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THE CHURCH,
AND
ITS REFORM.

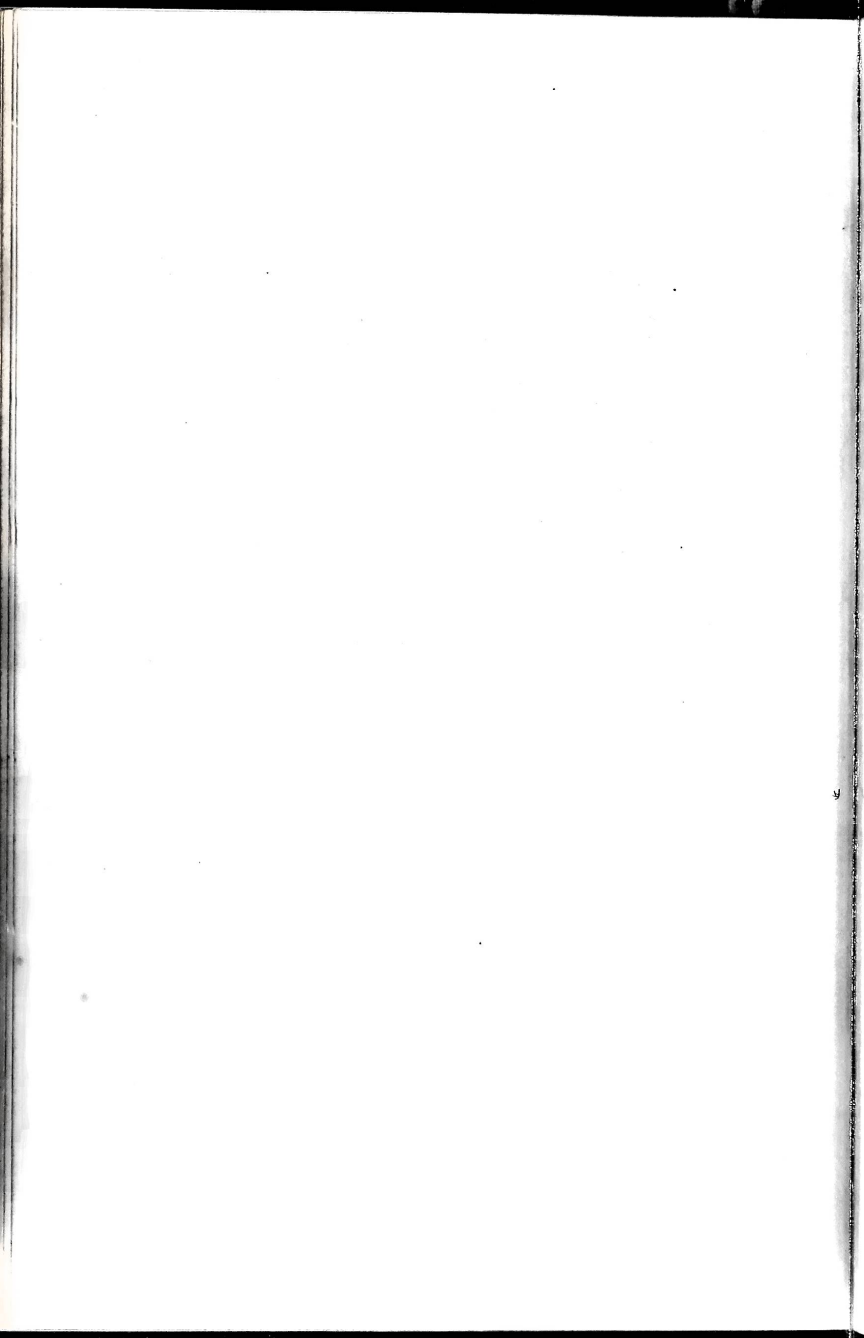
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THE
CHURCH, AND ITS REFORM.

'BACON says, "If St John were to write an Epistle to the Church of England, as he did to that of Asia, it would surely contain the clause, *I have a few things against thee!*" I am not quite of his opinion. I am afraid the clause would be, *I have not a few things against thee.*' These are the words of Dr Jortin.— (See his *Tracts*, vol. i. p. 350.)

"In England we certainly want a reform in the ecclesiastical part of our constitution. Men's minds, however, I think are not yet generally prepared for admitting its necessity. A reformer of Luther's temper and talents would, in five years, persuade the people to compel the Parliament to abolish tithes, to extinguish pluralities, to enforce residence, to confine episcopacy to the overseeing of dioceses, to expunge the Athanasian Creed from our Liturgy, to free Dissenters from Test Acts, and the ministers of the establishment from subscription to human articles of faith. These and other matters, respecting the church, ought to be done," &c.

Thus Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, delivered his sentiments, in a letter to the Duke of Grafton, in the year 1791.*

One of the most remarkable of the sentiments here expressed is the belief of the power which a single advocate of reform, of the proper stamp, might exert

* See 'Watson's Memoirs,' p 256.

on the public mind in England, and through the public mind on the House of Commons, and through the House of Commons on all that is faulty in our public institutions. "A reformer of Luther's temper and talents would in five years" (in 1791, be it observed, when the minds of men were ill-prepared) "persuade the people to compel the parliament," &c. The great characteristics of Luther were courage, activity, and perseverance; for in intellectual endowments he was equalled by many of his contemporaries; and by some, Melancthon and Erasmus for example, surpassed. We mention this, and request attention to it, as a matter of encouragement to those whose minds are elevated and blessed with the love of reform. It requires, they may see, but the *will* in any individual of a class, which now is numerous, to be the author of blessings, analogous to those achieved by him who among mortals was the greatest benefactor of the human race.

Among the reforms which five years of proper exertion might bring about, in the ecclesiastical part of our institutions, the Bishop enumerates the abolition of tithes, the extinction of pluralities, the compulsion of residence, the confinement of episcopacy (meaning, literally, overlooking or superintending) to the appropriate function which the name denotes; besides these, erasing the Athanasian Creed from the Liturgy, abolishing the Test Acts and subscription to Articles of Faith.

Forty-four years* have passed over our heads, and, of all this, how much has been done? We have abolished the Test Acts! And yet the people are accused of being too impatient for reform; as indicating, by their impatience, a desire to destroy religion—aye, and government along with it.—And so they would be if they were only to complain of a single bad thing once in a hundred years.

* Written in 1835.

The Bishop is far from intending here a systematic view of the bad things in our ecclesiastical machinery. He mentions a parcel of particulars, by way of exemplification, and ends by saying, 'these, and *other matters*,' &c. We know that he laid great stress on one thing which is here not mentioned at all; reducing emoluments of the overpaid priests of all descriptions, and giving something more to the class whom the clergy think sufficiently paid with a beggarly pittance.

The time is come, when a service of unspeakable importance would be rendered to the community, by a full and detailed exposition of the good which *might* be done by a well-ordered and well-conducted clergy; of the want of good in any shape derivable from our present ecclesiastical corporation, while it is the perennial source of evil to an incredible amount. We shall enter into some details, to give a clearer view of what we recommend to others, and earnestly desire to see accomplished.

We shall begin with some illustrations of the proposition, that the present ecclesiastical establishment in England is a perfect nullity in respect to good, but an active and powerful agent in the production of evil.

It is one of the most remarkable of all the instances which can be adduced of the power of delusion, when well supported by artifice and power—that, up to this hour, an institute, truly characterized by the terms we have just applied to it, should be still looked upon as a fabric, venerable for the benefits which it confers upon the people, at whose charge it is upheld.

It has not the look, the colour, not even one of the outward marks, of an institution intended for good.

The world, at least the Protestant world, needs no information respecting the abuses of the Romish Church. That ecclesiastical establishment had been reared up into a system, most artfully contrived for rendering men the degraded instruments and tools of

priests; for preventing the growth of all intellect and all morality; for occupying the human mind with superstition; and attaching the very idea of duty to nothing but the repetition of ceremonies for the glorification of priests.

At the time of the great revolt from the domination of the Romish priesthood, while other countries broke down and struck off, some more, some less, but all a great part of the machinery, by which the Romish Church had become the curse of human nature, the English clergy embraced that machinery very nearly as it stood, have clung to it ever since with the most eager attachment, praised it to the skies, and done whatever they could in the way of persecution against all who condemned it.

Look at the facts, and see how distinctly they support this representation.

Did not our church-makers retain the same order of priests? archbishops, bishops, deans, prebendaries, rectors, vicars, curates; with the same monstrous inequality of pay?

Did they not retain the very same course of clerical service—nay, the very same book of formularies, doing little more than translate the Mass-book into the English Liturgy?

Renouncing allegiance to a foreign head was the principal part of the change which took place in England, and the abolition of the religious houses, to satisfy the rapacity of the king and the nobles. But the employment and duties of the clergy remained as before, with some little alteration. The Church of England parson has less to do than the Romish priest; and being allowed to involve himself in the cares of a family, has a mind less devoted to the concerns of his place.

If the Romish establishment was not framed for the production of good, but was an exquisitely-fashioned instrument for the production of evil, is it not certain

that the English establishment, which consists of the same integrant parts, must very closely resemble it in its tendencies?

Let us look at this subject a little more closely. Can anything be a greater outrage upon the sense of propriety; a more profligate example of the contempt of public good; than to see a concatenation of priests, paid in proportions ranging from the height of princely revenues, down to less than the pay of a common footman; without even a pretence that the duties of the most miserably rewarded portion are less onerous or less important than those of the set who are paid with so immoral and disgraceful a prodigality?

The next thing which solicits the attention of all rational men, is the work which the English clergy are called upon to perform for this pay; exhibiting, in their extreme, the opposite views of extravagance and deficiency.

We undertake to maintain the two following propositions: First, that the only services which are obligatory upon the Church of England clergy, and regularly performed, are ceremonies, from which no advantage can be derived. Secondly, that the services they might render, in raising the moral and intellectual character of the people, are not obligatory, but left wholly to their option, to do, or not to do; that they are performed always most imperfectly, and in general not at all. Let us go to the particulars.

The services obligatory on the Church of England clergymen are, the Sunday service, performing the ceremony of baptism, that of marriage, and that of the burial of the dead.

To estimate the value of them, let us see wherein they consist.

The Sunday service. That consists almost wholly in the repetition of certain formularies; read out of a book called the Book of Common Prayer. On this

part of the duty (the work is actually called *duty*) of the Church of England priest, the following observations are inevitable.

1. The repetition of forms of words has a tendency to become a merely mechanical operation, in which the mind has little concern. To whatever extent the repetition of religious formularies becomes mechanical, it is converted into an unmeaning ceremony.

2. The formularies themselves are of the nature of mere ceremonies. They consist of creeds; of short sentences called collects, which are commonly words of Scripture thrown into the form of ejaculations, or petitions to God; prayers, especially the Lord's Prayer; and extracts from the Bible. It is needless to mention the Communion Service, because, excepting the purely mechanical part, handing what is to be eaten and drank, it consists of the same things.

It is necessary to bestow a short examination on each of those particulars.

Of the repetition of creeds, the best thing which can be said is, that it is purely ceremonial. If it is not ceremonial, it is far worse: it is a forced declaration of belief—in other words, an instrument for generating the worst habit which can be implanted in the human breast—the habit of saying the thing which is not—the habit of affirming as a matter of fact, that which is not a matter of fact—the habit of affirming that a man is conscious of a state of mind, when he is not conscious of it.* This is to poison

* There may be chicaning on this subject; but no candid man, who really understands the human mind, will hesitate in assenting to the fact which is here affirmed, that a man is not conscious of that state of mind, called belief, with respect to everything contained in the several creeds in the Prayer Book—perhaps in any one of them, every time he is called upon to pronounce them: above all, when he is first called upon to do so. A verbal assent is not belief. Belief implies ideas, and the perception of their being joined together according to the principles of reason. "Strictly speaking," says Berkeley, "to believe that which has no meaning in it is impossible. . . . Men impose upon themselves, by imagining that they believe those propositions which they have often heard, though at bottom they have no meaning in them."—*Principles of Human Knowledge*, § 54.

morality in the very fountain of life. The fine feeling of moral obligation is gone in a mind wherein the habit of insincerity is engendered: nay, more—every man who is possessed of that fatal habit possesses an instrument for the perpetration of every other crime. Mendacity is the pander to the breach of every obligation.

The collects, which are short sentences—mostly words of Scripture, thrown into the form of ejaculation or petition—we may take along with the prayers; and of the whole lot together we may affirm, that if it is not ceremonial, and without meaning, it is a great deal worse.

The most important, by far, of all the religious sentiments is—the distinct, and steady, and perpetually operative conception of what is implied in the words, *Almighty Being of perfect wisdom and goodness*. Without this, there is no religion. Superstition there may be, in perfection. Priestism is its nature; it is a contrivance of priests, and always manufactured for their ends. When deluded people are made to think ill of the Divine Being, they are in the hands of the priests, and can be made to do whatever the cunning of the order prescribes to them.

The tendency of the Church of England prayers is to give a wrong notion of the Divine attributes; and instead of the idea of a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness, to present the idea of a being very imperfect in both. To speak of them in the most general way, we may observe, that perpetually to be asking God for things which we want, believing that this is a way to obtain them, implies the belief that God is imperfect both in wisdom and goodness. Telling God unceasingly of our wants, implies that he needs to be told of them—otherwise it is an unmeaning ceremony. Asking Him continually to do things for us, implies our belief that otherwise he would not do

them for us; in other words, our belief, either that God will not do what is right, if he be not begged and entreated to do so—or that, by being begged and entreated, he can be induced to do what is wrong.

In like manner, in regard to praise, which is the other element of what is called prayer: first, what use can there be in our telling the Divine Being, that he has such and such qualities; as if he was like to mistake his own qualities, by some imperfection in his knowledge, which we supply? Next, what a mean and gross conception of the Divine nature is implied in supposing that, like the meanest of men, God is delighted in listening to his own praises! Surely, practices which have this tendency, if they are considered as having any meaning at all, it is much better to consider as having no meaning—that is, as being mere ceremonies.

The Divine Author of our religion everywhere indicates his opinion, that praying is nothing but a ceremony: he particularly marks praying, as one among the abuses of that sect among his countrymen, who carried their religious pretensions the highest, and whom he considered it his duty to reprobate as the most worthless class of men in the nation.

It is matter worthy of particular remark, that Jesus nowhere lays stress on prayer as a duty: he rarely speaks of it otherwise than incidentally. With that condescension to the weakness and prejudices of his countrymen, which is everywhere observable in his conduct, he does not reprobate a practice, to which he knew they had the attachment of an invincible habit; but by placing it among the vices of the Pharisees, he indicated with tolerable clearness what he thought of it.

It would seem, if we take his own words and example for authority, not the interested interpretation

of priests—that he actually forbade the use of prayer in public worship. Let us observe how he gave warning against the abuse of this ceremony, in the Sermon on the Mount, and how clearly and incontrovertibly he characterized it as a ceremony, and nothing else: “And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogue” (that is, in public worship) “and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and the Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Nothing can be clearer than this: all prayer is reprobated but secret prayer, and even that is not recommended. The words always are, “*when ye pray*”—that is, if ever ye do pray, do it in secret, the whole turn of the expression being permissive only, not injunctive. It is remarkable, with respect to this limitation of prayer to secret prayer only, that Jesus himself never makes a prayer on any public occasion; and as often as he is represented in the Gospels as praying, which is very rarely, he withdraws even from his disciples, and does it in absolute solitude. Jesus goes on—“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

This last expression is of peculiar force and significance: Be not ye like those who think they will be heard for their much speaking; since speaking at all is of no use; “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” Can there be a more distinct declaration, that prayer is a ceremony

only, and not very easy to be kept from being a hurtful ceremony?

Jesus subjoins to this declaration of the ceremonial nature of prayer these words—"After this manner, therefore, pray ye;" and then comes the formulary called the Lord's Prayer, evidently intended as a pattern to prevent the excesses into which the ceremony was apt to run. And the words of the pattern itself, taken in combination with the words spoken immediately before—"Your heavenly Father knoweth," &c.—afford sufficient evidence, when they are minutely examined, of the character in which its Divine Author meant it should be used.

But, as it is too evident to need any illustration that the idea of the Divine Being, as a being of perfect wisdom and goodness, so steadily and luminously fixed in the mind, as to be a principle of action, is the very essence of religion, and the sole source of all the good impressions we derive from it, it is not less evident, that every idea instilled into us, which implies imperfection in the Divine Being, is a perversion of the religious principle, and so far as it goes, converts it into a principle of evil. Because, exactly in so far as men set up for the object of their worship a being who falls short of perfect wisdom and goodness, so far they manufacture to themselves a motive for the practice of what is contrary to wisdom and goodness. Yet it is self-evident, that to offer petitions to the Divine Being, with the idea that they will have any effect—that everything, being already ordered for the best, will not proceed in the same way exactly as if no such petition had been made, is to suppose the petitioner either wiser or better than his Maker—either knowing better what is fit to be done, or more in earnest about the doing of it.

If these observations about the ceremonial nature of prayer be admitted, there is not occasion to say much about the rest of the Sunday service. Where

is the use of a priest to read a chapter of the Bible, which every head of a family does to those who live in his house? Besides, the Church of England always reads the same chapters, thereby inevitably converting the operation into a ceremony. Are these the only chapters in the Bible which deserve to be read? If not, why read them only, casting a slur upon the rest? Again, when anything has been read sufficiently often to have fixed the purport of it indelibly in the mind, what is the use of more repetition? It is evidently ceremonial only. With regard to the Communion Service, we think it is, among Protestants, considered as a ceremony. Mr Bentham has endeavoured to show that it was never intended, either by Jesus or his disciples, to be permanent, even as a ceremony, and that it is peculiarly ill-fitted for that purpose; and we have never met with anything like an answer to his observations, which well deserve the attention of all rational and honest-minded Christians.

And now we come to the Sermon, the only part of the Sunday performance which is not essentially ceremonial; but which may, by misperformance, become not only ceremonial, like the rest, but positively and greatly mischievous.

A celebrated wit of the last age, known by the familiar name of George Selwyn, had gone one day to church, and was asked when he returned, by some one in the family to which he was on a visit, of what sort the sermon had been? "Oh," said he, "like other sermons; palavering God Almighty; and bullragging the devil." This was said, of course, satirically; and it must be added, considering the subject, that it was said profanely. But, nevertheless, it must be confessed, that it describes with great point the character of at least one grand class of Church of England Sermons, which consist of terms of praise heaped unceasingly on the Divinity—terms of con-

demnation heaped as unceasingly on the Personification of Evil: as if there could be supposed to be an individual in a Christian congregation not already prepared to bestow laudatory epithets upon God, opprobrious epithets on the devil, as far as his power of language would permit him to go. As no congregation, therefore, could possibly be the better for hearing such a sermon, it is necessary to consider it as a mere ceremony.

Another grand class of Church-of-England sermons consist of what, to borrow (as we may here do without profaneness) the language of George Selwyn, we may call palavering the Church of England, and bullragging the Dissenters; ascribing good qualities without end to Church-of-Englandism—evil qualities, in equal proportion, to Dissenter-ism. This is not merely ceremonial, certainly; but we may safely pronounce it worse—something so bad, that hardly anything equal to it in atrocity can be conceived. It is making religion, which ought to be a principle of love among human beings, a principle of hatred; and that hatred turning upon what? The great line of distinction between moral good and evil? That by which He who is perfection is mainly distinguished from the Prince of Darkness? No, no! But upon some difference of opinion in matters of little importance, or some diversity in the use of ceremonies. Is not this to vilify, or rather to explode morality? setting above it such frivolous things, as sameness of belief in dubious matters, or sameness of performance in matters of ceremony? Is not this to renounce the good of mankind as the grand principle of action, the main point of obedience to the will of God—making the service of God a pretence for hostility to a large portion of his creatures? Is this a morality, fit to be promulgated by a man, miserably, or exorbitantly paid, in every parish in the kingdom? We restrain by punishment, and we do well, the publica-

tion of indecent books and prints, calculated to inflame the passions of the inexperienced and unwary. But these publications are innocent, compared with the sermons read to congregations, or printed for the public, to which we now allude.

The extent to which the exercise of this malignant principle is carried cannot, perhaps, be more clearly shown than by calling to mind that celebrated Charge to the clergy of London, by the then Right Reverend the Bishop of London, afterwards the Most Reverend the Archbishop of Canterbury, to which Mr Bentham makes such pointed allusion. "The prostration of the understanding and the will," there spoken of as one of the *desiderata*, one of the objects of desire, and of endeavour, to the Church of England, Mr Bentham has commented on with his usual fulness and usual effect. And all that is necessary for us, in regard to that generous purpose, is, to refer our readers to the treat prepared for them in his comment.* Another expression in the said Charge—is that to which we desire to direct the reader's attention in this place. We borrow the expression from Mr Bentham, other means of reference not being at hand, but with perfect confidence, knowing, as we do, what his care of accuracy in such particulars was. "In the Charge," says Mr Bentham, "we shall see Non-Church-of-Englandists marked out as '*enemies*' and men of '*guilt*.'"—Why, in the name of all that is good, should Church-of-England men treat as "enemies" all men who cannot subscribe the Thirty-Nine Articles, or join in the performance of their ceremonies? Is not this to make religion the curse of human nature—the permanent fountain of discord—the extinguisher of love and of peace? Not to subscribe the Thirty-Nine Articles, and not to join in certain ceremonies, is "guilt!" This is to make the Church-of-England man the general enemy of his species. Sermons, which

* 'Church of Englandism Examined.' By Jeremy Bentham, Esq.

propagate this idea, propagate a feeling of hatred, a disposition of hostility, towards all men but those of their own particular sect. Is not this to renounce the religion of Jesus, which is a religion of peace? Is not this Antichrist? Is not this to deny the Lord that bought them?—to crucify him in the house of his friends? Assuredly sermons of this cast had better not be delivered.

Another class of sermons are the controversial: those which undertake to settle points of dogmatic divinity. We believe that all rational men are united in opinion, that such discourses, addressed to ordinary congregations, can be of no use, and have a strong tendency to be hurtful. They have a direct tendency to attach undue importance to uniformity of belief on points on which it is not necessary. They have also a direct tendency to lower men's ideas of the Divine character—representing the Almighty as favouring those who adhere to one side in the controversy hostile to those who adhere to the other. This is to suborn belief: to create in those who yield to such teaching a habit of forcing a belief; that is, of dealing dishonestly with their own convictions. To hold out rewards for believing one way, punishment for believing another way, is to hold out inducements to resist the force of evidence, on the one side, and lend to it a weight which does not belong to it, on the other. This is a mode of attaching belief to any opinions, however unfounded; and as soon as a man is thoroughly broken in to this mental habit, not only is the power of sound judgment destroyed within him, but the moral character does not escape uninjured. The man in whose breast this habit is created, never sees anything in an opinion, but whether it is agreeable to his interest or not. Whether it is founded on evidence or not, he has been trained to neglect. Truth or falsehood in matters of opinion is no longer with him the first consideration.

This is nearly the most immoral state of mind which can have existence in a human being. No other cause of criminal actions is of equal potency with this. A man in this state of mind has an opinion ready to justify him in any profitable course of villany in which he can engage. How great a proportion of Church-of-England teaching, in pulpits, in schools, and in universities, has this tendency, and no other, is a subject of immense importance. Oh, for a Pascal! Oh, for a new set of Provincial Letters!

We shall pass by the other subdivisions of sermons, and come to the moral. Though a man of the proper stamp, residing among his fellow parishioners, would have other and still more effectual means of making the impressions on their minds which lead to good conduct, we do not dispute that a discourse of the proper kind, delivered to them when assembled on the day of rest, would have happy effects. In the first place, it would establish in their minds pure ideas of the moral character of God; and would root out of them every notion which implies imperfection in the Divine Mind. This is a matter of infinite importance, though neglected, or rather trampled upon by Church-of-England religion; for exactly in proportion as the model which men set up for imitation is perfect or imperfect, will be the performance which takes place in consequence. It is unavailing, it is pure childishness, to call the Almighty benevolent, when you ascribe to him lines of action which are entirely the reverse. It is vain to call him wise, when you represent him as moved by considerations which have weight with only the weakest of men.

We have already seen something of the extent to which the religion of the Church of England tends to imprint the notion of imperfection, both of the moral and intellectual kind, in the character of the Deity. But there is one particular to which we have hardly as yet adverted, which deserves the deepest attention.

We mean the notions propagated about punishments after death.

No wise and good man ever thinks of punishment but as an undesirable means to a desirable end: and therefore to be applied in the smallest quantity possible. To ascribe to the Divine Being the use of punishments in atrocious excess; not applying it according to the rules of the most perfect benevolence, which is its character in the hand of a virtuous man, but in the spirit of revenge, and to vindicate his dignity is to ascribe to him, not the character of a civilized man, but of an atrocious savage. Nor is the excess of future punishments the only point of importance. The uselessness of them also deserves the utmost regard in tracing the ways in which priests, for their own ends, have perverted men's notions of the Divine character. Punishment is employed by virtuous men for the prevention of hurtful actions. But what is the use of punishment when the time of action is gone by, and when the doom of the wretched victim is fixed for ever? It is said that the apprehension of these punishments is a restraint on men during their lives. But to make this allegation is only another mode of ascribing imperfection, both intellectual and moral, to the Supreme Being.

It is a certain and undisputed principle, that proximity of punishment is necessary to its efficiency; that if a punishment is distant, and hence the conception of it faint, it loses proportionally of its force. As it is the great rule of benevolence to be sparing in the use of punishment—that is, to employ it in the smallest possible quantity which will answer the end—it is the constant aim of benevolence to make it as proximate as possible—that is, to make the smallest possible quantity suffice. What would be thought of a legislator, who should ordain, that the punishment of murder and theft should not take place till twenty years, or so, after the commission of the

crime ; and that, for the distance of the time, compensation should be made in the severity of the punishment? Is not this the atrocity into which those theologians sink, who tell us that the punishments of hell are intended for the prevention of evil in the present life? That this theory is not derived from the Scripture, but is the pure forgery of priests, might be inferred with certainty *à priori*, and could also be easily proved by particular evidence. But the authority of Bishop Butler will be sufficient for us on the present occasion. He has given it as his opinion, an opinion which has never been accused as unscriptural, that the change from the present to the future life will not, in all probability, be greater than the change from the state which precedes, to that which follows the birth ; that the individual will pass into the future life with all the dispositions and habits which he had acquired in his previous course, producing misery to him if they are bad, happiness if they are good ; but with this advantage, that the circumstances in which he will be placed will have an irresistible tendency to correct bad habits, and encourage good ones, whence in time it will be brought about, that none but good habits will exist, and happiness will be universal.

Next to the propagation of correct notions regarding the character of the Supreme Being, as the perfection of wisdom and goodness, with warnings against all such notions as imply imperfection in the Divine nature, the object of discourses, calculated to be of real utility to the majority of those who compose congregations, would be, to make, and as deeply as possible, all the impressions which lead to good conduct ; to give strength and constancy to the kindly and generous feelings ; to stimulate the desire of doing good, by showing the value of it, and the amount of good which even a very poor man may effect, in the course of his life, if he seizes the many

little occasions which he will find put in his way; to make understood and felt the value of a good name; how much of the happiness of each individual depends upon the good-will of those among whom he lives; and that the sure way of obtaining it is to show by his acts his good-will to them. Such discourses would put the people on their guard against the misleading affections; would make them understand how much is lost by giving way to them; and with what a preponderance of good, even to ourselves, they are supplanted by those which lead us to rejoice in being the instruments of happiness to others. Above all things, such discourses would make parents clearly understand, and acutely feel, the power they have over the happiness or misery of their children during the whole course of their lives. On the mode of creating in their children the habits on which their happiness depends, such discourses would enter into the most minute detail. They would carefully warn parents against every display of feeling or passion, everything in word, or in action, having a tendency to produce an undesirable impression on the tender mind; and would give them an habitual conviction, and, as it were, a sense of the importance of making none but the right impressions.

It is not necessary to go farther in illustrating what sermons of the useful class would be. It is only necessary to recollect what the moral class of Church of England sermons are. Other people may have been more fortunate than we; but though we have heard a good many of that class, we never heard one which we thought good for anything. They may be characterized as a parcel of vapid commonplaces, delivered in vague and vapouring phrases, having not even a tendency to give men more precise ideas of the good they may do, or to kindle within them a more strong and steady desire of performing it. We have often asked ourselves, after hearing such a ser-

mon, whether any human being could by possibility have received one useful impression from it ; whether any one could have gone away after hearing it a better man than when he came ; in the least degree more alive to the motives to good conduct, more capable of resisting the motives to bad ? Never, in a single instance, do we remember having been able to make an answer in the affirmative. For a confirmation of the opinion we have thus formed of Church of England sermonizing, we appeal to the printed specimens of them, some of which are by men of considerable ability, skilful advocates of a cause, acute and eloquent controvertists, but all of them defective, or rather utterly worthless, in moral teaching.

We have now probably said enough to show how entirely of the ceremonial kind, and ceremonial with more or less of a hurtful tendency, the whole of the Sunday services obligatory on the Church of England clergyman are.

All that remains is the ceremony of baptism, the ceremony of marriage, and the ceremony of burying the dead. These services are so much regarded in the light of ceremonies, that they commonly go by that name.

The Church of England indeed pretends, that baptism washes away original sin ; one of those cherished opinions by which it ascribes weakness, both intellectual and moral, to the Supreme Being. In this opinion it is reprobated by other churches, as retaining one of the errors of the Romish Church. For the rest, it cannot be pretended that it is other than ceremonial. To the infant, who knows nothing about the matter, it would be ridiculous to suppose that any good is done. And what can it be pretended is the good which it does to any other body ? For a full exposure of the Church of England proceedings in respect to baptism, we refer to what is said by Mr Bentham in his Examination of Church of England

Catechism, pp. 47 to 59, where the reader will find both instruction and amusement.

About marriage it is not necessary to say much. It is in its essence a civil contract; and few rational men think that the religious ceremony is of any importance. It is very certain that nobody regards it as any security for the better performance of the duties which the contract implies.

The burial service consists in reading certain portions of Scripture and certain prayers. But to whom can this performance be considered as being of any use? Not certainly to the dead man; and certainly not to any of the living, excepting those who are present. And who are they? Hardly anybody; some half-dozen of the dead man's nearest connexions being excepted. If the ceremony were believed to be of any use to those who witness the performance of it, means ought to have been employed to bring the people together for that purpose. No such means have ever been thought of. What does that declare? One of two things. Either that the Church of England clergy are utterly indifferent to the good which the witnessing of it is calculated to produce; or that they do not believe it is calculated to do any good at all.

We have thus examined in some detail the duties which are exacted of the Church of England clergy, and the only duties which they can be really considered as performing. The duties, the enforcement of which is left to conscience, to the desire of doing good, in the breast of the individual, are for the most part neglected, and never otherwise than ill performed. We are far from denying that there are good men among the working clergy of the Church of England, notwithstanding the obstruction to goodness which their situation creates: men who reside among their parishioners, go about among them, and take pains to do them good. But these are the small number;

and they never act systematically and upon a well-digested plan. They are left, unguided, to follow their own impulses; and often a great part of their well-meant endeavours is thrown away. They receive no instruction in the art of doing good. This is no part of Church of England education. Yet it is an art towards the perfection of which instruction is of first-rate importance. Few men are aware of the whole extent of their means in that respect; and still fewer judge accurately in what applications of their means they will prove the most productive. It follows, as a necessary consequence, that the amount of good which a well-intentioned man produces is often very short of what, if better directed, he would have been able to effect.

Thus employed, and thus paid, is it any wonder that the Church of England clergy should have lost their influence among a people improving, now at last improving rapidly, in knowledge and intelligence? And when a clergy have lost their influence, what is the use of them? The evidence of their total loss of influence is very striking, when it is fairly looked at and considered. The first fact is the notorious one, that one-half of the population have renounced them as utterly unfit to be their religious guides, and have chosen others of their own. This fact speaks inferences far beyond the numerical proportions. The Dissenters afford evidence of their being in earnest about their religion. The Established Church is the natural sink of all those who are indifferent about it, and belong to a church for the sake of the name, as long as there is anything to be got by it. To this number may be added all those whose lives are too scandalous to let them be admitted into any other Christian society. Now, if we say that not more than every other man in a community is in earnest about religion, we shall not perhaps be considered as making a very unreasonable supposition.

But if this be anything like an approximation to the fact, the members of the Church of England are almost wholly men who adhere to it either for the sake of the name, or for the good things which they owe to it, with a small proportion indeed of those in whose adherence to it regard for religion has anything to do. The Church of England therefore exists in no other character than that of a state engine; a ready and ever-willing instrument in the hands of those who desire to monopolize the powers of government—that is, to hold them for the purpose of abusing them.

It is useful to mark, among the proofs that the Church of England exists for no good purpose, that those of the common people who brutalize themselves with intoxicating liquors belong almost wholly to the Church of England sect. A Dissenter is rarely a notorious drunkard, with whatever other sins he may be tainted. The costermongers are never Dissenters. It would be important to put means in operation to show what proportion of the people convicted of crime are Churchmen, and what Dissenters. Our conjecture would be, that nine in ten at least are of the Church of England. It would be easy to ascertain what proportion of parish paupers are Church of England men, and what Dissenters. And that, too, would be no insignificant article of evidence.

Though such, however, is the light in which the Church of England, in its present state, must appear to every intelligent and honest inquirer, we know what a clamor will be raised against us for expressing our opinion, by all those who derive their profit from what is evil in things as they are; who are therefore attached to the evil, and bitterly hostile to all who seek to expose it. With the reasonable and the sincere, we need no other protection than the evidence we adduce. With others, it may have some effect, to show them what eminent men before us have said of the clergy, and of the inevitable effect of the position in which they are placed, by a viciously constructed establishment.

Dr Middleton, one of the greatest men whom the Church of England ever produced, has spoken of one of the most deplorable of the effects of their position, their hostility to the interests of truth, in the following terms:—

“Every man’s experience will furnish instances of the wretched fruits of this zeal, in the bigoted, vicious, and ignorant part, both of the clergy and the laity; who, puffed up with the pride of an imaginary orthodoxy, and detesting all free inquiry, as dangerous to their case, and sure to expose their ignorance, take pleasure in defaming and insulting men of candor, learning, and probity, who happen to be touched with any scruples, or charged with any opinions which they call heretical.”*

One of the most respectable names to be found in the list of Church of England clergy is Jeremy Taylor. He speaks to the same effect, in the following terms:—

“Possibly men may be angry at me, and my design; for I do all them great displeasure, who think no end is then well served, when their interest is disserved.” †

“Opinions are called heresies, upon interest, and the grounds of emoluments.” ‡

“Our opinions commence and are upheld, according as our turns are served and our interests are preserved.” §

To return again to Middleton, who saw this malignant disease of the Church of England with peculiar clearness:—

“I do not know how to account for that virulence of zeal, with which it [the Free Inquiry] is opposed by those writers, but by imputing it to their prejudices or habitual bigotry, or to some motives especially of interest; which, of course, bars all entrance to opinions, though ever so probable, if not stamped by an authority which can sweeten them with rewards.” ||

Nothing is of more importance than the repeated, and earnest, consideration of the fact, that the interest of a

* ‘Middleton’s Works,’ 4to ed., vol. ii. p. 117.

† ‘Liberty of Prophesying.’ Epist. Ded. ‡ Ib. § Ib. Introd.

|| ‘Preface to an Intended Answer to all Objections against the Free Inquiry.’ Works, 4to ed., p. 374; where there is much more to the same purpose.

clergy, in the circumstances in which the Church of England clergy are placed, is in direct opposition to their duty, and makes them sworn enemies of the good of their fellow creatures. They are hired, for the purpose of propagating a certain set of opinions. They are sworn to retain them: that is, to keep their minds stationary in at least one department of thought. And it is curious to observe how far that creates a motive to exert themselves to keep the minds of other men stationary, not in that department only, but in all the departments of thought; to make the clergy the enemies of all improvement of the human mind. If one set of men stand still in this improvement, while other men go on, these men see that they will soon become objects of contempt. They are sworn to stand still; they, therefore, detest all those who go on, and exert themselves to impede their progress, and to discredit their design.

This motive has a cruel extent of operation. To be bound to stand still, in any line of mental improvement, is a state of great degradation. The progress of other men in knowledge gives them a keener sense of this degradation. The clergy therefore perceive, that, in proportion as other men grow wiser, they will sink deeper in contempt. This gives them a hatred of the pursuit of knowledge. The search of truth bodes them evil, and not good; and therefore all their art is employed to prevent it.

We think, however, that by changes—far from violent, the Church of England might be converted from an instrument of evil into an instrument of much good; and to the consideration of this part of the subject we now proceed.

We consider a local clergy, distributed everywhere among the people, as the fundamental part of an institute really intended for moulding the character of the people, and shaping their actions, according to the spirit of pure religion. The question then is, what is required towards obtaining in greatest amount the beneficial

services capable of being derived from such a set of men. —The very first particular which comes to be noticed, shows in what a different spirit from that of good to the people everything relating to the Church of England has been arranged. It is very clear, that in employing men to the best advantage in any sort of service, each individual should have enough to do, and not more than enough. This care has been wholly renounced by Church of Englandism, which exhibits the most enormous disproportions; in one place, parishes far too large for any individual to manage; in other places so small, that a man has little to do in them. A good establishment would correct this abominable instance of careless and profligate management.

Next, the men who are to direct the people in the right path, and make them walk in it as diligently as possible, should be men capable of doing their work well: that is, they should, at least, be men of good education and good character. To this end, it is absolutely necessary that they should receive sufficient pay, to be an inducement to men of that description to undertake the duties. There is evidence enough to prove that this need not be high. We do not adduce the curates; because the baneful lottery of the over-paid places in the Church draws into it too great a number of adventurers. But the medical men, of whom one is to be found in every considerable village, afford evidence to the point, and that conclusive. Besides, the situation would be one of great consideration and dignity, as soon as it came to be regarded as a source of great utility; and men with property of their own would be desirous of filling it. The situation of judges in France is strong evidence to this point. The pay is so small, that the wonder of Englishmen always is, how anybody can be found to accept the situation; yet the fact is, that it is in request; and the problem is solved, by learning that men, having a moderate property of their own, covet the dignity which the office confers.

Thus far we have proceeded with no difficulty, and with very little room for doubt; but having determined the sort of men we ought to have, we come next to the question by whom, in each instance, ought they to be appointed. Three considerations obviously entered into the solution of this question—the best means of securing honesty in the selection—the best means of giving satisfaction to the parishioners, without incurring the evils of a mistaken choice—the not giving too much power to one individual. The best chance, perhaps, for having honesty and intelligence in the selection, would be to have a Minister of Public Instruction, by whom all the appointments should be made. He would act under a stronger sense of responsibility, conspicuously placed, as he would be, under the eye of the public, than any other man; and in the majority of cases, would not have any interest in acting wrong. But this would be a great amount of patronage, possibly too great to exist without danger in any single hand; and it is not easy to find an unexceptionable mode of distribution. Suppose the patronage were in each county given to the principal civil authority in the county, he would be exposed to all the local influences which are known to be so adverse to the virtuous use of patronage; and acting in a corner with very little of the salutary influence of publicity, where the choice was not made by favouritism, it would be very apt to be made in negligence.

Suppose, however, that this difficulty is got over (it would interrupt us too much at present to show that it is not insurmountable), we may assume, that where provision is made for the appointment of a fit minister in every parish, complete provision is made for the religious instruction and guidance of the people—provided we can depend upon the due discharge of the duties which those ministers are appointed to perform. It has, however, been generally believed, that the due discharge of the duties of the parochial ministers cannot be depended upon without superintendence. A question then arises, what

is the best contrivance for the superintendence of a parochial clergy?

Two methods have been thought of, and are at the present hour in operation; the one is, superintendence by individual clergymen; the other is, superintendence by assemblies, in which clergy and laity are combined. One question is, which of these two methods is the best? and another question is, whether there may not be a third, which is better than either?

The two methods which are now in practice are exemplified respectively in the churches of England and Scotland. In England the scheme of superintendence by individuals has been tried, in Scotland that of superintendence by assemblies.

If we were to judge by the event, in these two instances, the question would be decided very rapidly. The Scottish system is proved by experience to have answered, and not very imperfectly, its end, while it occasions no expense whatsoever. The English system is at once disgracefully expensive, and totally inefficient to its end: it is an absolute failure, with an enormous burden to the nation.

We hardly suppose that the proposition we have thus announced respecting those two churches will be disputed in regard to either. The general good conduct of the Scottish clergy, and the absence of flagrant abuses in that church, is matter of notoriety. The lamentable want of good conduct, though not universal, among the English clergy, and the existence of enormous abuses in their church, is matter of not less notoriety. There is no non-residence in Scotland, and no pluralities. Would such things have ever begun to exist in England, if the superintendence by bishops had been good for anything? The proportional amount of Dissenterism in Scotland is small, compared with what it is in England; and has arisen almost wholly from the people's dislike of patronage—a matter over which the clergy had no control, and of which the consequences are not to be imputed

to them. There is nothing of the sort to screen the English clergy; and the enormous extent of Dissenterism in England is evidence—is *proof, invincible proof*—that the clergy have not done their duty.

It is not, however, safe to ground a general conclusion upon individual instances, unless where the reason—the *rationale* of the instances, applies to other cases. With respect to superintendence by individuals, the mode of it adopted in England is so glaringly absurd, so little reference has it to any rational purpose, that it never can have been intended to be an instrument of good—to be a means of obtaining from the local clergy the greatest amount of useful service to the people at large. The pay alone is perfect evidence to that effect. Who ever thinks of getting laborious service from a man on whom is bestowed an enormous income, which incessantly invites him to the enjoyment of voluptuous indolence, without any efficient call for exertion? Nor is this the only baneful effect of these enormous incomes: they created a line of separation between the superintending and the superintended clergy. They constituted them two castes; and well is it known how their conduct has conformed itself to the distinction. A principle of repulsion was created between them: often enough, it is true, commuted for prostitute servility on the part of the lower caste; and thus morality, by Church of England culture, was propagated and flourished. There could rarely be any cordial communication between two classes of men placed in such relation to one another. No bishop has an intimate knowledge of the character or turn of mind of any, except an accidental individual or two, among those whom he superintends. He does not go about into the several parishes, to see and inquire how the clerical duties are performed; he knows nothing at all about the matter, unless some extraordinary instance of misconduct, which makes all the country ring, should come to his ears.

Nor could it be otherwise. Natural causes produce

their natural effects. A bishop was intended to be a great lord: of course he would be governed by the impulses which govern other great lords. Not one of these impulses is to go about parishes, seeing whether clergymen have been as effectual as they might, in training the people under their tuition to bring their children up well.

The very pretext of any such duty as this is absurd, when we recollect that these reverend lords have to be absent from their business of superintendence of their clergy for one full half of their time, by attendance on their *duties* (so by an abuse of language they are called) in Parliament.

As we have seen how it is with the ordinary clergy of the Church of England—that of the two classes of their duties, one the ceremonial, another the useful, it is the ceremonial only which means are used to make them perform—the useful are left to themselves to perform, or not perform, as they please; so it is exactly with the bishops. There are certain ceremonies they have to go through: these are obligatory on them. The duty of vigilantly looking after their clergy—of using means to get them to do whatever it is in their power to do, to make their people more virtuous and more happy—is left to the bishops to do, or not do, as they please; and accordingly it never is done—at least, to any purpose: by the greater part of them it is never thought of.

But it does not follow, because the plan of superintendence by individuals was so ill-constructed by the Church of England as to make it a source of evil and not of good, that therefore it is in itself, and radically, bad. We are inclined to think that it is radically good, and might be so contrived as to be superior to the Scottish method.

We do not think that an assembly is well fitted for minute inspection; and that is the only inspection which is sure of answering its end. An assembly cannot go about visiting parishes, and ascertaining on the spot

where the clergyman has been to the greatest degree, where to the lowest degree, useful to his parishioners.

But if we are to employ individual inspectors (the name bishop means inspector) by what scheme is the greatest amount of good to be obtained from them?

One thing is perfectly clear: you must not over-pay them. An inspector, to be useful, must be a hard-working man: that a very rich man never is. This is an established rule, though it does not altogether exclude exceptions. They should be paid higher than the parochial clergy, because they should be men of such high character and attainments as might give weight to their decisions. Still the business of an inspecting priest is so much of the same kind with the business of a parochial priest, that the pay of the one should be a sort of criterion by which to regulate that of the other. If the highest pay of a parish priest were, say, 500*l.* per annum, we think 1,000*l.* per annum should be the highest pay of an inspector; for we allow no weight whatsoever to the pretence which is set up with characteristic impudence by the friends of public plunder, that wealth gives efficiency to superintendence. It does no such thing. A man will pull off his hat with more hurry, will bend his body lower, will speak in a softer tone, before the man of great wealth; but he will not trouble himself to do his bidding one atom the more for his riches. Is any man so nearly deprived of intellect as still, though grown to be a man, to need evidence on this point? Let him see how the rich are served, even in their own houses. Are they better served than those among us whose riches are less? Do we not know that the men best served in their houses are not the richest, but the most sensible men?

There is another thing to be regarded in the matter of pay, which, though it appear small intrinsically, is great by its mode of operation on the human mind. It is infinitely better that the clergy should be paid in the way of salary than in the way of estate. Between the

idea of salary, and the idea of service to be performed for it, the association is close and strong. Between the idea of living on the proceeds of an estate, and the idea of having nothing to do, the association is equally powerful. And so it must be. In all our experience, we regularly observe that salary and service go together. We see that commonly estate and service have no connexion. Hence it comes, that a man who lives upon an estate seems to himself to share in the common privilege of those who live upon estates; that is, to enjoy himself. No man who has studied the human mind will doubt that this is a matter of the greatest importance. If the Church of England clergy had always been paid by salary, we may be assured they would not have sunk into the state of absolute uselessness in which we now behold them.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the scheme of paying the clergy by that particular kind of estate called tithe, because people now pretty well understand it. Of all conceivable schemes for setting the interest and the duties of the clergy in direct opposition, this is the most perfect. And it makes a fearful revelation. It proves, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the clergy, and all those who through so long a series of ages have had in their hands the power of regulating the payment of the clergy, have been void even of the desire that the clergy should be useful. Oh, what an odious thing is the pretence of caring for religion in the mouths of such men! Contrast an establishment of men whose business it would be to go about their parishes, planting themselves in the hearts of their people, and working upon their minds to the performing of all good actions, and the acquiring of all good habits, with an establishment of men who go about their parishes, indeed, but go about raping and rending, demanding what others are unwilling to pay, carrying strife and hatred along with them, looked at by their people in the light of enemies, not of friends, the very sight of whom is odious, and in whose mouths advice to their parishioners to be

mutually forbearing and helpful could only be treated with ridicule; and say if the imagination of man can present any two things of a more opposite character. Reflect also deliberately who the men are who have so long strained their lungs, and now do, proclaiming that this church is "most excellent." What a help-meet it must have been for misrule to earn all the protection which it has received! That on any other score it has deserved it, there is hardly impudence enough in the world now to pretend.

But if it were determined that good inspection and stimulation were more to be expected from individual superintendents, properly paid and employed, than from assemblies, another question would remain to be answered: whether these inspectors should be clergymen or laymen? There are some reasons for thinking that laymen would be the best. They would be less under the influence of that feeling which men of a class commonly contract, and which makes them willing to favour one another, to make them sympathize with their self-indulgences, and to screen their neglects. If it be surmised that such men would be less acquainted than clergymen with the supposed science of the theologians, we answer, that if it were so, and it is by no means necessary that it should be so, for that science is easily learned, it would not, upon our scheme, be a matter of much importance. For we do not mean that our parochial clergy should trouble their parishioners with dogmas. Their business will be to train them in the habits of a good life; and what is necessary to that will be judged of fully as well by a layman as by a clergyman.

We have now supposed, that a well-selected person from the class of educated men has been placed as the minister of religion in every conveniently-sized district, called a parish. This we consider as the fundamental part of a religious establishment. We have next supposed that a well-selected person from the class of men of superior acquirements and intelligence has been

appointed the inspector and superintendent of a convenient number of clergymen everywhere throughout the country. We have also spoken a little of the duties of each, but it is necessary to speak somewhat more in detail.

In the first place, it is a fundamental part of our scheme, that a clergy, paid by the state, should, in their instruction of the people, abstain entirely from the inculcation of dogmas. The reasons are conclusive. They cannot inculcate dogmas without attaching undue importance to uniformity of belief in doubtful matters; that is, classing men as good or bad on account of things which have no connexion with good conduct; that is, without derogating from morality, and lessening its influence on the minds of men.

They cannot inculcate dogmas—at least they never do—without attaching merit, and the rewards which belong to it, to belief on one side of a question; that is, without suborning belief, using means to make it exist independently of evidence; that is, to make men hold opinions without seeing that they are true—in other words, to affirm that they know to be true what they do not know to be true; that is, if we may give to the act its proper name—to lie. But a clergy, paid for teaching the people to live well, should assuredly not do what has a tendency to make them habitual liars.

To preach the importance of dogmas, is to teach men to impute imperfection to the Divine nature. It is according to the perfections of the Divine nature to approve in his rational creatures the love of truth. But the love of truth leads a man to search for evidence, and to place his belief on that side, whatsoever it be, on which the evidence appears to him to preponderate. The clergyman who tells him that God likes best belief on one side, declares to him that God does not like the honest search of truth. Oh God! with what perseverance and zeal has this representation of thy Divine nature been maintained, by men who, with the same

breath, and therefore in the spirit of base adulation, were calling thee the God of truth!

Upon this ground it surely is proper to interdict the use of articles. The Articles of the Church of England are a set of propositions, the strangeness of which we shall not dilate upon. That, and the history of them, are both pretty well known. The clergy of the Church of England subscribe them as propositions which they are bound to believe. Anything more fraught with injury to the intellectual and moral parts of man's nature cannot be conceived. This is to make men enemies to truth.

We shall not repeat, what we have so immediately said, and what we are sure must make a deep impression on every untainted mind, on the atrocity of giving men inducements to make a belief, which they have not derived from evidence. The subscription of articles goes beyond this. It vouches for future belief. It is a bond, that the individual subscribing shall for ever after set his mind against the admission of evidence; that is, resist the entrance of truth: in other words, make war upon it, in the only way in which war upon truth is capable of being made.

It is a deplorable fact,—which deserves the most profound attention, though hitherto it has not received it,—that the creation of effectual motives to the hatred of truth in one department, creates effectual motives to the hatred of it generally. We have touched upon this point already. But it deserves further development; for it stands first in point of importance.

The man who is reduced to the degraded condition of resisting truth, lives under the painful assurance that he will be held to be a degraded being, by every man who sets a high value on truth, and is eager in the pursuit of it. The pursuit of truth brings thus along with it a consequence most painful to him. He therefore dislikes it. He would prevent it, if he could; and he is stimulated to do all that he can to prevent it. If the love

and pursuit of truth should become general, he sees clearly that he must become an object of general contempt. What a motive is this to him to prevent its becoming general; to smother it in the very birth, if he can!—See in what perfect obedience to this impulse the Church of England has always acted! Above all, explore minutely the cruel ways in which, to this end, it has abused its power over the business of education! The whole bent of its tuition is to make its pupils acquiesce slavishly in a parcel of traditional dogmas, and instead of awakening the desire of farther progress, to frighten them at the idea of it; training them to regard it as a source of boundless evil; and all those who pursue it, as villains, aiming at the destruction of whatever is valuable among mankind.

They have thus been constituted the enemies of their species. The advance of mankind in happiness has, by a nefarious constitution of their church, been made a source of evil to them. And they have been, as it was certain they would be, its strenuous, and, to a deplorable extent, we must add, its successful opponents.

The steadiness with which the priests of this establishment have persevered in this course, is a point of great interest in their history, and should be carefully set to view. The barefacedness with which it is professed, up to the present hour, and by some of the most respectable among them, amounts to a striking phenomenon. They even reprobate Locke, the cautious, the modest, the sober-minded Locke, for that which is even *his* greatest distinction, the trusting to evidence; the seeking after truth; the desiring to know something beyond the traditional propositions of others; the taking the only course which leads to the advancement of human knowledge, the improvement of the human mind, the progress of the race in happiness and virtue. Listen to what Copleston, then Head of a House, afterwards bishop, and peer of parliament, thought it not disgraceful to him to say a few years ago. "His" (Locke's)

“own opinions would have been entitled to greater respect,” (observe for what) “if he had himself treated with more respect the opinions of those who had gone before him,” (opinions, you see, are entitled to respect, not on account of the truth of them, but something else) “and the practice of sensible men of his own time, whose judgment was worth more, in proportion as it was confirmed by experience.”—Locke misbehaved, you see, by seeking for evidence, and yielding to it when found. Had he disregarded evidence, that is truth, and taken passively the opinions given to him, he would have merited the praise of Church of England priests; by taking the course he did, no wonder he has been always unpopular among them. “The light freedom, indeed, and the confidence with which this philosopher attacks all established notions, is one of the principal blemishes in his character.”—Is not this *instar omnium*? That is one of the principal blemishes in the character of one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived—so says Church of Englandism—which alone enabled him to do any good; namely, calling for evidence, marking where he did not find it, but only some man’s *ipse dixit* instead, and then proceeding honestly in search of it himself! Good God! what sort of a place of education is it, where such a course is held up, not for imitation, but reprobation?

There is not a finer specimen of the arts of the clergy than their new-born zeal for the religious education of the children of the poor. The religious education of the children of the poor is not among the objects of the Church of England; there is no provision for it in that establishment; it was never a practice. Though the most eminently religious of all the possible functions of a minister of religion, a clergyman of the Church of England as little thought it belonged to him, as to make shoes for the children of his parishioners. Till the other day, there was in England no education for the children of the poor. They were absolutely uneducated,

in religion, as in every thing else. During all the ages in which this state of things continued, the clergy saw no occasion for this religious education they are now so hot about. It is only when education in general, that is knowledge, begins to be, that they think education in religion is required. Non-education in religion was not an evil, when in union with ignorance; in union with knowledge it becomes direful.—Can any body need help, in reading this passage of clergy?

So long as the people were in gross ignorance, their servility to their priests was to be depended upon. The moment light began to dawn upon them, it was, it seems, not to be expected, unless particular artifice was used. An expedient was fallen upon—that of clamouring for the union of religious education with other education.

This, in the first place, was a great impediment to education. It rendered it impossible for the children of people of different sects to be educated together. This was a capital stroke. It rendered the education of the people much more expensive, therefore much less likely to be carried into effect. It had other important consequences. It made all those benevolent individuals, whose partialities ran towards the Church, place the funds which they were disposed to contribute towards the education of the poor under the control of the Church, which was skilled in the art of giving education without instruction. From the evidence extracted by the committee of the House of Commons on Education, last year,* it appears, that their endeavours in the National Schools are remarkable specimens of that art. They thus made sure of having all the children of those who nominally belong to the church in their own hands; and all the security against the desire of knowledge which education without instruction can yield.

The hollowness of the pretence is further seen in this, that all the education in religion which for ages the clergy thought necessary for the children of the poor,

* The year 1834

was only to make them able to repeat a few questions of the Catechism, before confirmation; and surely this it would not be difficult to attain, if they were educated in schools for all. What should hinder the parson of the parish (it is his business if anything be), to assemble the children of his flock as often as needful, for the purpose of imparting to them much more religious instruction than this? That the clergy are not in earnest in their talk about the necessity of schooling in religion, is manifest from this, that they have done nothing to have it given. They have made use of the cry solely for the purpose of making schooling difficult. But where is the parson of the parish who takes the trouble to instruct the children of his parishioners in religion? Where is there one ordinance of the bishops rendering it imperative upon their clergy to fulfil the great duty of administering religious instruction to the young? The whole thing is a farce.

Having thus seen the importance of relieving the parochial ministers of religion from all concern with dogmas, we come to another question of no small importance, whether their labours of love should not also be relieved from the incumbrance of ceremonies?

The example of our Saviour shows, that in certain circumstances they cannot be dispensed with; that where the human mind is spell-bound in old habits, you cannot obtain access to it except through the medium of some of these habits.

We persuade ourselves, however, that we have attained in this country such a degree of advancement, notwithstanding the efforts of the Church of England to prevent it, that we may dispense with the performance of ceremonies on the part of those ministers of religion whom the state appoints for the pure purpose of making the people conform to the designs of a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness.

The importance would be immense of constituting a church without dogmas and ceremonies. It would be

truly a catholic church. Its ministers would be ministers of good, in the highest of all senses of the word, to men of all religious denominations. All would share in the religious services of such a church, and all would share in the blessings which would result from them. This is the true idea of a State religion ; and there is no other. It ought to be stripped of all which is separating ; of all that divides men from one another ; and to present a point whereon, in the true spirit of reverence to the perfect being, and love to one another, they may all unite. So long as there are men who think dogmas and ceremonies a necessary part of religion, those who agree about such dogmas and ceremonies may have their separate and respective institutions of their own providing, for their inculcation and performance. But this is extraneous to the provisions which alone it is proper for the State to make, and which ought to be so contrived as to embrace, if it were possible, the whole population.

This, the scheme of which we have been endeavouring to convey the idea, we think, would effect. There is no class of Christians, who could not join in the labours of love of one who was going about continually doing good ; whose more solemn addresses to his assembled parishioners would never have any other object than to assimilate them more and more in heart and mind to Him who is the author of all good, and the perfection of wisdom and benevolence. Men could not long attend a worship of this description, worship of the perfect being, by acts of goodness, without acquiring attachment to it, and learning by degrees that it is the one thing needful. All would belong to this church ; and after a short time would belong to no other. Familiarized with the true worship of the Divine Being, they would throw off the pseudo worship, dogmas and ceremonies. This is the true plan for converting Dissenters. There would be no schism, if men had nothing to scind about.

If the ministers of the Established Church had

nothing to do with dogmas, and nothing to do with ceremonies, how would we have them employed ?

We have already expressed the general idea of their employment. It would be assiduous endeavour to make all the impressions on the minds of their parishioners which conduce to good conduct ; not merely negative, in abstaining from ill ; but positive, in doing all the good to one another which the means put in their power enable them to do.

It is very evident, that rules for the making of those all-important impressions cannot be given. General rules would be too vague to be of any use ; and the variety of differing cases is so great, that it can only be met by the resources of zeal and discretion in the daily intercourse between the minister and the individuals of his flock. There are, however, certain things which may be assumed as tests, in each instance, of the manner in which the duties of the parochial minister are performed, and which afford a guide to the manner in which stimulants may be applied to him.

For example ; we would give annual premiums to those ministers in whose parishes certain favourable results were manifested—in whose parishes there was the smallest number of crimes committed within the year—in whose parishes there was the smallest number of law-suits—in whose parishes there was the smallest number of paupers—in whose parishes there was the smallest number of uneducated children—in whose parishes the reading-rooms were best attended, and supplied with the most instructive books. We mention these as specimens. If there were any other results of the same kind, of which the evidence could be made equally certain, there would be good reason for including them in the same provision. In this manner, would pretty decisive evidence be obtained of the comparative prevalence of good conduct in the different parishes, and a motive of some importance would be applied to the obtaining of it.

We think that infinite advantage might be derived

from the day of rest, if real Christian consideration, exempt from all superstitious feelings, by which the clergy have hitherto converted it to their own use, were applied to it.

We think it of great importance, that all the families of a parish should be got to assemble on the Sunday—clean, and so dressed, as to make a favourable appearance in the eyes of one another. This alone is ameliorating.

An address delivered to these assembled neighbours, by their common friend and benefactor, on their means of lessening the evils, and ensuring the happiness of one another. the motives they have to this conduct, its harmony with the laws of that benevolent Being of whom our lives are the gift, and who has made the connexion between our own happiness and the aid we afford to the happiness of others inseparable—would come powerfully in aid of all the other means employed to make salutary impressions on their minds.

When the parishioners are assembled, it is of importance to consider in what other ways the meeting can be turned to advantage.

One thing is very obvious : the opportunity would be favourable of doing something to add to their education. As often as the means were available, useful lectures on various branches of art and science might be delivered to them. Of what importance would it be to the numerous classes of workmen who make use of tools, to be made acquainted, in a general way, with the mechanical powers. What interest might be excited by chemical experiments ; and what benefit derived from the knowledge of the composition and decomposition of bodies, which that science imparts. The science of botany, to all those whose employment is in the fields, and to the females whose monotonous lives are confined to their cottages, would afford a great source of interest and delight. Why should not even the wonders of the distant world—the magnitude and laws of the celestial bodies,

be laid open to their minds? It will not be disputed that lectures on the art of preserving the health, pointing out the mistakes which ignorant people commit in the physical management, both of themselves and their children, and both the preventive and curative means which they might employ, would be of infinite importance to them.

It is impossible to estimate too highly the benefit which would be derived from good lectures to those parochial assemblies on the education of their children: not merely in sending them to school, and getting them taught to read and write, but in moulding their tempers; in making them gentle, moderate, forbearing, kind, and deeply impressed with the importance to themselves of habits of industry and frugality.

Not merely the mode of conducting themselves towards their children—the mode of conducting themselves towards their servants is an important topic. On the right and the wrong in this matter, in which the grossest errors are habitually committed, good teaching would be of the greatest utility. Even in the mode of training and conducting their beasts, there is great good to be done by proper instruction—in order to habituate them to the thought that gentleness is more effectual than cruelty—that when the animal disappoints our expectation, it is not by design, but by its not knowing what we desire, and that beating it for it knows not what, is no means of correction to the animal, but fuel to one of the worst of our own distempers—the disposition to inflict evil upon whatsoever or whosoever is the cause of immediate annoyance to ourselves. No man practises ferocity towards animals who would not, with a little more temptation, practise it towards his fellow-men; and this is a propensity which may be effectually rooted out.

There are even branches of political science, in which it would be of importance that the people should receive instruction in their weekly assemblies. They cannot, for example, be too completely made to understand the

laws which determine the rate of wages—from ignorance of which rise most of their contentions with their masters, as well as the other evils which they endure. Indeed, a knowledge of the laws of nature, by operation of which the annual produce of the labour of the community is distributed, is the best of all modes of reconciling them to that inequality of distribution which they see takes place, and which there are people ignorant or wicked enough to tell them, is all in violation of their rights, because it is by their labour that everything is produced.

We go farther: we say there is no branch of political knowledge which ought not to be carefully taught to the people in their parochial assemblies on the day of rest. If it be an established maxim of reason, that there is no security for the good use of the powers of government, but through the check imposed upon it by the representatives of the people, and no security that the representatives will duly apply that check, unless the people make them, by a right use of the power of choosing and dismissing them, it is evident how necessary a condition of good government it is that political knowledge should be diffused among the people.

And the elements of the politics are not abstruse. There is nothing in them above the comprehension of a sensible man of the most numerous class. They relate to nothing but the common-sense means for the attainment of a common-sense object—the means of compelling those in whose hands the powers of government are placed, to make the best use of them. Questions, no doubt, arise in the exercise of those powers, which are exceedingly difficult, and require the highest measure of knowledge and understanding rightly to determine them: the question of war for example. The decision whether the known calamities of war, or the evils threatened by the unchecked proceedings of another state, are, in any instance, the greatest, may require the most extensive range of knowledge, and the utmost skill

and sagacity in placing the exact value on the causes of future events.

Even the elements of jurisprudence might be taught to the people with great advantage in their Sunday meetings. The art and science of protection might be opened up to them in a manner which they would find in the highest degree interesting. How usefully might they be made to perceive that to them, above all others, it is the most necessary? The rich man can always do a great deal for his own protection. The poor man—unless the means of many, combined with art, are applied to protect him—is totally deprived of it. The institution of laws and tribunals is that combination; and the essence of them it is not difficult to unfold. To protect a man in the use of what is his own, the means must be provided of determining what is his own—that is, a civil code must be constructed. To prevent violations of what the law has declared to be a man's own—that is, declared to be his rights—the law must determine what acts shall be considered violations of them, and what penalty shall be annexed to each: that is, a criminal code must be made. This is all plain; and the development of it would convey, even to the common people, the most useful ideas.

The necessity of a third party, to settle disputes, and afford redress of wrongs, is a maxim of common sense, familiar to all. This is the establishment of courts of justice; and the discussion of that subject is merely the inquiry, by the instrumentality of what means can the settlement of questions of right, and the redress of wrongs, be most effectually and cheaply accomplished. Not only is there nothing abstruse in this development—it is a subject, the discussion of which, as coming home to their businesses and bosoms, is calculated to excite the most lively interest, and exceedingly to improve their minds.

So much, then, for the serious matters with which the minds of the people might be usefully engaged in

their parochial meetings on the day of rest. But further than this, it is well known to those who have made the principles of human nature their study, that few things tend more effectually to make impressions on the minds of men, favourable to kindness, to generosity, to feeling joy with the joys, sorrow with the sorrows of others; from which the disposition to mutual helpfulness mainly proceeds,—than their being habituated to rejoice together—to partake of pleasures in common. Upon this principle it is that the amusements of the common people are looked upon by philosophical minds as a matter of grave importance. We think that social amusements, of which the tendency would be ameliorating with respect to the people, might be invented for the parochial meetings. They should be of a gentle character; harmonizing rather with the moderate, than the violent emotions; promoting cheerfulness not profuse merriment. We can enter but a very little way into the details of this subject. When the time shall come for thinking of it seriously, it will deserve a very careful and minute consideration.

If there were as many people in earnest about religion as there are who pretend to be; if there were as many imbued and animated with the spirit of true religion, as there are besotted with dogmas and ceremonies, all the difficulties which present themselves would be overcome. Have not those who were interested in the work got men to submit to whatever was most repugnant to their nature and feelings? to fall in love with propositions incredible? to practice tiresome, and endless, and often painful tricks, in supposed service of the Deity, which sink the performers of them to the level of monkeys? And can we despair if similar pains were taken, of getting them to do what, at every step, would be delightful, and from which they would derive the greatest of all conceivable pleasures, the consciousness, the heart-felt assurance, of rising higher and higher in the scale of virtue and intelligence every day! Assuredly, the best means of carry-

ing on the moral culture of the people will not speedily present themselves to the people, if they are not aided; and if the influence of those whom they are always ready to follow is not employed to put them in the right path, and urge them forward in it to a certain extent. But for the accomplishment of all this, we should rely much on the efforts of such a class of parochial ministers as we have just been describing; who might be truly styled the servants of God, and the friends of man; who would do much, by their own influence, and much, by stimulating men of station, and wealth to employ their influence in the same beneficent direction.

P. Q.

