be considered elsewhere—but this I will say, that no fair and reasonable man, however opposed to us, will ever think of arguing, from the acknowledged abuses of any Establishment, against the system altogether. He will remember, it is the *principle* we contend for, not the *wrong application* of it. There is no mode of argument more common than that of general condemnation, because of particular error or abuse: but nothing can be more fallacious than this. It would lead to the subversion of every institution, and to the destruction of all that is valuable. By this reasoning, forsooth, we must dispense with the British constitution itself, for who dare undertake to maintain the positive and absolute perfection of it, either in itself or in its working?

It is true, however, that all men will not see this subject of Church Establishments, as we do.

There are some, whose minds are so naturally infirm, and peculiarly constituted, or so fettered by the prejudices of education, and long connexion with others, that they are, well nigh, morally incapable of giving a just and candid opinion, upon the subject.

They have been so long accustomed to survey it, through their own medium, that arguments, clear and forcible as they may be to *us*, are, scarcely, perceptible to *them*. It is indeed, in this respect, with the mental faculty, as it is with the body, which, when accustomed, for any length of time, to an awkward position or ungainly carriage, you can hardly ever restore to its original symmetry and native bearing. This, (and I desire to keep it in remembrance,) is the case, with some of the excellent of the earth, on the question before us. Of their infirmities, or misfortunes, I wish to be tender—nor would I ever forget that the people of Christ, of whatever name or denomination, are all brethren. Beloved and precious they are, in their master's sight, and so they are, in mine. Indeed, I trust, I do not altogether deceive myself, when I cherish the hope of having passed from death unto life, because, I love all those, "that love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth." If a word in the foregoing pages, has, at all, wounded any one of them, I am heartily sorry for it—or, if I have, seemingly, transgressed the bounds of Christian charity, I beg they will put the most favourable construction on what I have said, and believe that, as far as they are concerned, at all events, I have not forgotten the distinction, that exists, between the *doctrine* and its *advocate*—the *person*, and the *principle*.

Others there are, the most violent, and the chief instruments of all the noise and clamour on the sub-

ject, who may be, in some respects, similarly circumstanced with those just mentioned. But they are driven on, in their furious career, by other means, than distorted views of truth. Their mad crusade against Establishments is, with them, a chosen way to notoriety and importance. They care not for the truth. They are ready, (however vociferously they may try to persuade us of the contrary,) to sacrifice every thing at the shrine of personal aggrandisement. Profession of the greatest regard for religion will be made by them, if it promise to answer their own grovelling ends, but when these can be better promoted without the former, they will be content to cast it to the winds, to shew themselves in their true colours, and mingle together, as one united band of infidel or heretical brethren. Judas will be a disciple, so long as it serve his purpose, and, at the beck of interest, be ready to betray his master. To these persons, I have no apology to offer. As I hold their principles in detestation, so do I consider the men themselves, to be the veriest pests of society, the curse of their native land, and, in reality, (whatever boastful pretensions they may make of being the special friends of liberty and religion,) the greatest enemies of God, and man.

Let me, further, address two or three remarks to those who are agreed with me.

One thing, to be ever borne in mind, is *this*, that *truth*, like the Almighty himself, is, *necessarily, permanent and immutable*. With it, "there is no

variableness, neither shadow of turning." No force of eloquence, no power of reasoning can, at all, affect it. *Truth* must be *truth*, for ever. No argumentative alchemy can ever transmute it into error. We may not, perhaps, be a match for "the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," but being settled and grounded in the authority of our principles, and taking our stand on the basis of eternal truth, we should feel assured, that all the reasonings of our opponents, on this subject, however specious they may be, constitute only the "spider's web," which, though it be wrought with wonderful ingenuity, subtleness, and intricacy, is, after all, but airy, weak, and flimsy.

Another thing, worthy of observation, is, that *our principles*, if true, are *most essentially important*. We cannot oppose them, refuse them our countenance and support, or act, in any way whatsoever, to their disparagement, without contracting, thereby, the greatest guilt. It must ever be in our remembrance, that the cause of Church Establishments, is, with our principles, the cause of religion—the cause of our God and of His Christ. At all hazards—by all lawful means, therefore, it is to be supported by us. Not only direct opposition—but indifference, or neutrality, itself, will justly be considered, in us, a base dereliction of duty, and high treason against the majesty of heaven. In the discharge of every duty, whether of a more public or private nature, let us be careful to act, consistently with our principles, nor ever throw

the weight of our influence into the opposite scale. In short, let principle, and not caprice—a due regard to the common good, and not some incidentally private advantage, or personal gratification—broad and general views, and not such as are narrow and partial—let these things regulate all our behaviour. The line of procedure, which such considerations imply, may, sometimes, expose us to the charge of bigotry and intolerance, from the thoughtless, or the *liberal*, (I use the word according to the phraseology of the day,) but the wise and good of all parties cannot but approve our conduct. Consistency must commend itself even to an enemy, when the mind is not so blinded by ignorance, prejudice, or passion, as to be incapable of judging between right and wrong, whilst inconsistency will be sure to issue, sooner or later, in disaster, contempt, and disgrace.

Lastly, let it never be forgotten by all the friends of an Established Church, whether clergy or laity, that the most efficacious, as well as the most tangible argument, after all, is that, which is presented in the general tenour of our lives. It is not the thing itself, whatever it be, so much as the use and benefit of it, that gives it its current value in the world, at large. Gold itself is valuable only for the advantages it procures. The well tempered sword is, no doubt, preferable, in itself, to the rude weapon of the Indian, and the nicely turned rifle to his bow, yet, still, the inexperienced observer will determine their comparative merits, by actual results. No matter, what may

be the keenness of the sword's edge, or the exactness of the rifle's bore, if they be entrusted to the hands of the ignorant, the incapable, the careless, or the cowardly, their claim to superior excellence and power will be urged in vain. The untutored savage will laugh defiance to all arguments that may be adduced, in favour of his adversary's arms, whilst he points, in triumph, to the victory he has gained, and exults in the number of his scalps. Oh, that all the members and *the pastors, more especially*, of our national church, felt the force of this *logic of nature!* That they were, one and all, duly sensible of their *individual responsibility*, in the maintenance of that, which they justly regard as the pillar of truth! That they were as careful to exhibit *lives, superior in holy devotedness*, as they are *confident of better principles!* That they were able to resist gainsayers, and appeal to arguments seen, read, and understood, of all men—*to consistent piety, and laborious self-denying charity!* *These were* arguments! Ah, how strong! how persuasive! how unimpeachable! how irresistible! And, let me add, these, and these alone, are the arguments, which divine providence will bless and accredit. The principle of an Establishment, thus maintained—thus supported—will be secure, indeed! The rain may descend—the floods come—the winds blow and beat upon it, but it will not fall. It will stand as secure, amidst the noise and roar of popular phrensy, rancorous infidelity, envious rage, ill founded

prejudice, and ignorant self-importance, as the everlasting hills, on whose tops storms and tempests have gathered, howled, and beat for ages. "Therefore, "my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, "always abounding in the work of the Lord, foras- "much as ye know that your labour is not in vain, in "the Lord."

FINIS.





