FARTHER THOUGHTS

ON THE NATURE OF THE

GRAND APOSTACY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES,

Foretold by the Apoſtles:

WITH

OBSERVATIONS on the LAWS againſt HERESY,

THE SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES
OF HUMAN COMPOSITION,

AND

OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE UTMOST
IMPORTANCE

TO THE

RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS,

And to Chriſtianity in general.

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Chriſtianity.

If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Diſciples indeed: and ye ſhall know the Truth; and the Truth ſhall make you free. JOHN viii. 32.

Stand faſt in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST *hath made us free; and be not entangled again in the Yoke of Bondage.* GAL. v. 1.

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IT has always been my desire to see Religion treated as a Rational Consistent thing, free from all absurdity or folly—The Religion of Nature is capable of the strictest Evidence; and therefore *that* is never to be deviated from or given up. The Religion of Christ, as it lies in the New Testament, is perfectly agreeable to, and consistent with, what Natural Religion teacheth; and so it will always be found by them that examine into its Truth with Sincerity. Sykes's Preface to the 2d Edition of his Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion.

Ea est constans Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ & omnium Evangelicorum opinio; S. Scripturam regulam perfectam satisque perspicuam continere; ex qua omnes Fidei articuli creditu necessarii, omnes que morum Regulæ ad salutem obtinendam requisitæ dignoscantur. Hanc normam qui destruit, aut huic saluti obtinendæ minus idoneam reddit, eo ipso Fidei nostræ fundamentum subruit & protinus evertit. Whitby Examen Var. Lec. Jo. Mill. Præfat.

ERRATA.

Page	Line	
17	18	for office, read offspring.
22	20	r. lain heavy.
39	4	r. proſecution.
44	23	r. Paſſalorynchites.
48		note (*i*) r. aut for at.
78		note, r. the Confeſſional.
87	16	r. 29th of.
90	6	dele into.
—	7	r. Eccleſiaſtical.
92	22	r. gone on.
94	23	r. encourage and diſcourage.
108	1	for them, r. him.
118	6	r. UNIVERSALITY.
137	17	r. Metaphyſical.

THE

PREFACE.

THOUGH the general design of this Pamphlet is to trace out the Apostacy of the Christian Churches, from the word of God to the decrees of men in matters of Faith; and to shew, that such decrees lay no obligation upon Conscience, agreeably to the XXth article of our Church; yet I could not help seizing this opportunity (in hopes of a more candid hearing than could be expected in the days of Bigotry) to expatiate freely and explicitly upon the impropriety, or rather the inconsistency, of the Protestant Churches, in their penal Laws against Heresy, and what they falsely call Apostacy; as well as in requiring a Subscription of the Clergy and several of the Laity

to Articles of human Compoſition; and thereby maintaining two oppoſite *Rules of Faith*; which if not immediately found to be inconſiſtent with one another when the Articles are firſt made, muſt become ſo in a very ſhort time afterwards; and conſequently generate diſſentions and ſects among honeſt, uſeful, and well-meaning ſubjects, inſtead of unanimity.

The preſent liberal way of thinking among all Ranks of men, ſeems loudly to call upon our Governors for a Reform in theſe and ſuch like inconveniences, with regard to our Religious Liberties; which the firſt Reformers left with us as they found them.

The Politicians of former times knew but little of the nature of Religion, and have been afraid of making any alteration in the laws which concern it, though ever ſo unjuſt(*a*). They have heard of Hereſy as a Crime for which many have been condemned; as worthy and good men and as uſeful Subjects as thoſe who condemned them; and they look upon it as a ſin deſerving Puniſhment as the Law directs. But they neither knew what Hereſy is (for they imagined it to be any thing contrary to Acts of Parliament and Convocation) nor could they know what is not true, that by the law of God

(*a*) Politici qui ſæpe dogmata vera a falſis ſalubria a noxius non norunt diſtinguere omnia nova ſuſpecte habent. Grot. in *Act.* xvii. 6.

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they have any right to puniſh a heretick when they find him. But they received their notions from Rome, and do not care to part with their de facto power in this reſpect, though they have none de jure.

It is true, that the fundamental Principles of Proteſtantiſm were at firſt very conſiſtently maintain'd by Luther and other Reformers; but thoſe Principles have long ago been deſerted by all the Churches in purſuit of power and dominion. It is true, that our Whig Miniſters have nobly at ſeveral times, both in Theory and Practice, maintain'd the Principles of Civil and Religious liberty, but they have been no leſs liable than the Reformed Churches to be tempted from the practice they approved.

Another thing which they received from Rome, as Rome did from the Aſiatick Churches, is a Subſcription to Articles of Religion of human Compoſition, by Clergy, Phyſicians, and other Graduates, and lately, if not at preſent, by Children, &c. imagining, as muſt be ſuppoſed, that the Faith of a Proteſtant Church muſt be an unalterable Syſtem of Articles, which when once fixed muſt be always adhered to; than which nothing can be more contrary to the Religion of the People, and the very nature of a Proteſtant Church, which receives the *Scripture*, and not *its own deciſions*, as a complete Rule of Faith: and muſt therefore, if ſhe would pre-

ſerve the very eſſential and fundamental Principle of her Faith, alter her opinion of particular doctrines, as the Scripture by which they are to be explained is better underſtood.—On the other hand, to bind them up by a Subſcription to the opinion of former ages, would make the fundamental Principle of Proteſtantiſm abſolutely void, and the Scripture itſelf of no farther uſe: it would be tantamount to a declaration, that thus far the people ſhall improve, and no farther; thus far they ſhall uſe the Scripture as a Rule of Faith, and no farther; thus far and no farther ſhall the people be inſtructed in the will of God. —Whereas, if (inſtead of a Subſcription at any time to what was formerly thought to be the ſenſe of Scripture, but afterwards found, both by Clergy and Laity, not to be ſo,) the Clergy ſhall promiſe, (as they now do, when Candidates for Prieſts orders,) that they will inſtruct the People out of the Scriptures, and teach nothing but what they are perſuaded may be concluded and proved from thence: And if theſe Candidates for holy Orders ſhall be ſubjected to the examination of the Biſhops (who muſt be ſuppoſed to be Maſters of every improvement in the interpretation of Scripture doctrines as ſoon as it is known) what can the People wiſh for more? Any farther Security, that the genuine doctrines of the Goſpel ſhall be preached to them without addition or curtail, is not within the power of man to provide.

But

But why a Subſcription ſhould be required of the Laity of ſome profeſſions, and not of others, or why it is not equally required of them all, whether male or female, as it is at Rome, (in order to prevent Hereſy,) is not very eaſy to explane; and is worth conſidering: for as it is at preſent, we ſeem to have adopted the practice without examining why or wherefore; and do things by halves, as if we were not fully convinced, that we were acting right: Whereas the Romaniſts go through with the matter, by their Capital Laws againſt hereſy, in which all, both male and female, are equally concerned; and this ſhews, that theſe Subſcriptions were not originally intended for the Clergy only, as is now pretended by ſome writers, but for all men in general.

If, after all, it ſhould ſtill be thought neceſſary to preach agreeably to the Articles, which were framed ſome ages ago, notwithſtanding the new light which has been thrown upon the doctrines of Scripture by the ſtudy of the learned within the two laſt Centuries, and which the people, who maintain the Clergy, have a right to be acquainted with; the People are not uſed honeſtly and fairly. This is not to preach the Goſpel agreeably to the Rule of Faith, for which the Clergy are paid, but according to the Commandments of men, which the people object to. —And if by this mean the People ſhould open

their Eyes to the Truth, and the Clergy be obliged to keep theirs ſhut, what muſt be the conſequence, but that the people will underſtand their Religion in a more perfect manner than the Clergy will dare to teach it; and ſo the knowledge of the Laity will bring on the Contempt of the Clergy; and the People at length leave the Churches.

I ſhall venture here to uſe the words of Mr. Wm. Pitt, when ſpeaking of our happy Conſtitution, and apply them to the Church in particular. "I am afraid the Reverence and Enthuſiaſm which Engliſhmen entertain for the Church of England, will, if not ſuddenly prevented, be the means of deſtroying it: for ſuch is their Enthuſiaſm, that they will not remove its defects, for fear of touching its Beauty." Lond. Even. No. 9371.

"Neither Magna Charta, nor the Revolution, "was perfect any more than the Reformation," ſays a Writer in the Lond. Journal. "The "houſe of Lords in Charles the IId's time glo- "rioufly oppoſed the Bill for obliging them to "ſwear they would never make, or attempt to "make, any alterations in Church or State, well "knowing there might ariſe juſt occaſions for "alterations, and that our Conſtitution did not "conſiſt of unalterable Laws, but in the nature of "our Legiſlature, and a power lodged in Kings, "Lords, and Commons to make ſuch altera-

"tions

" tions as Reaſon and the circumſtances of affairs " require." And the preſent knowledge of the Laity inſtructs us wherein the Alterations with regard to the Church of England ſhould be made.

Thoſe who have a juſt notion of Proteſtantiſm are no longer to be ſatisfied with human deciſions in matters of Faith. They know, that the Apoſtacy from Scripture, from the teſtimony of Jeſus, from the Commandments of God, from the Spirit of Truth, from the Apoſtles and Prophets, to the Traditions and Commandments of men, to the Rudiments of this World; hath for many Centuries been accompanied with blaſphemy, idolatry, and perſecution. For ages, were the People deceived by their Teachers in giving them the decrees of Fathers and Councils as of divine Authority. And inſtead of convincing them by arguments, (as the Proteſtant Divines did in King James the IId's Reign,) they deterred them authoritatively from the diſbelief of their decrees by the threats of Damnation, which we find at the end of their Creeds.—But all underſtanding Proteſtants know, that theſe anathemas hurt none but thoſe who uſe them; and that neither Fathers, nor Councils have any Authority for ſuch Execrations. But as theſe days of Ignorance and Preſumption we hope are now over; and both Clergy and Laity now lift up their eyes to Scripture; and allow of no Autho-

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rity in matters of faith but what can be proved from holy writ, as the Articles declare; to what purpoſe can a Subſcription to human Articles be required rather than a Subſcription to the Scripture itſelf; a fallible rather than an infallible Guide?

But ſome well wiſhers to the Church of England will argue, that a Subſcription to the Articles of the Church will preſerve the Faith of the Church. It may be ſo; but ſhould the Faith of the Church be preſerved where it is erroneous? Where it contradicts the known Truths of the Goſpel, upon which Goſpel the belief of every particular doctrine is founded, and by which it is to be explained?—The faith of the Church before the Reformation was Papiſtical: and the ſame Argument of preſerving the Faith of the Church, will reach up to thoſe times, and prove that we ought to continue in that Faith.—But the honour of the Church of England does not conſiſt in never altering its opinion upon particular doctrines, but in her ſteady adherence to the word of God, and her having altered her opinion of particular doctrines by that Rule, till ſhe is the moſt perfect of all human eſtabliſhments, and lies open to further Perfection, by adopting every improvement in the knowledge of divine Truth: and God knows there are very many material difficulties in the Scripture which ſtill remain to be explained; though none that are neceſſary to Salvation.

It may perhaps be anſwered to this, that the Articles to be ſubſcribed may be altered from what they now are, and amended by the learned members of the Church; which many wiſe and good men have wiſhed to ſee done.—But to what purpoſe is it to frame Articles for ſubſcription which will always be defective? Is it not better not to ſubſcribe to them? eſpecially as it will be always ſo difficult to get the proper alterations; and we have an infallible Rule already, from whence they muſt be taken, which wants no altering.—And let them be drawn up in ever ſo great conformity to the preſent notions, yet, unleſs we ceaſe to ſtudy the Scripture and to improve in the knowledge of the Truth, the difficulty will be continually returning; except we tranſcribe verbatim out of the infallible Rule of Scripture; and we muſt either alter continually or Subſcribe to what we know to be falſe. For ſuch is the unavoidable conſequence of admitting two Rules of Faith, the one human, and the other divine; that they will never long agree; but the one muſt give way to the other, or the whole Syſtem taken together will be confuſion and inconſiſtency: in which the Chriſtian Verity will contradict the Catholick Religion; or in other words, the Religion of Chriſt will contradict the Religion of Men.

There is a farther inconvenience attending the Churches which preſume to alter the words of

Scripture, till they ſpeak their own fallible opinions, which is, that their enemies will take the advantage of their precipitancy, and inſtead of laying the blame upon the Churches, will endeavour to remove it to the Rule itſelf, i. e. the Scripture. And ſure enough the fault muſt be in one or other of them, if any Error is eſtabliſhed.

Accordingly, Mr. John Potter, among the reſt of his Crudities, argues as follows. "The "New Teſtament in 1562 fixed the Church of "England on Calviniſtical principles; and the "ſame New Teſtament in 1742 would [proba-"bly] fix the Church of England upon Armini-"an principles: and both of them reſpectively "ſaid to be the doctrine of the New Teſtament "by as great and diſtinguiſhed men of Genius, "piety, and abilities, as thoſe RESPECTIVE "ages have produced."

From hence Mr. Potter concludes, that the New Teſtament cannot be a Rule of Faith. But this is all miſrepreſentation. It was not the New Teſtament that fixed the Church of England upon Calviniſtical principles (if the XXXIX Articles are ſuch) but the Archbiſhops and Biſhops, and the reſt of the Clergy, if the Title to the Articles be true: and ſurely it does not follow, that the New Teſtament is no Rule of Faith, becauſe the Archbiſhops, &c. miſtook the ſenſe of it in thoſe Articles.—And further, ſuppoſe

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the Archbiſhops, &c. have now altered their opinions upon theſe Articles, I would then aſk this ſophiſtical writer, whether they have not done it upon the authority of the New Teſtament as they now underſtand it? And if this be the Truth; the conſequence of Mr. Potter's obſervation is the very reverſe to what he has made it, viz. That the New Teſtament was the Rule they mean'd to go by in both caſes; Though in one Caſe they were miſtaken in the true ſenſe of it: And the change of their Opinion upon theſe Articles is ſo far from a fault, that they could not do otherwiſe, conſiſtently with their Religion, whenever their RESPECTIVE age, or any other advantageous circumſtance, diſcovered to them, that the true ſenſe of Scripture was different from what their Predeceſſors judged it to be. Their change of Opinion is therefore commendable; and the only fault lies in the method taken by their Predeceſſors to prevent it, by fixing down the faith of the Church to their miſtakes.

The beſt thing that can be ſaid of any Articles is, that they are taken or copied from the Scripture; and to imagine the correcting the Copy from the Original can render it leſs valuable, and look upon ſuch an improvement to be a change of Religion, is a great miſtake: for as long as we agree in the authority of the original from whence the Copy is ſuppoſed to be taken;

or in other words, as long as we join to Chriſt as the head of the Church, the Religion is the ſame, however corrupted or improved in particular doctrines. For the Apoſtacy or change of Religion does not ariſe from miſtaking the ſenſe of the Original, but from preferring the Copy to the Original, and thereby eſtabliſhing for doctrines the commandments of men. And every Church runs the Chance of doing this, when in framing their Articles, they leave the words of Scripture to follow their fallible interpretations of it.

Theſe looſe hints are meaned to be enlarged upon in the following pages with this important Truth in view: that there can be no other CENTER of UNITY among Chriſtians or Chriſtian Churches, but the Scripture only, agreeably to the Reaſoning of the Apoſtles on the Subject.

St. Paul ſays, that we being many, are one bread and one body, becauſe we partake of that one bread, I. Cor. x. 17—This is farther explained by St. John, ch. xv. " As the Branch cannot bear fruit unleſs it abide in the Vine, ſo neither can ye unleſs ye abide in me; I am the *Vine*, ye are the *Branches*." Now the Branches are no otherwiſe joined to *one another*, than as they are all joined to the *Vine*. In like manner, Chriſt is ſaid to be " the Head; from whom the whole Body is fitly joined together, Eph. iv. 16. and having nouriſhment miniſtred,

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increaſeth," &c.—The Union here does not conſiſt in the members being joined to one another, but in the Union of them all with the Head: and ſtill more fully in the 7th verſe; If ye abide in me, and my *words* abide in you, ye ſhall aſk what ye will, &c.

It is therefore from the Union of every individual Perſon of the Church with Chriſt himſelf, by his WORDS abiding in them, that the Church is formed, and that the *Communion of Saints* conſiſts, and by which they receive proper nouriſhment: and conſequently, all notion of Communion with one another in any other way, is vain and idle; ſince no agreement among themſelves can ſupply them with ſpiritual food; and it is only HIS WORDS abiding in them which will conſtitute them the members of his Body, the Chriſtian Church, and not of a diſtinct ſociety. So that if every Member of every one of the Councils had ſigned the ſame Articles; yet, if theſe were not Scripture doctrines, it might prove their Communion with one another, but not one of them to be a member of the Chriſtian Church. The Chriſtian κοινωνια, or Communion of Saints, as it conſiſts in their all partaking of the One Bread, being Branches of the ſame Vine, Members of the ſame Head, conſiſts in their being all joined to Chriſt and receiving Nouriſhment from him by his WORDS abiding in them; and

and thus they cannot form the Communion of Saints, and conſtitute the univerſal Church by any other agreement among them, or by ſubſcribing to any ſet of articles they can poſſibly compoſe.

After ſaying thus much upon the nature of Chriſtian Communion, it would be in vain to think of clearing myſelf from the Suſpicion of the ſagacious Dr. Randolf, who, ſpeaking of Ben Mordecai's letters, uſes this bitter Sarcaſm, *I ſuſpected him to be of their own Fraternity.*—Now though this does not inform me what Fraternity he means, yet as I ſuppoſe he is ſpeaking of ſome Chriſtian Fraternity, and I clame a Relation to them all as Brethren, who eat of the ſame Bread, and drink of the ſame Cup, notwithſtanding their miſtakes in the interpretation of Scripture; I muſt be obliged to plead guilty to the accuſation.—For though I differ in opinion in ſome particular doctrines from every Sect I know of, i. e. wherever they appear to me to miſtake the genuine doctrines of Scripture, whether they be Socinians, or Arians, or Sabellians, or Athanaſians, or Pſeudo-Athanaſians, &c. yet as they all agree with me in receiving the Scripture as the Rule of their Faith, and keep the head, which is Chriſt, I cannot find in my heart to diſclame my Relationſhip to any of them. I can ſee no reaſon to bear them any ill will, or wiſh them any harm

harm in their fortunes, perſons, or characters; I meet with worthy and pious men among them all, and can't help rejoicing when I find the family of Chriſt increaſes, though they may not perhaps be all perfectly orthodox in any one man's opinion except their own. I honour and eſteem every man who labours to explain the Scripture agreeably to the divine attributes, though he differs ever ſo much from myſelf in the method of doing it. And heartily enjoy the noble and liberal Sentiment of Socrates, who, being condemned for his Religious principles, conſoles himſelf in the hope, that after Death he ſhall converſe with *wiſe* men upon the difficult points of Philoſophy, as he uſed to do, without incurring the danger of another Condemnation.—And, in ſhort, while ſome are for narrowing the Bonds of Communion by zeal, avarice, or ambition, as Biſhop Hoadly ſpeaks, I am proud to conſider myſelf as related in Chriſt Jeſus to every Chriſtian Fraternity in the world, and to every individual among them.

But leaſt my miſtakes ſhould be attributed to others, I muſt here add, that I am only confeſſing the Faith for myſelf, and not for any Fraternity; and therefore in what follows in this Pamphlet, I muſt beg the Reader to conſider it merely as coming from the heart of an individual, who believes what he aſſerts, and is ready to diſavow any part of it which ſhall be proved to be falſe.

FARTHER

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ON THE

GRAND APOSTACY, &c.

IN a former pamphlet I have endeavoured to mark out the firſt traces of the grand Apoſtacy foretold by the Apoſtles, and its progreſs for many ages: but propoſing at the ſame time to anſwer Mr. Gibbon, as he led the way through his five imaginary cauſes of the rapid progreſs of the Chriſtian church, I could not preſerve a regular Chronology of the times in which the ſeveral events happened which are there mentioned: I ſhall therefore be obliged to repeat ſome things in order of time, which have been ſpoken of before, as they happened to fall in with Mr. Gibbon's arguments.

The begining of the Apoſtacy from the genuine doctrines of Chriſt was owing to the Gnoſ-

ticks in the time of the Apoſtles, and to the Tatianiſts and Cataphrygians afterwards, who introduced abſtinence from Marriage, frequent faſtings, and Holy-days, and other *forms of Godlineſs without the power thereof.* It began to work, as Sir Iſaac Newton tells us, in the diſciples of Simon Menander, Carpocrates, Cerinthus, and ſuch kind of men, who had imbibed the metaphyſical philoſophy of the Gentiles and Cabaliſtical Jews, then called Gnoſticks: Euſebius adds Saturninus and Baſilides (*a*). But the greateſt danger to the Chriſtian church in thoſe early times, aroſe from the hypocriſy of liars, who endeavoured to defend the *Truth* by *Falſity*; for what Satan could not obtain by open aſſault, ſays Dr. Owen, he gradually did obtain in defence of Truth (*b*). To this purpoſe they endeavoured to accommodate the Chriſtian doctrines to the then reigning philoſophy of the Platoniſts, and thereby corrupted them. They dreſſed up ſuppoſititious pieces containing the moſt ſubtile and refined philoſophy, (ſuch as the new teſtament every where avoids), and publiſhed them under the names of Dionyſius the Areopagite, Clemens Romanus, and many others; to make it appear that the firſt Chriſtians were not ſo illiterate as was repreſented. To the ſame purpoſe of propagating the truths of Chriſtianity they not

(*a*) Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. IV. 7. (*b*) Page 34.

only

only falſified the ſcripture where they diſapproved of it, but forged whole Goſpels, Epiſtles and Revelations which they impoſed upon the world as the writings of the Apoſtles, and not to appear inferior to the heathens in reſpect to their pretended miracles, and the power of their Demons; they impiouſly atteſted to the performance of lying wonders and miracles wrought by the ſaints and martyrs and their relicts, and thereby made way for the doctrine of many mediators and prayers to the dead; and then defended their idolatry by pretended traditions, viſions, and revelations; and at length by confiſcation, impriſonment and death.

In the mean time we find, that as the judgments of God on the one hand kept pace with theſe corruptions in the churches, (by their ſufferings under the perſecution of the Jews, and heathen Emperors; which ſeparated the wheat from the chaff, and prevented the church from being overrun by hypocrites:) ſo on the other hand it muſt appear very plain from hiſtory, (as we find it likewiſe foretold in the Revelation of St. John,) that the perſecuters themſelves were ſeverely puniſhed for their injuſtice and inhumanity by famine, ſword and peſtilence.—After the deſtruction of Jeruſalem upon the rebellion of the Jews in Egypt and Cyprus, in the reign of Adrian, the Jews put to death 460,000 men, and were conquered with the loſs of 1000

cities and fortreſſes, and above 580,000 Jews were ſlain without reckoning the loſs of the Romans; this happened from the year 100 to 140— after this we hear of a great famine in the reign of the Antonines to the year 193; and a peſtilence under Maximin and Valerian, and all theſe judgments were united during the reign of Maximus, Decius, Gallus, Voluſenus, and Valerian; during which time there were about four perſecutions in 30 years; which reaches to the year 270; another perſecution began about the year 302 and laſted 10 years; ſoon after which the dominion of the heathens was taken out of the way, and the Roman empire came into the hand of the Chriſtians; and by this great change the colleges of the Pontifices and Augurs and Veſtals, and all the pagan prieſts and religious officers throughout the Empire were brought under the dominion of a Chriſtian prince; many of the officers both civil and military were diſplaced, and Chriſtians put in their room; and a thorough alteration was made in the government(c). This was brought about by the victories of Conſtantine over Maxentius in 312. "So that in his "reign and his ſon's one half of the Roman Em- "pire turned Chriſtian; but the whole was not "accompliſh'd till the reign of Gratian, who re-

(c) Daubuz. Lowman on the Revel. pa. 57. The fall of this Empire is deſcribed in Prophetic language, Rev. vi. 12.

jected

" jected the dignity and habit of the pontifex
" maximus, threw down the idols, interdicted
" the sacrifices, and took away the revenues
" with the salaries and authority of the Priests.
" Theodosius the Great followed his example,
" and Heathenism afterwards recovered itself no
" more, but decreased so fast, that Prudentius
" about 10 years after the death of Theodosius
" calls them vix pauca ingenia & pars hominum
" rarissima (*d*)."

It might have been reasonably expected upon Constantine's coming to the empire in 306, that the church would for the future have enjoyed a state of peace and safety, and that pure Christianity and virtue would from thenceforth flourish. But this happy state was imaginary; the Apostacy had gained too much ground. The chief men of the Church had apostatised to the worship of Demons, and a multiplicity of mediators; and their powers were bent to defend these doctrines, and in this attempt they lost all the appearance of love and forbearance: and not content with such punishments as might affect their adversaries in this world, did what they could by excommunications, and anathemas, to condemn both body and soul in hell.

Constantine would at first have appeased this madness, as appears by his excellent letter to Alexander and Arius upon their disputes (*e*): but

(*d*) Sir I. Newton, 293. (*e*) Translated in the Appendix to Ben Mordecai's VIIIth Letter.

it

it was not in his power. On the contrary, He was drawn into the whirl-pool and became a perſecuter himſelf; and after his death, his ſon Conſtantius was as furious againſt the Athanaſians, as his father had been againſt the Arians: ſo that both Sects were perſecuted by turns. One Council was called to annul what a former one had decreed: and having loſt ſight of Scripture, the whole was managed with ſuch contention and fury, as if they had laboured to make the church a ſlaughter houſe. From this time the Apoſtacy introduced by private men, began to be eſtabliſhed by Emperors and Councils, and thereby the moſt fatal blow was given to the Chriſtian Church that it has ever experienced, by eſtabliſhing at the Council of Nice, that the Son is of the ſame Subſtance with the Father (*f*); from whence it unavoidably followed, in direct contradiction to the whole tenor of the Goſpel, that the Son was not capable of aſcending or deſcending, or Suffering, or Death: the Subſtance of the Father being incapable of all theſe things (*g*).——From this time the beſt and the moſt learned of the Fathers have been ſo bewildered in theſe palpable contradictions, that Dr. Meric Caſaubon declares

(*f*) How this was managed by the Athanaſians ſee Ben. Mordecai, Let. VIII. p. 24. See alſo the Preface to that Letter.

(*g*) See Ben. Mord. Let. III. Poſtſcript, p. 113, 114.

of

of one of them only, (" *whether the Lord and* " *governor of the world, who fills the universe,* " *was concealed in the body of an Infant,*") that it contains an Objection againſt Chriſtianity the moſt conſiderable that ever was made, and which hath kept more people from embracing the Chriſtian Faith than any that he knew (*b*)—But what was a ſtill worſe conſequence; this doctrine, which was underſtood in different ſenſes, even by thoſe who voted for it, when it came to be explaned, produced many diviſions, which were called hereſies, and looked upon as Crimes, and theſe diviſions produced Perſecution.

" Since the Nicene Council," ſays Hilary, " we do nothing but write Creeds, and while " we quarrel about words, while we raiſe queſ- " tions about Novelties, while we fight about " ambiguities, and about Authors, and ſtrive " about parties; while there is difficulty in " conſent, while we anathematize one another; " ſcarce any one is Chriſt's. What a change " there was in laſt year's Creed! the firſt de- " creed the Homoouſios ſhould not be men- " tioned: the next decrees and publiſhes it; " the third, does by indulgence, excuſe the " word Uſia, as uſed before by the Fathers " uncompounded: the fourth does not excuſe, " but condemn it: it is come to that paſs, " that nothing [profeſſed] among us, or thoſe

(*b*) Ben Mord. Let. I. pa. 42.

" be-

" before us, remains ſacred and inviolable. " We decree annual and monthly Creeds con- " cerning God: we repent of our decrees, we " defend thoſe that repent of them; we ana- " thematize thoſe whom we defended: we " defend other mens opinions in our own; and " condemn our own in thoſe of other men: and " while we bite one another, we are conſumed " one of another." How natural and unavoidable does all this follow from leaving the Scripture, and truſting to the decrees of Councils and the Commandments of Men! And from the time that the Nicene Creed was huddled up, as Epiſcopius expreſſes it (*i*), and the doctrines of the Church depended upon the Votes and Management of the Councils, " Chriſtianity became a myſterious, dark, " incomprehenſible, unintelligible Religion, " loaded with the Inventions of Men. It " conſiſted of artificial ſounds and doctrines " of men in power, and all the Engines of " Authority were made uſe of to force an " obedience to what they could not under- " ſtand (*k*). And accordingly this whole Period of about 400 years, under the Chriſtian Emperors, is filled with abominable Superſtition, Idolatry, and cruel Perſecution, exerciſed with the greateſt fury by Chriſtians againſt Chriſtians, under the name of Arians, Athanaſians, Eutychians.

(*i*) Ben Mord. Let. I. pa. (*k*) Dr. Sykes.

chians, &c. which occaſioned St. John to wonder with ſo much admiration(*l*). Theſe Perſecutions, and the puniſhments of the Perſecutors, takes up a great part of the Apocalypſe.

It was during the dominion of the Chriſtian Emperors, that the learned Lady Hypatia was barbarouſly murdered by the monks and friends of Cyril; and Neſtorius, who had perſecuted the Arians and Novatians with ſuch zele, that Conſtantinople was almoſt in an uproar, fell himſelf under perſecution and was depoſed for denying the Virgin Mary to be the mother of God. It was during the Chriſtian Emperors that Priſcillian, a Spaniſh Biſhop, and his adherents were murdered by Maximus in 455; and Juſtinian, not to be behind hand with his Predeceſſors in Chriſtian zele, thought it his duty to exterminate all ſects from the Empire, and in that opinion deſolated whole provinces, and almoſt drove Chriſtianity out of the world. This period was famous for the perſecution of the Monothelites, for believing that Chriſt had only *one will*; and for depoſing Childeric King of France, by the Pope, and giving his Kingdom to Pepin; and eſtabliſhing the worſhip of Images.

In the mean time the perſecuting family of Conſtantine the Great became extinct in a very few years. The Empire was invaded by the northern nations, and Rome itſelf was taken by

(*l*) Rev. xvii. 6.

Alaric King of the Goths. The ravages in Italy put an end to the weſtern Empire in 476. Baſiliſcus in the Eaſt was an Arian, Zeno an Eutychian, Genſeric in Africk an Arian and perſecutor of the Catholic Church, Eurich the ſame in Gaul, Odoacer in Italy, and the Kings of Spain aſſerters of the ſame Hereſy, and the Eutychians in the Eaſt(*m*). And thus by the juſt judgment of God the Perſecuted became ſuperior to their Perſecutors, who had ſhed ſo much bloud to no purpoſe. Laſtly, it was during this period that Dr. Prideaux obſerves, " God per-
" mitted the ſucceſs of the Saracens in his all-
" wiſe providence to continue a ſcourge to us
" Chriſtians, who have ſo holy a Religion and
" will not live according to it." It was, as Mr. Mede obſerves, " at the time when we be-
" gan to ſerve other Gods, that God gave the
" Chriſtians over to ſerve other nations, and
" the Turkiſh fury could never be ſtayed from
" caſting more and more this bondage upon our
" necks, till the Reformed Churches began to
" put away their Idols." It was according to the judgment by which the Chriſtians had judged of others who differed from them, that they were judged themſelves, and with the meaſure they did mete, it was meaſured to them again; according to the words of the Angel, Rev. xvi. 6. " Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and

(*m*) Echard's Rom. Hiſt.

which

which waſt, and which ſhalt be, becauſe thou haſt judged thus, For they have ſhed the bloud of Saints and of Prophets, and thou haſt given them bloud to drink for they are worthy."

The heathen Roman Empire had its trial for about 300 years, during which time Chriſtianity had been preached among them; but inſtead of liſtning to the Truth, they uſed their power in perſecuting its Preachers, whom St. John in the Apocalypſe entitles the two Witneſſes. The Dominion was then transferred to the Chriſtians themſelves. And *they*, inſtead of reforming the errors of the Apoſtacy, eſtabliſhed them by their Councils, and defended them by confiſcations, baniſhment, impriſonment and death.

700. At length, after the Chriſtian Emperors had been tried for about 450 years, a new Power aroſe, and the dominion over the Church was given into the hands of a Chriſtian Biſhop; Rome began again to flouriſh after it had been deprived of its power for 200 years, and began to enjoy Dominion in its laſt form of Government under the Pope; And here, if ever, the ſincere Chriſtian, one would imagine, muſt have expected a ſafety from perſecution, and a reſtoration from all the Errors of the Apoſtacy. This dominion we are informed by St. John and the Prophet Daniel is to laſt 1260 years.

The power of the Pope was transferred to him in a great meaſure by Charles the Great, the grandſon of Charles Martel, and ſon of Pepin, who ſat upon the Weſtern Empire by the Pope's means. Charles the Great overthrew the Lombards, and gave ſome of their Cities to the Pope, and about the year 800 conferred on him the dutchy of Rome, by which he became exalted above the Roman Senate and all human Judicature; and this gave him a Supremacy over the Weſtern Churches, which, as Sir Iſaac Newton obſerves, gave him a look more ſtout than his fellows (Dan. vii. 20) and enabled him to grapple with the Emperor himſelf; till at length he overtopped him, and gained an abſolute power over all Chriſtian Princes(*n*); and the ten kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was divided in, France, Spain, Britain, &c. gave him their ſtrength and power(*o*). For God hath put it into their hearts to give their kingdom unto the Beaſt, until the words of God ſhall be fulfilled(*p*).

The Pope now began to canonize Saints of his own making, and to grant indulgencies and pardons for the moſt atrocious ſins; and the kiſſing the Pope's feet became a cuſtom(*q*). Charles confirm'd the Exarchate to the Pope, and propagated the Roman Religion in all his

(*n*) Sir Iſ. Newton, p. 85. (*o*) Rev. xvii. 13.
(*p*) Ver. 17. (*q*) Sir I. Newton, 85, 86.

conqueſts,

conqueſts, obliging the Saxons and Huns to receive it, diſtributing his northern Conqueſts into Biſhopricks, granting Tythes to the Clergy and Peter-pence to the Pope: by all which the Church of Rome was highly enlarged, exalted and eſtabliſhed.—His power, his preſumption, and his cruelty grew up together, and aſſiſted each other in carrying the Apoſtacy to the amazing height it has done, ſo as to become the wonder of the world.—In this age, ſays Spanheim, what by civil and military calamities, by the indulgence of Princes, the vices of the Clergy, the ambition of the Prieſts, the ſloth of the monks, a foul and truly antichriſtian corruption prevailed in doctrine, worſhip, manners, and diſcipline(*r*).

By the help of dreams, viſions, apparitions, and perſecutions, the worſhip of the image of Chriſt and the holy virgin and holy angels was ordained by a Council of Conſtantinople, and the contrary opinion anathematiſed. The Pope's ſupremacy gained ground dayly: The title of Weſtern Empire was taken from the Greeks by the Pope's authority for Hereſy; a power aſſerted by him of excommunicating and depriving the Emperor, and to abſolve men of their Oaths; and decrees made that none ſhould judge the Pope, nor Emperors nor Kings judge Prieſts.

(*r*) Hiſt. Eccleſ. Sæcul. ix. c. 5. p. 1343.

So

So that the Popes became quite ſcandalous. Lando is declared by Baronius and Binius to be an invader, a thief, a robber; and the accuſations againſt John XII(s), by the Cardinals, Biſhops, Prieſts and Deacons are for debauchery, murder, perjury and inceſt with two of his Siſters; for which he was depoſed. And the wickedneſs of the Clergy was got to ſuch a height, that the decree of the Council of Nice, which allowed them to dwell with a mother or Siſter, was reverſed upon evidence that they lay with their Siſters and had children by them. A conſequence this of their hypocritical abſtinence from marriage!

About 872 John the VIII. gave the Empire to Charles the Bald in prejudice of Lewis of Germany, the elder branch, who thereupon gave up many rights of the Gallican Church, and promiſed by oath to protect the Pope againſt all perſons; and Marinus, in the beginning of his popedom in 882, decreed, that Popes ſhould be made without expecting the Emperors authority.

900. During this and the next Century, from the death of Lewis the Pious, ſon of Charles the Great, in 840, till the ſettlement of the German Empire in 962, under Otho, the many calamities in the family of Charles the Great ſo weakened the Empire, as to expoſe it to the invaſions

(s) Lowman. 177. Baxter's Ch. Hiſt. 325.

of

of the Normans(*t*), particularly in France; whilſt the Saracens ravaged Italy, and made excurſions to the gates of Rome, and carried off the riches of the Churches—and the Normans from a deſire of plunder fell into the richeſt provinces; and their falſe zele for their religion (for they were then Heathens) made them cruel and bloudy, eſpecially to Churchmen. From Sea to Sea there was not a monaſtery that did not feel their rage, nor a town that was not ranſomed, pillaged and burn'd two or three times; which, ſays the hiſtorian Mezeray, made it ſufficiently evident that it was one of God's terrible plagues(*u*).

During this Century, Paſchale taught the doctrine of the real Preſence of Chriſt in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; which was confirmed by pretended miracles; and Odo, a Biſhop of Canterbury, is ſaid to have changed the bread and wine into fleſh and bloud, and then changed them back again(*x*).

1000. The burning Hereticks was ſet on foot at Orleans by King Robert and the Prelates. Benedict IX. ſet up Tranſubſtantiation, which was afterwards eſtabliſhed by Innocent III. at the Council of Lateran in 1215. A prodigious ſuperſtition ſpread every where among all ſorts of people, pretended Miracles and ap-

(*t*) Lowman on the Revel. pa. 177. (*u*) Ibid from Mezerai vol. I. p. 319. (*x*) Ibid 151, from Wm. of Malmſbury.

par-

paritions and Tales of ſouls in Purgatory, &c. and the whole of religion was placed in penances, maſſes, legacies to redeem ſouls out of purgatory, and pilgrimages, eſpecially to the holy ſepulchre at Jeruſalem, which ended at laſt in the holy war; during which the bloud they ſhed in their perſecutions was abundantly repaid by the loſs of many hundred thouſand men.

1073. Hildebrand or Gregory VII. expreſsly claim'd the power of depoſing Emperors and abſolving ſubjects from their allegiance, and exerciſed it againſt Henry IV. and other Princes in Europe(*y*). In 1076 he excommunicated the Emperor and all his adherents, and gave the Kingdom of Germany to Rodolphus. About this time the Bogomili were burn'd by the Patriarch of Conſtantinople.

1100. The claims of the Popes and Emperors about inveſtitures divided the Guelphs and Gibelines, and engag'd all Italy in a civil war, which laſted above 100 years; in which there was ſcarce a family that did not ſhed one another's bloud. Innocent the III. excommunicated King John of England, and interdicted the Kingdom for 6 years. There was another Cruſade in this year, and another in 1192; and at length what was contended for was obliged to be left to the Mahometans.

(*y*) Lowman, ib. 179.

At

At the latter end of this Century, in 1198, Innocent III. ſent his Legates to ſuppreſs the Albigenſes, and excite the Princes and People to exterminate them by a Cruſade. Theſe croſs bearers were not leſs than 500,000. They took Beziers, and put 60,000 to the ſword.

1200. This Century is famous for erecting the Inquiſition, the moſt unjuſt and barbarous Court of judicature that ever was inſtituted. When the witneſſes to the truth, (who happened then to be the Sectaries) were not to be ſilenced by Dominick and his brethren preachers, the civil Magiſtrate was perſuaded to burn all ſuch as were judged to be obſtinate Hereticks: and that they might do this legally the 4th Council of Lateran, in 1215, did decree, that all hereticks ſhould be delivered to the ſecular power to be extirpated: the goodly office *this*, of the unnatural alliance between Church and State, by which the grand Apoſtacy is perfected and eſtabliſhed, and the Kingdom of darkneſs is defended by the civil power, the Commands of Chriſt ſuperſeded by the canons of the church, and the moſt horrid cruelties committed under the pretence of ſaving mens Souls, and preſerving the Peace of the Church.

This Council of Lateran anathematizes all hereſy, and by its decrees, every Officer of the ſecular power is obliged to ſwear, that they will exterminate all hereticks denoted by the Church;

and whatever temporal Lord, being warned by the Church, ſhall neglect to purge his country in this manner, ſhall be excommunicated; and if he continue ſo a year, the Pope may pronounce his Vaſſals abſolved from their fidelity, and expoſe his Country to be ſeized on by Catholicks; and whoſoever ſhall not avoid the excommunicated perſon, ſhall be excommunicated himſelf. The people are to be put to their Oaths whether they know of any Hereticks in their neighbourhood; if they refuſe the Oath, are to be looked upon as Hereticks themſelves. It is ordered that they ſuffer none ſuch within their Shires or Circuits to preach, or to keep either houſe or family, either yet to uſe any handicraft or occupation, or other trade of merchandize, or elſe to ſolace themſelves any ways, or frequent the company of Chriſtian men (z).

In performance of the Laws and decrees of this Council, multitudes, called hereticks, have ſuffered, ſome ſay two millions. And thus Rome, under the appearance of a Chriſtian Church, has been built up and maintained by bloud, rebellion, and uſurpation. In the beginning of this Century, Pope Honorius procured a new expedition to Jeruſalem, and his ſucceſſor commanded the Emperor Frederick to go thither: but he was obliged to return, becauſe the Pope in the mean time had taken his

(z) Lowman on the Rev. 148. Baxter's Ch. Hiſt. 398.

Cities

Cities in his abſence; and endeavoured to betray him to the Soldan(*a*). The war of the Guelphs and Gibelines continued, and a plague broke out in Rome which ſcarce left every tenth man.

The ſpeech of Innocent IV. upon receiving a letter from Robert Groſhead, Biſhop of Lincoln, ſhews to what a height of pride the Pope was arrived; it is related by Matthew Paris, as follows; " Who is this doating old Fool, ſays " the Pope, who boldly and raſhly judgeth my " doing? by St. Peter and St. Paul, if our in- " nate ingenuity did not move us, I would pre- " cipitate him into ſo great confuſion that he " ſhould be to the whole world a fable, a ſtupor, " an amazement, and a prodigy: Is not the " King of England our Vaſſal, and I ſay more, " our Slave, who can with our Nod impriſon " him, and enſlave him to reproach (*b*)?"

This Century is famous for the Sicilian Veſpers, when the French were murdered through the whole Iſland, 8000 were ſlain in two hours; The Women ripped up, and the childrens brains daſhed out; in which Pope Nicholas had the chief hand, though it was executed after his death.

1300. Great diſtreſſes fell upon Rome itſelf by the Wars of the Guelphs and Gibelines. Clement V. is obliged to retire to Avignon in

(*a*) Baxt. Ch. Hiſt. 399.

(*b*) Baxter, 411.

France,

France, where the Court of Rome continued above 90 years.

1400. During this Century it was decreed in the Council of Conſtance, that though Chriſt adminiſtered the ſacrament to his diſciples in both kinds, viz. bread and wine, and though in the primitive Church the faithful received it in both kinds, &c. yet the contrary cuſtom of the Church ſhould be a Law. Seſs. 13.

It was likewiſe decreed, that they might procede againſt hereticks, notwithſtanding the ſafe conduct and promiſes of the Emperor, Kings or Princes; by whatever bond they had bound themſelves therein; though the hereticks had not appeared, but upon that ſafe conduct: and that the ſaid Emperor, &c. having done what in them lieth, are no way obliged by their promiſes. [Principles which a Heathen would bluſh to maintain.] And by this breach of promiſe John Hus, and Jerom of Prague were circumvented and burnt.

In 1492 Alexander VI. was made Pope, one of the worſt of men; and, if there was any one who exceeded him in abominable crimes, it was his baſtard, Cæſar Borgia (*d*). This Period is remarkable for the long wars in Italy, Germany, France and Spain, occaſioned by a Sciſm in the Papacy, there being three Popes at the ſame time, and by their perſecutions and murders,

(*d*) Mezeray.

uſur-

uſurpations and contentions; by which they were ſo weakened as to become a prey to the Saracens: and the Eaſtern Empire by the juſt judgment of God, was hereby put an end to, and Conſtantinople was taken in 1453. But the reſt of the men who were not ſlain by theſe plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they ſhould not worſhip Demons (or Saints) and Idols of Gold, and Silver, and Braſs, and Stone, and of Wood, which can neither hear, nor ſee, nor walk; neither repented they of their murders, nor of their Sorceries, nor of their fornication [or Idolatry] nor of their thefts. Rev. ix. 20, 21.

1500. The moſt ſurprizing and fatal artifice was now practiſed which the man of ſin had ever yet uſed; which corrupted the morals of the whole church by means of the holineſs of the Saints; and this was brought about, ſtrange as it was, by the ingenuity of the Scholemen, in the following manner. According to the erroneous doctrine of the Roman Church, all the works of the Saints over and above thoſe which are neceſſary for their own Juſtification, together with the infinite merits of Jeſus Chriſt, are depoſited in one inexhauſtible treaſury. The keys of this were committed to St. Peter and his Succeſſors the Popes, who may open it at pleaſure; and by transferring a portion of this ſuperabundant merit to any particular perſon for a

ſum

ſum of money, may convey to him either a pardon of his own ſins, or a releaſe for any one, in whom he is intereſted, from the pains of Purgatory. Such indulgencies were invented in the eleventh century by Urban the II. as a recompence for thoſe who went in perſon upon the wild enterprize of conquering the Holy Land, and afterwards to thoſe who hired a ſoldier to that purpoſe(*e*): and in progreſs of time the ſame indulgences and pardons were given for the taking up arms againſt thoſe that obey'd not the Church of Rome, although they were Chriſtians(*f*). At length they were hawked about and ſold to any body that would buy them, for a mere trifle of money; and as their efficacy was declared to extend to all ſins, thoſe who truſted them were hereby ſet looſe from all moral obligations whatſoever, and thought themſelves at liberty to indulge in vices which would have heavy lain upon the conſcience of a Pagan.

And what added to the ſcandal hereby brought upon the Church, was the bad lives of the Pardoners, who in taverns and elſewhere, in games and other things not fit to be named, ſpent that which the People ſpared from their neceſſary expences to purchaſe theſe indulgences.

(*e*) Robertſon's Hiſt. of Cha. V. pa. 79. (*f*) Father Paul's Coun. of Trent, by Bret. pa. 4.

The

The wickedneſs of the Man of Sin thus threatning to overwhelm the whole Chriſtian world in immorality, and debauchery, under the veil of religious ſanctity, (in which has conſiſted the hypocriſy of liars from the beginning) the providence of God raiſed up the ſpirit of Martin Luther to oppoſe the danger, and lay the foundation of a Reformation in the Church, both in her Faith and Practice. " Luther having " found a copy of the Bible, which lay neglected " in the library of his monaſtry, abandoned all " other purſuits, and devoted himſelf to the " ſtudy of it. He attacked the whole doctrine " of indulgences by arguments founded on rea- " ſon and ſcripture; while his adverſaries pro- " duced nothing in ſupport of them, but the " ſentiments of the Scholemen, the concluſions " of the Canon-law, and the decrees of the " Popes. And from hence aroſe the ſect of " Proteſtants, ſo called from a ſolemn Proteſt " which was made againſt a decree in the " Church of Rome in 1550(g): who rejected " *all human authority whatſoever*, and allowed " of none but that of Scripture:" And, if they had kept to their principles, would certainly have put an end to the apoſtacy, and reſtored to Chriſt the ſovereign dominion over his ſubjects in his own Kingdom, (which the Chriſtian Biſhops had ſo long uſurped) and would have

(g) Robertſon's Hiſt. pa. 62.

fixed

fixed Chriſtianity upon the firm Baſis of divine Revelation, unmixed with human inventions; for the doctrines of the Reformation ſpread ſo faſt, that it was thought neceſſary for its adverſaries to call a general Council, as the only effectual means to put an end to their differences. Thereupon a Council met at Trent in 1542, which, after many ſuſpenſions and intermiſſions, ended in 1563. This Council was ſo managed by the Popes, and ſo fully confirmed their corruptions, that it was unanimouſly rejected by all who maintained the neceſſity of a Reformation(*b*). In this Council, the worſhip of Images being already ſettled; the adoration of the ſacrament was an eaſy conſequence; and this Council, over and above the adoration of Images and the invocation of Saints, expreſsly requires the ſame adoration of the conſecrated elements, which is due to the ſupreme God. Nullus itaque dubitandi locus relinquitur, quin omnes Chriſtiani fideles, pro more in Catholica Eccleſia ſemper recepto Latriæ cultum, qui vero Deo debetur, huic ſanctiſſimo ſacramento in veneratione exhibeant(*i*).—And to ſtrengthen their party, propagate their errors, and gain converts, the Pope, by a Bull dated 1540, erected the new order of Jeſuits, who, with

(*b*) See an account of this Council by Father Paul and Le Vaſſor in Ben. Mord. Letter VIII. pa. 61. (*i*) Conc. Trident. Sect. 13, cap. 5.

this

this end in view, diſpoſe themſelves into every nation, and act with amazing induſtry: no difficulty which they cannot ſurmount; no danger ſo imminent which they will not undergo; no crimes ſo ſhocking which they have not perpetrated to ſerve the cauſe(*k*).

By theſe and ſuch like means, " the great " work of Satan became eaſy; which he divid- " ed among the Scholemen and Canoniſts, who " readily undertook the buſineſs." The Scholemen's taſk was to defend the power of the Pope, and the doctrines he favoured, by diſputation and argument; and that of the Canoniſts to maintain the Antichriſtian diſcipline and ſovereignty, by the authority of the Church; urging this as the foundation of all Eccleſiaſtical impoſitions—And that they might be able to defend their Errors by the authority of antiquity, they ſhamefully returned to the practice of the ſame Knavery, which had been uſed in the early ages; and, to prevent the effect of the books which had been publiſhed by Wickliffe, Luther, and other Proteſtants, the Council of Trent appointed certain learned men to gather a catalogue of all ſuch writings as ſhould be publiſhed contrary to that council, declaring that the offenders ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed by the inquiſition. This catalogue was referred to Pope Pius the IV (*l*). who cauſed it by his Bulls and Breves

(*k*) Chamber's Diction. (*l*) Jenkin's Hiſt. Examin. of the Authenticity of Councils. See Peck's Catalogue of Writers in King James's time, No. 207, pa. 5.

to be publiſhed with certain rules which he approved: theſe were added to by Sixtus Quintus and Clement VIII. The deſign was to ſmother the Truth, by cenſuring all ſorts of men, and all kind of books, by adding to, or taking from them, or otherwiſe changing the words or altering the meaning of them. [Thus the decretal Epiſtles were counterfeited to prop the Pope's ſpiritual power, and Conſtantine's donation to ſupport his Temporals.] At Rome, Liſbon, Naples, and the Low Countries, men were appointed for this purpoſe. And this reformation or expurgation reaches to the MSS(*m*). But what is very unlucky for them, as theſe Indexes grow and multiply, they vary; So that what the Inquiſitor of one place tolerates, the Inquiſitor of another place condemns. Thus all the books they print of the Fathers or others, are altered and mutilated juſt as they pleaſe. Hence it comes to paſs, that the later Editions are more and more corrupted.

" Let any man compare the Editions of the " Councils at Rome with Binius, Binius with " Nicolinus, Nicolinus with Surius, Zerlin, " and Crabbe, and he ſhall find the lateſt " prints the worſt, and the worſt accounted the " beſt by the Romaniſts, who never try the

(*m*) James, of the Corruption of the Fathers, 509, 544.

" Edi-

" Editions or examine the books, but take them
" upon the credit of their holy Father the Pope,
" or ſome appointed by him for the overſight or
" charge of the books.

" Eraſmus gave the firſt intelligence of their
" barbarous corrupting the Fathers, for which
" his very name is in maledictione. But this in-
" ſtrument of miſchief being now well known,
" can no longer deceive any but themſelves: the
" Proteſtants are ſenſible that none of the fathers
" are to be depended upon in matters of Faith
" in the beſt Editions of them, and much leſs
" after being mangled at the Vatican. This piece
" of chicanery being diſcovered, was a plain con-
" feſſion and proof of the weakneſs of their cauſe,
" and a farther demonſtration to the Proteſtants,
" that nothing could be depended upon as the
" ground of their Faith but Scripture only.

" The Kingdoms of England, Scotland and
" Ireland, the Northern Kingdoms of Sweden
" and Denmark, many States of the Empire, the
" Cantons of Switzerland, and great numbers in
" France, Hungary and Bohemia, firmly adhered
" to the Reformation, ſeparated from the Roman
" Communion, and abſolutely renounced the
" Papal authority. In order to ſuppreſs theſe,
" the Popes engaged the houſe of Auſtria and
" other Princes, in wars, invaſions, aſſaſſinations
" and maſſacres for above 100 years in Germany;
" the civil wars in France, the long wars be-

" tween Spain and the United Provinces, the Spa-
" niſh Invaſion of England, the many attempts
" againſt the life of Queen Elizabeth, the Pow-
" der-plot in England, the Maſſacre of Paris,
" the aſſaſſinations of Henry III. and Henry
" IV. Kings of France, and of the Prince of
" Orange the founder of the Dutch Common-
" wealth; all which things are recited at large
" in hiſtory, and recorded as the memorable
" Events of thoſe times."

Agreeably to theſe undeniable facts, when Mr. Chillingworth is ſhowing to Mr. Knot the difference between the Popiſh and Proteſtant Faith, his words are theſe, " Following the
" Scripture, I ſhall believe a religion, which
" being contrary to fleſh and blood, without any
" aſſiſtance from worldly power, wit and policy;
" nay againſt all the power and policy of the
" world, prevaled and enlarged itſelf in a very
" ſhort time all the world over: whereas it is
" too too apparent, that your church [viz. the
" Roman] hath got, and ſtill maintains her au-
" thority over mens conſciences, by counterfeit-
" ing falſe miracles, forging falſe ſtories, by ob-
" truding on the world ſuppoſititious writings,
" by corrupting the monuments of former
" times, and defacing out of them all which any
" way makes againſt you, by wars, by perſe-
" cutions, by treaſons, by rebellions, in ſhort,

" by

" by all manner of carnal weapons whether
" violent or fraudulent(*n*)."

At length the Peace and Liberty of the proteſtant ſtates, were confirmed to the chief Defenders of the Proteſtant cauſe, by the treaties of Weſtphalia or Oſnaburgh, and Munſter in 1648, notwithſtanding the oppoſition of the Pope, and his proteſts againſt them; and hereby a noble opportunity was given by Providence to the Proteſtant Churches, of quitting entirely their Apoſtacy, and returning back from philoſophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, from the nominal Orthodoxy and errors of the Councils and Fathers, to the true Faith, the Teſtimony of Jeſus, the commandments of God, and the Spirit of Truth——But the time was not yet come. God grant it may be come now; It certainly never ſeemed ſo likely; as it all depends upon the love of religious Liberty and Truth in our Governors. But to return from this delightful proſpect,
" The Eccleſiaſticks of particular countries did
" indeed at this time emancipate themſelves
" from their ſubordination to the See of Rome,
" but—they all eſtabliſhed Hierarchies of their
" own, according to their ſeveral Syſtems;
" and paid no more regard to the natural rights

(*n*) Chillingworth's Rel. of Proteſt. ch. vi. § 66.

" of

" of conſcience, and the promotion of true reli-
" gious Liberty, than the church of Rome itſelf,
" the people only changed their maſters(*o*)."
The very Reformers began to look back with regret upon the honours, riches and powers of the Church they had left, and in too many inſtances to imitate her. The Spirit of the martyrs ſoftened into the complacency of the Courtier, and Religion became in many as it was before, a mere ſtalking horſe to Politicks; the true Faith gave way to Civil Utility, they ſtop'd ſhort in the midſt of this career, and even the Clergy themſelves began to remember the fleſh pots of Egypt, " the fiſh their Fathers did eat there freely, the cucumbers, and melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick (*p*)." Or to ſpeak more plainly, When by the bleſſing of God, the Proteſtants had got free from the power of the Romiſh Church, and very great things might have been expected from their receiving the Scriptures as the ONLY Rule of Faith, which was the noble Principle they ſat out upon; they ſuddenly became infected, through all the Churches, with the ſame Luſt of power which they had condemned at Rome. From hence originated the demand which was made by Calvin upon the people of Geneva, that if he became their teacher, they ſhould be content to

(*o*) Evanſon's letter to the Bp. of Litchfield and Coventry, pa. 61, 62. (*p*) Numb. xi. 5.

ad-

admit a complete form of diſcipline, which both they, and alſo their Paſtors, ſhould be ſolemnly ſworn to obſerve *for ever* (*q*). For though they aſſerted the liberty of judging for themſelves againſt the Church of Rome, they did not chuſe to give up the Antichriſtian power (*r*) of judging for other men: and though but juſt delivered from the darkeſt ignorance themſelves, they began to ſet themſelves up as properly qualified to determine, and circumſcribe, the Faith of future ages, and, in imitation of the Roman Church, to form articles and confeſſions of Faith, which they bound authoritatively upon the Conſciences of other people; to deny the common liberties and rights of Subjects to thoſe who would not ſubſcribe them, and to look

(*q*) Hooker's Preface.

(*r*) Mr. Buan Herport, who was lately perſecuted at Bern, where he was impriſoned and died, obſerves "that "the man of Perdition, Antichriſt, is to be found in all "places. Whoever makes himſelf judge over his brother, "forcibly obtrudes on him his own imaginations, and thus "ſets up himſelf in the temple of God; He uſurps Chriſt's "prerogative, burthens conſcience with terrible Oaths for "the ſake of human Edicts, and perſecutes the true diſci-"ples, the living members of the Church. [Whoever does "theſe things] whether Pope or King, Sovereign or Ma-"giſtrate, Clergy or Layman is ANTICHRIST. Many "Popes were men of parts, conſideration, and piety; and "there have been many worthleſs country parſons great "Antichriſts in a ſmall ſphere." And many who look abroad for Antichriſt, or the man of ſin, in the true ſenſe of the Phraſes might find him in their own breaſt.

upon

upon all deviations from them as heretical and worthy of puniſhment. " To which ſpiritual " Tyranny the Canon law being retained almoſt " every where, not a little contributed. Luther " indeed was for a total abolition of it, but the " Lawyers defended it as of great uſe for the " regular courſe and ſpeedy adminiſtration of " Juſtice(s)."

In England, the Palatinate, Switzerland, and Geneva, they murdered thoſe whom they looked upon to be Hereticks(t); though in the United Provinces, the Landgravate of Heſſe-caſſel, and the Lutheran countries, they did not procede to ſuch extremities. And it is remarkable in all the trials of Hereſy in England (and it ſeems to be the ſame in all other Proteſtant countries) that the Culprits are not examined and judged by the ſcripture only, upon the ſole authority of which their Churches are founded; but the doctrines of the four firſt general Councils, and other human deciſions are admitted in evidence againſt them: againſt all which kind of authority, the whole body of Proteſtants, in their con-

(s) Buan Herport's Eſſay on Truths of Importance, page 173. (t) Legat was burnt in Smithfield in 1611, and the next month Whiteman, as Hereticks. Gibſon's codex, page 426. Jane Bocker and Van Pere, by Ridley and Cranmer, in the reign of Edward VI. Val. Gentilis, at Bern; and Servetus, at Geneva, by Calvin; and ſome condemned for Hereſies of ſo oppoſite a nature, as was impoſſible to be held by the ſame perſon.

ten-

tentions with the Romaniſts: and Luther in particular, in his anſwer to the emperor Charles V. at the diet of Wormes, have always ſo vehemently proteſted: For being queſtioned by the Emperor whether he would maintain his writings, he anſwered, that he would not revoke any thing that he had written or taught, if he were not convinced by the words of Scripture or by evident Reaſons. And ſome days after, when there was a Treaty in the preſence of ſome of the Princes; and in particular of the Abp. of Triers, and the Elector of Brandenburg, and they were deſirous to induce him to refer every thing to the judgment of the Emperor, and the aſſembly and diet without any conditions; he anſwered "The prophet forbad us to put any "confidence in men, yea even in princes, to "whoſe judgment nothing ought leſs to be "committed than the word of God." Laſt of all it was propoſed, that he ſhould ſubmit all to the judgment of a future Council; to which he agreed upon this condition only, that "firſt "the articles which he intended to be laid before "them ſhould be taken out of his books, and "that Sentence might be given of them but ac-"cording to the Scriptures (*u*)." Upon this fundamental Principle all the Proteſtant Churches are built, and with it they muſt ſtand or fall; and it is entirely owing to the neglect of this

(*u*) Father Paul's Hiſt. tranſlated by Bret, pa. 14.

principle, and leaving in the Proteſtant Churches ſome of the old leaven of Popery, that human and divine placets continue now to be ſo mixed together, and eſtabliſhed among Proteſtants; that their Creeds and articles contradict the Scriptures, and render them liable to be condemned as Hereticks by their own laws. It is plain from hence, that Luther himſelf did not ſuppoſe the ſcripture to be ſuch a noſe of wax, that any thing the moſt abſurd and miſchievous might be proved from it, as the writers againſt the petition of the clergy to be freed from a Subſcription to Articles, have maintained: but as a proper and conſequently a determinate judge or Rule to refer to.

By this mixture of divine and human deciſions the progreſs of chriſtianity to its purity and perfection, has received ſuch an unexpected check in the midſt of the moſt ſanguine and reaſonable hopes, that it would be nothing wonderful, eſpecially if ſome lately revived principles of Popery ſhould be encouraged, if this mixture of Truth and Falſhood ſhould, by degrees, carry the proteſtants back again into as groſs errors as they are reformed from. "For ſince Divinity has "been made a Science, and Syſtematical Opi-"nions (founded upon mere human authority) "have been received and embraced in ſuch a "manner, that it has not been ſafe to contradict "them, the burthen of vindicating chriſtianity

"has

" has been much increaſed; its friends have
" been much embarraſſed through fear of ſpeak-
" ing againſt local truths, and its adverſaries
" have ſo ſucceſsfully attacked thoſe weakneſſes,
" that chriſtianity itſelf has been deemed inde-
" fenſible; when in reality, it has been only the
" follies of chriſtians (*x*) " [in having eſta-
bliſhed Errors.] And if the Politicians of this world ſhall think proper to defend thoſe weak-neſſes and eſtabliſhed errors by the civil power, and introduce more human deciſions into the Church by making *more ſtrict Inquiry into Hereſy*; Chriſtianity will become indefenſible againſt its adverſaries by all the members of the eſtabliſh-ment, and the buſineſs muſt naturally fall intire-ly into the hands of thoſe who diſſent from it. For the Errors and abſurdities of human deciſi-ons in Church matters are infinite; and nothing but a cloſe adherence to the Scripture can prevent them, and preſerve the ſpirit of Truth diſtinct from the ſpirit of Error. And when a national Reli-gion becomes ſo overloaded with error, as not to be able to ſupport itſelf by reaſon and argu-ment, the Politicians will naturally drive the nail that will go, and have recourſe to perſecu-tion. This has always been the practice of the Church of Rome, and ſome times of the Reform-ed Churches.

(*x*) Dr. Sykes.

The truth of what I am laying down, as to the method of Proſecutions among the Proteſtants upon accuſations of hereſy, will appear from hence, that in the judgment of the Archbiſhops, and Biſhops, and Clergy, of the province of Canterbury, in convocation aſſembled concerning diverſe aſſertions in the books of Mr. Whiſton, they examined them, not by the holy ſcripture ONLY, but added the two firſt general councils, and the Liturgy and articles of the church of England, in order to give judgment upon them. And if it be ſaid, that his caſe was particular, becauſe he was a Clergyman, we muſt refer to the Law books; where we are told, that hereſy is any thing that may hereafter be decided by act of Parliament with the conſent of Convocation(*y*). So that the principles upon which the Proteſtant Reformers built, are entirely contradicted: The Scripture, which they declare to be the only Rule of Faith, is ſuperſeded by a quite different Teſt; the appeal is removed from divine to human authority; the Right of private judgment or Liberty of Conſcience, the only juſtifiable plea for leaving the church of Rome, is as fully taken away by the Laws which enjoin the authority of Councils and human articles, as it is at Rome: and what is ſtill more diſcouraging

(*y*) Blackſtone, vol. IV. pa. 49, 50. Stat. 9, 10. Wm. III. c. 32.

to the cauſe of chriſtianity, is, the terrifying aſpect of the Laws againſt hereſy as they now ſtand; and like a two-edged ſword, cut on both ſides. The marks of hereſy are ſo very different and oppoſite, and the different Creeds and Articles ſo contradictory to one another, as I ſhall hereafter ſhew in ſeveral inſtances, that, upon ſome very important queſtions of Divinity, a man is equally liable to be condemned of hereſy whether he maintains the affirmative or the negative. To ſay nothing of the impoſſibility of avoiding it in ſuch articles as are not now heretical, but may be made ſo whenever the Parliament and convocation pleaſe.

But, in a very ſhort time, the Proteſtants became ſenſible, that by framing articles of Religion they had only framed their own chains, and began to be very uneaſy under them; they found them too tight: and to give them ſome relaxation in their ſtruggle for liberty, K. Ja. I. put forth a declaration, giving them leave to ſubſcribe in different and contradictory ſenſes. Since which time it has never been gueſſed at with any probability, what uſe they can poſſibly be of: while the miſchief of them is manifeſt, in bringing into the Church, another Rule of Faith different from the Scripture, and thereby taking away from the Proteſtant Churches the Eſſential and fundamental princi-

ple

ple of their Conſtitution. And here the Proteſtants may be compared to the Iſraelites when they deſired a King in imitation of the neighbouring nations, while the *Lord their God was their King*. Thus the Proteſtants muſt have their Articles and Subſcriptions, becauſe the Roman Church had them: not conſidering that the Roman Church forbids the uſe of the Bible, and therefore it became neceſſary for them to ſupply its votaries with human inventions, or elſe they would have *no Rule* to go by. But why the Proteſtants ſhould not be ſatisfied with the Laws of God, and why they ſhould change the liberty of the Goſpel for human laws, or join them together, (which never ſerved to any purpoſe ſince the days of Conſtantine, but to give occaſion to diviſions, maſſacres and murders), can only ariſe from their own vices and follies. And they have been already puniſh'd with their own Inventions; by not being able to defend their own Creeds, and ſtill continue to be ſo.

And yet notwithſtanding the Peace and Quiet that we have of late enjoyed, merely by the Candour and Moderation of the times, in not examining into our different opinions: and notwithſtanding the many dangers that hang over our heads and the heads of our poſterity, if an age of Bigotry ſhould follow this age of diſſipation, and the Laws ſhould be put in execution againſt us, let us believe how we pleaſe;

we

we are told by perſons learned in the law, " that every thing is as it ſhould be, unleſs that " perhaps Hereſy ought to be more ſtrictly de- " fined; and no perſecution permitted even in " Eccleſiaſtical Courts TILL the tenets in queſ- " tion are by proper authority declared to be " Heretical; and that under theſe reſtrictions " it ſeems neceſſary for the ſupport of a nati- " onal Religion [whether Popery, Paganiſm " or Mahometan, the argument is equally con- " cluſive] that the officers of the Church ſhould " have power to cenſure Hereticks, but not " extirpate(z)."

Here we find the ſame opinion is maintained by the Proteſtants, which muſt have prevented the propagation of the Chriſtian Religion at firſt among the Jews and Heathens; and all Reformation of the errors which were afterwards introduced into it. And can ſuch a principle be conſiſtent with a Religion, which made its progreſs in oppoſition to all the power of the Roman Emperors, and all the Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures of the Roman Prieſts, whether Pagan or Papiſtical? " It is certain, that in Eng- " land, though the Pope had as great power " as any where; yet there were no *executions* " for matter of opinion known till the time of " Henry IV. who, becauſe he uſurped the " Crown, was willing by all means to endear " the Clergy by deſtroying their enemies, that

(z) Sir Wm. Blackſtone.

" ſo

" ſo he might be ſure of them to all his pur-
" poſes(*a*)." But how far our Politicians will carry their Church cenſures, when they find them not effectual to prevent the evils they are in fear-of, I have already obſerved; and it plainly appears in ſeveral inſtances, even in worthy and good men who have turned perſecutors and murderers. But how contrary is all ſuch power to the Religion of Proteſtants, even though it ſhould not extend to extirpation!

Let us conſider this matter nearer, and enquire whether Perſecution, though ſhort of extirpation, upon account of Hereſy, be founded upon the Laws of Chriſt, or the ſpirit of antichriſt.

And firſt what occaſion is there that the Chriſtian Religion, when eſtabliſhed in any nation, ſhould have any more or any other Articles in it, than what are plainly expreſſed in the Scripture? I will venture to anſwer, none at all: and the twentieth Article of the Church will ſupport me in the aſſertion: Becauſe; it is undoubtedly true, that whatever is added to the Scripture is no part of it; and conſequently no part of Chriſtianity; and to determine upon ſuch doctrines as are uncertain and problematical, is to uſurp the authority of the Lawgiver;

(*a*) Taylor's Lib. of proph. Ded. 27.

and

and to condemn to death upon no better evidence is murther.

" He that depends upon another perſon's " interpretation of a Law or doctrine, either " willingly or ignorantly, makes the Law and the " Lawgiver both ſtales, and obeys only the In- " terpreter. As if I ſhould pretend that I ſhould " ſubmit to the laws of the King of England, " but ſhould indeed reſolve to obey them in " that ſenſe, which the King of France ſhould " put upon them. Whatever they were, I pre- " ſume every underſtanding Man would ſay, " that I did indeed obey the King of France, and " not the King of England. If I ſhould pre- " tend to believe the Bible; but yet I ſhould " underſtand it according to the ſenſe which the " chief Mufti ſhould put upon it; who would " not ſay, that I were a Chriſtian in pretence " only, but indeed a Mahometan(*b*)."

Men therefore can have no authority to determine for others upon doubtful queſtions; much leſs to make ſuch determinations to be teſts of Hereſy; and for this plane reaſon, becauſe they are ignorant themſelves on which ſide the queſtion the truth lies, and men of as much knowledge and virtue as themſelves underſtand it in a different manner. Such an authority therefore, without Infallibility, would be a contra-

(*b*) Chillingworth's Rel. of Prot. preface, § 10.

diction; becauſe it would be an authority to eſtabliſh falſhood as well as truth: And therefore the Romaniſts argue very conſiſtently and juſtly, that wherever there is ſuch an authority the judge muſt be infallible. And the Proteſtants argue as ſolidly, that as the Popes have contradicted one another in their decrees, and conſequently are not infallible; they can be poſſeſt of no ſuch authority.—If there be no more Infallibility among the Proteſtants, than there is among the Popes; *by whom is Hereſy to be more ſtrictly defined?* or by what new data, or new inſpiration, is the matter to be decided? and laſtly, what benefit can the Politicians expect to accrue to the State, by rooting out the belief of ſuch doctrines, as, for any thing they know to the contrary, may be very important Truths? what advantage from puniſhing as good and uſeful ſubjects as any they have among them, merely becauſe they do not agree with their Rulers about ſome abſtruſe queſtions, which have been litigated perhaps for many hundred years between men of Learning and Virtue; merely becauſe they ſometimes may ſee farther than their Rulers and ſometimes not ſo far?

Let us then enquire by what new Data or Inſpiration is Hereſy to be more ſtrictly defined? If by divine authority (and that it muſt be, if it be by any proper and ſufficient authority, for any other authority is more likely to define it

wrong

wrong than right) where ſhall we find any more light to direct us than the learned men who went before us?

The Politicians indeed, and the Lawyers, may perhaps think, that the Laws of the land can make any thing Hereſy, or that an *act of Parliament* can do it with the *aſſent of Convocation* (*c*); as they may make what they pleaſe to be Felony; and ſo one thing may be hereſy in France, and the contrary in England. But the queſtion is not what is called Hereſy in Synods or Councils, either eccleſiaſtical or civil, where a man may be deemed a Heretick for not worſhipping Saints or Images, but what is ſo called in Scripture, and is really diſpleaſing to God, and immediately detrimental to the peace of ſociety. For nothing is more unworthy of a Politician, than to ſuffer any thing to be puniſhed as a crime, which is not ſo in itſelf, and ſerves only to inſnare the innocent. Nor is it only impolitick, but dangerous, if we may truſt the famous Wickliffe, who ſays, "no Prelate ſhall excommunicate any one unleſs he "knows that God hath firſt excommunicated "him: and he that ſo excommunicateth, is "thereby a hereſick excommunicate." In ſhort, where the Liberty, and property, and perhaps the life of a man is concern'd in a Ver-

(*c*) See back, page 36.

dict, a good and a wiſe man would never think himſelf too cautious in determining ſo difficult a queſtion. The votes of a Parliament or Convocation, can no more make that Hereſy which is not ſo in its own nature, than they can make falſhood to be truth, or by declaring a crooked line to be the ſhorteſt one that can be drawn between the extreme points, will make it ſtrait. Was Vigilius a heretick, becauſe he was condemned and burnt as ſuch, for aſſerting the Antipodes? or Galilæo, who, if he had not recanted, would have ſuffered the ſame fate, for maintaining the Earth's motion? Is it a hereſy, to ſay, that Earthquakes are produced by natural cauſes; or, that the number of years from the begining of the world is uncertain? or, that there are many worlds, all which Philaſtrius has marked as ſuch(*d*)? Were the Priſcillianiſts, who were murdered by Maximus, hereticks, becauſe they would not eat their herbs boiled with fleſh(*e*)? or the Artotyres, becauſe they offered bread and cheeſe in their myſteries? or the Taſcodrugites, or Paſſolorynchites, becauſe they put their fingers upon their noſes or mouths during prayers(*f*)? or the Stercorarians, becauſe they believed that the Euchariſt broke their Faſt, and was liable to digeſtion? Or was St. Paul a heretick, becauſe he worſhipped God

(*d*) Philoſ. Hær. 54, 63, 65. (*e*) Baxter's Ch. Hiſt. (*f*) Dupin's Eng. Vol. II. page 48.

after

after the manner that ſome call Hereſy? Or, are thoſe Chriſtians Hereticks who agree with him in the belief that there is one God and Father of all, who is above all. Eph. iv. 5. Abſolute power, and Zele, without knowledge, may declare it Heretical to kneel in the church, or to ſtand upright; to faſt or to feaſt; and can puniſh for any thing, or for nothing, and carry on a ſimilar ſcene of Superſtition and iniquity againſt good and uſeful ſubjects, under the pretence of hereſy, to that which was acted in new England, under the pretence of Witchcraft; where, after they had murdered a number of innocent people, and began to fall upon the chief men of the colony, they found at laſt, that they had been all wrong; and the poor Witches knew no more of the Devil than thoſe who condemned them did of Juſtice, Chriſtianity, and common ſenſe, which were all overwhelmed in Bigotry, and Superſtition.

The notion of commanding a man's Faith by a law is thus condemn'd by Ambroſe. "Thoſe," ſays he, "whom Auxentius could not deceive "by his diſcourſe, he thought ſhould be ſmote "with a ſword; uttering with his mouth, and "writing with his hand bloudy laws, as think-"ing that a law can command men's Faith;" and in a journey into Gallia he refuſed to communicate with thoſe Biſhops who would have ſome certain Hereticks put to death. The

emperor

emperor Marcian in like manner, who called together the council of Chalcedon, and was a Prince highly commended for his piety, ſolemnly proteſted, that he had forced no man to ſubſcribe or aſſent to the Council of Chalcedon againſt his will; for, ſays he, we will not draw any man into the way of life by violence or by threats; and Hoſius ſays the ſame thing of Conſtans, that he never compelled any man to be Orthodox. And this Mr. Daillé obſerves is the courſe that is approved by all the ancients(*f*).

No good man in the Catholic Church, ſays Auſtin, allowed the Puniſhment of Hereticks with death; and if the Luſt of Revenge in any perſon do render evil for evil, we do not approve of them though their Puniſhment be *much leſs* than death; much more do we deteſt the robbing any of their private goods, or taking away what belongs to them, though they be done for the procuring of UNITY; all theſe things diſpleaſe good men, they forbid, they hinder them as much as they can, judging them not laudable but damnable. Aug. con. Creſcon Grammat. L. iii. Cap. 50.

And ſuch was the opinion of the moſt learned Biſhops and Fathers of the Church in former ages. As muſt appear by the quotations from them in this pamphlet, to which purpoſe ſee the preface to a diſcourſe concerning the Laws

(*f*) Daillé Engliſh. page 174.

of

of the Church of Rome, made againſt Hereticks, written, as ſuppoſed, by Dr. Morris, Chaplain to Abp. Sancroft, and reprinted by the order and encouragement of Abp. Wake, and publiſhed by Dr. White Kennet, Bp. of Peterborough.

But if Hereſy muſt indeed be more ſtrictly defined, what man in the world is equal to the undertaking? The Proteſtants pretend not to Infallibility: muſt we then appeal to the Papiſts?

St. Auſtin, ſpeaking in general, ſays, a Heretick is one who follows falſe or new opinions for ſecular advantages(*g*). But who ſhall judge whether the opinion be either new or falſe? This is the very queſtion, which, with relation to ſome doctrines, the chriſtian world has been diſputing upon from the days of the Nicene Council. And who can tell, but God alone, whether he follows them for ſecular advantages? Mr. Chillingworth ſays, he that believes the Scripture, and endeavours to believe it in the true ſenſe, cannot poſſibly be a Heretick; and Mr. Hales of Eton ſays, "Hereſy is "an act of the will, and not of reaſon; a lie, "and not a miſtake." And when Auſtin comes to be more particular, he ſays the ſame thing; for he allows that "to make a heretick, there

(*g*) Hæreticus eſt qui alicujus temporalis commodi & maxime Gloriæ & principatus ſui gratiâ, falſas vel novas Opiniones gignit vel ſequitur. Aug. de Definit.

"muſt

" muſt be not only an error in judgment but a " perverſeneſs in will(*b*) ". And in another place he ſays, " It cannot at all, or without " great difficulty be defined regularly, what it " is that makes a man a heretick(*i*)."

Bp. Taylor ſays, " if a man's error be not " voluntary and part of an ill life, then, be- " cauſe he leads a good life, he is a good man " and therefore no heretick: no man can be a " heretick againſt his will(*k*)."

On the other hand, if we conſult the Reformatio Legum carried on under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. purſuant to an act of Parliament; we ſhall find Hereſy to be of ſuch a comprehenſive nature, that no man can avoid it. The words of the Reformatio Legum are theſe, Hæc eſt differentia inter blaſphemiam & hæreſin, quod blaſphemia contemptu contumelias in Deum projicit & iracundia: ſed Hæreſis *errore* falſas opiniones ſuſcipit & inſcienter.

Hereſy is when falſe opinions are taken up unwittingly and by miſtake. And who can tell

(*b*) Qui ſententiam ſuam quamvis falſam atque perverſam nulla pertinaci animoſitate defendunt, quærunt autem cautâ ſollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint nequaquam ſint inter Hæreticos deputandi. Augus. contra Manichæ. 24, q. 3.

(*i*) Quid vero faciat Hæreticum regulari quadam Definitione comprehendi, aut omnino non poteſt at difficiliter poteſt. See Emlyn's narrative, page 65.

(*k*) Liberty of Proph. § 2. Num. 12.

if

if Hereſy ſhould come to be more ſtrictly defined, whether the definition of Mr. Chillingworth, Mr. Hales, and Bp. Taylor (not to mention what St. Paul ſays, that a Heretick is ſelf condemned) would be overruled by the Reformatio Legum? Or ſuppoſe another Diana Valentina (*k*) ſhould undertake to reform the Church: who can doubt in ſuch a caſe, that the heretick hunters would have as good noſes, and be as ſtaunch, as the witch finders of New England; and ruin as many honeſt men? for all the rogues and hypocrites would be orthodox, and join the pack.

Hear what Dr. Sherlock ſays againſt the Papiſts; and it is juſt as true when objected to the Proteſtants. "While nothing was Hereſy but "the denial of a plane acknowledged Article "of the Chriſtian faith, and there was no diſ-"pute who were Hereticks, the power of de-"poſing Hereticks was ſacred and venerable, "and had its juſt authority and effects; but

(*k*) Father Paul, in his hiſtory of the Council of Trent, tells us, that about the time that Servetus ſuffered, many were burnt in France for Religion; not without the indignation of honeſt men, who knew that the violence uſed againſt the poor people was not for piety and religion, but to ſatiate the covetouſneſs of Diana Valentina, the King's miſtreſs, to whom he had given all the confiſcations of goods made in the Kingdom for the cauſe of Hereſy.

" ſince the controverſy is, *what is Hereſy?* the
" world is divided about it. Though the pow-
" er remains, yet the Exerciſe of it becomes
" contemptible; when a church firſt coins new
" articles, and then cenſures and depoſes them
" for Hereticks who do not believe them."

Is not this the very caſe of thoſe proteſtant Churches, which interpret the Scripture by their own fallible judgment, in framing Articles and Liturgies; and then, falling in love with their own ſagacity, bind the ſame upon poſterity, making thoſe very Articles and Liturgies the teſts of Hereſy, and condemning thoſe who will not acknowledge them to impriſonment, and confiſcations, and death? Is not this, to ſet their own fallible interpretations upon the ſame footing with the infallible word of God? And ſhall the Proteſtants, who condemn this, be guilty of the ſame Tyranny? Yet this has been the caſe.

What can be more amazing, than to ſee the profeſſors of a Religion, " a pure and humble
" religion," as Mr. Gibbon juſtly deſcribes it,
" which gently inſinuated itſelf into the minds
" of men," and was founded upon love, and built up in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed opinions of the Country in which it firſt appeared, and to every other Religion in the world; and was afterwards reformed from the errors which had crept into it by the ſame kind of oppoſition; who could imagine, I ſay, that its Profeſſors

ſhould

ſhould no ſooner get free from the perſecution of their enemies, than they ſhould immediately arrogate to themſelves the very ſame power over others, which they had juſt before groaned under; and ſhould uſe the very ſame arguments to bite and devour one another, which they had condemned as tyrannical: nay, in the caſe of Mr. Emlyn, even when they were themſelves only under a toleration, and were obliged to the lenity of Government for their own ſafety. And Bp. Taylor, to the ſame purpoſe, obſerves, "that there were Divines in Lower Germany "who with reaſon ſpake againſt the Inquiſition, "and the reſtraining Prophecying [or liberty in "preaching] who yet when they had ſhaken off "the Spaniſh yoke, began to perſecute their "brethren." Page 208.

Who can think, without horror and amazement, of ſuch excellent men as Cranmer and Ridley condemning an unhappy woman to death for being an Anabaptiſt, and defending it by the Sophiſtical argument of ſtoning Blaſphemers under the law of Moſes; (as if that had given them the power of burning an Anabaptiſt, who is no Blaſphemer under the laws of Chriſt) while the young weeping King, whoſe unſophiſticated mind was open to the common ſenſe and feelings of Human nature, ſaw and lamented her unhappy fate.

Without doubt theſe unhappy men were ſenſible of their errors when they were brought to the ſtake themſelves, and could then ſee planely enough, that every deviation from the opinion of a ruling party, was not hereſy: and if it was, yet the laws of God give the Chriſtians no more right to murder a heretick than a true Believer, whatever the Laws of the State may do.

What did the two great Perſecutors, Cyril and Neſtorius, gain by defining hereſy more ſtrictly when they both fell into the ſnare they had driven others into? And what can we deſire more for the peace and ſafety of all good men, (next to the abolition of the ſevere laws already in being) than to prevent all inquiry into hereſy, and ſuffer the Laws of the land againſt us to lie dormant as they now do? But ſtrange as it is, there are many men of ſo violent a temper againſt ſuch as differ from them in opinion upon religion, that they rather chuſe the ſword to hang over their own heads, and the heads of their Poſterity, than that both of them ſhould be delivered, by a repeal of ſuch Penal Laws, from the ſame Danger.

If we were only to conſider the difference of opinion between the orthodox Chriſtians, as they are called, and the Scripturarians, who are now the only genuine Proteſtants; or the different doctrines of the Polytheiſts, Arians, Sabellians, and Socinians, which are, all of them, ſo eaſy to condemn, and ſo difficult to avoid,

that

that thoſe who have written againſt one of them have been generally accuſed of falling into a contrary one which is looked upon as equally heretical; we ſhould ſee the impoſſibility of ſettling theſe points authoritatively, without putting the whole nation into a ferment upon a ſubject abſolutely unneceſſary to be ſettled, and of no publick uſe. It is an eaſy thing to talk of defining theſe matters more ſtrictly, but no ſuch eaſy matter to perform. The chriſtians have been murdering one another upon theſe ſubjects for theſe 1400 years, (which every man of them muſt hereafter account for at the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, who never gave them any ſuch authority) but they are not at all the nearer to an agreement.

Theſe ſubjects were left unexamined at the Reformation; and the world, even at this time of day, is hardly cool enough to undertake ſuch a buſineſs. Melancthon was very ſenſible of this, and foreſaw that the diſputes about the Trinity would break out one time or other; and he ſpeaks of this as Juſtin Martyr does, without the leaſt intimation of any evil deſigns on either ſide among ſuch as ſhould differ in ſentiments, "You know, ſays he, that I was always fearful "that theſe things about the Trinity would break "out one time or other. Good God! what "Tragedies will this queſtion raiſe among po-

"ſterity

" ſterity, whether the Logos be a *Subſtance*, whe-
" ther the Spirit be a *Subſtance*(*l*)."

But why will the Politicians ſuffer theſe tragedies? Why will they be ſo impoſed on by their bigotted Prieſts, as to ſacrifice uſeful and faithful ſubjects to their ambitious rage? The very queſtion which Melancthon here ſpeaks of, as cauſing ſuch tragedies, is conſidered cooly and diſpaſſionately by Juſtin Martyr, as I obſerved; and the ſide of the queſtion he diſapproves, which is now called Socinianiſm, is diſmiſſed by him, without any other cenſure than merely his approbation of the contrary opinion(*m*).—And the ſame was the caſe with the Homoouſian doctrine, which hath cauſed ſo many perſecutions and murders ſince, as may be ſeen in a letter of Conſtantine the Great, which he ſent to Alexander and Arius by Hoſius; in which it evidently appears, that it was not then conſidered as a fundamental article ὲ περὶ τὲ κορυφάιε τῶν ἐν τῷ ιομῷ παραγγιλμάτων, but of little importance; ὑπερ λίαν ιλαχίςων, very minute matters; ματαιὼν και μηδαμῶς ἀναγκαίων, vain, and by no means neceſſary; which was no obſtacle, as he obſerves, to their having one and the ſame

(*l*) περὶ τῆς τριάδος ſcis me ſemper veritum eſſe, fore ut hæc aliquando erumperent. Bone Deus quale Tragœdias hæc quæſtio excitabit ad Poſteros ει ειςιν ὑποςασις ὁ λογος, ει ειςιν ὑποςασις το πνευμα. Epiſt. Melanch. l. 4. Epiſt. 140. Edit. Lon.

(*m*) Dial. cum Tryph. 358.

Faith,

Faith, and one opinion in religion(*n*); much leſs, I may ſurely add, a brotherly love and Charity.

Theſe things, ſays Dr. Whitby, could not have been ſaid by the Emperor, who was ſurrounded by pious men, whom he conſulted, nor would have been inculcated upon the Alexandrians by Hoſius, a man approved for purity of faith, in order to reduce them to peace and concord, nor have been recommended as they were, by Euſebius and Socrates, as extremely neceſſary, and admirable advice, and full of wiſdom, if they had imagined the controverſy was then moved concerning a capital article of Faith, and neceſſary to be believed for Salvation(*o*).

It is manifeſt therefore that the heats and animoſities among Chriſtians upon theſe ſubjects have not ariſen from the nature of the queſtions themſelves, but from the Artifice and miſrepreſentations, and bigotry, by which the paſſions of mankind have been kept up for theſe 1400 years, ὑπὲρ ἐλαχίστων, as Conſtantine expreſſes it, upon matters of very ſmall importance to Salvation.—And yet ſo ſanguine were the Eaſtern and Weſtern churches upon the queſtion, whether the holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father, according to the Conſtantinopolitan creed, or from the Fa-

(*n*) Apud. Euſeb. de Vita Conſtan. L. ii. c. 68, 71.
(*o*) Soc. Eccles. Hiſt. L. i. c. 7, 8.

ther

ther and the Son, according to what is called the Nicene Creed, that the Weſtern Church, in the firſt Canon of the ſecond Council of Lions, declares damnamus & reprobamus, we damn and reprobate all ſuch as preſume to deny that the holy Spirit doth eternally procede from the Father and Son; and on the other hand the Eaſtern churches, on every holy thurſday, excommunicate as Sciſmaticks and Hereticks all the Latins (ſo they call the weſtern Church) that do not hold that he procedes from the Father only; (*p*) and thus, if there was any validity in their anathemas and excommunications, the whole world is damned together. And yet, if the Chriſtians then believed as they ſeem to do in ſome of their preſent creeds, that the ſubſtance of the Father and Son be one and the ſame, the queſtion whether he proceeded from one or from both, muſt be abſolutely unintelligible, and they curſt one another without any meaning.

However, as long as they make uſe of no other than ſpiritual weapons, they only hurt themſelves; if they procede any farther, it is the buſineſs of the civil magiſtrate to put a ſtop to all ſuch unwarrantable acts and breaches of the

(*p*) Father Simon's Crit. Hiſt. of the Religions of the Eaſt page 16, 17. Collect. of Unitar. Tracts vol. II page 8. Vide Lombard's Senten. Lib. 1. Diſtin. 11. B. Baron ad An. 809, 879, 883. Ben Mord. Let. VIII, page 38. Pearſon on the Creed, page 325.

Peace,

Peace, which are often ſuffered to follow ſuch unchriſtian animoſities; and to be no longer duped, as they ſtill are in many Countries, with that fallacious argument, ſo contrary to all hiſtory and experience, that a variety of opinions in a State is of a dangerous tendency.

It is but too true indeed, if the Politician looks into the hiſtory of the world, that he will obſerve, with wonder and amazement, the murders, devaſtations, and maſſacres that have ariſen, as may appear at a diſtant view, from a difference of religious ſentiments. But if he draws a little nearer, and is honeſt enough to own where the fault lies, he will confeſs his miſtake, and acknowledge that wherever a variety of opinions hath been allowed in any nation under heaven, it hath always increaſed its glory, wealth, and happineſs; and all the dangers and commotions laid to its charge, have univerſally ariſen not from difference of ſentiment, but a difference in political intereſts, and a vain endeavour in one party to ſuppreſs the other, and increaſe its own importance. It is the vain attempt of bringing this about by ſilencing their adverſaries, called the Heterodox and Sectaries, and forcing them to profeſs what they do not believe, that has ſo often ruined and depopulated countries, which would otherwiſe be rich, powerful, and happy. It is this that ruined the ſeven churches in Aſia, and made Africa a ſolitude. And it has been

chiefly owing to the folly of the Civil Magiſtrate, in making himſelf a party in ſuch diſputes, and not preventing their proceding to violence: whereas if he had maintained his proper Province, and prevented men of all parties and perſuaſions from moleſting one another, as his duty required, he would have bleſſed the Society he preſided over, with all the advantages which naturally ariſe from a Religious Liberty, without its ſuffering any of theſe Evils.

" I acknowledge, ſays Monteſquieu, that " hiſtory is full of religious wars; but we muſt " take care to obſerve, that it was not the " multiplicity of religions that produced thoſe " wars, it was the intolerating Spirit, which " animated that Religion, which thought ſhe " had the power of governing. It was the " ſpirit of Proſelytiſm, which the Jews con- " tracted from the Egyptians, and which from " them hath paſſed like an Epidemic and po- " pular diſeaſe to Mahometans and Chriſtians. " It is, in ſhort, the ſpirit of Enthuſiaſm, the " progreſs of which can only be conſidered as a " total Eclipſe of human Reaſon(*q*).

" The ancient Romans fortified their Empire, " by indulging all ſorts of Religious worſhip; " but their Poſterity deſtroyed it, by rooting " out the various ſects whoſe doctrines were not

(*q*) Perſian Letters, LXXXV.

" pre-

" predominant. Theſe ſects were compoſed " of entire nations, ſome of which, as the Jews " and Samaritans, had retained their ancient " religion after they were conquered by the " Romans; others were diſperſed through the " Country, as the followers of Montanus in " Phrygia, the Manichees, the Sabbatarians; " the Arians in the other provinces; beſides " which, the generality of the people in the " country continued in Idolatry, and infa- " tuated with a Religion as groſs as their un- " derſtandings. Theſe ſects Juſtinian cauſed " to be extirpated by the military, as well as " the Civil power; and the perſecuted people " revolting in their own defence, he thought " himſelf obliged to extirpate them from the " Empire: in conſequence of which he depo- " pulated many provinces, and whilſt he ima- " gined himſelf increaſing the number of the " faithful, he was only diminiſhing the race of " mankind(*r*).

" Conſtantine the great owed great obliga- " tions to the Clergy, it was they who had " ſettled him on the throne. But the con- " demning of Arius's doctrines, and the inſti- " tuting Confeſſions of faith, and Rules of diſ- " cipline, did not ſatisfy the fathers: they " brought the Emperor to paſs an act, that

(*r*) Monteſq. of the Grand. &c. of the Romans, p. 222; and Marmontel's Belliſarius, ch. xv.

" every one who would not in all things con-
" form to the declared meaning and intentions
" of the Church, ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed.
" Now this was going beyond any Pagan
" Prince: Nay, they perſuaded the Emperor,
" that all their tranſactions were to be looked
" upon as thoſe of God himſelf; and the Em-
" peror accordingly ſtrengthened the Council's
" decree with this formidable Law, that who-
" ever concealed an Arian book, and did not
" publickly burn it; whoever embraced that
" doctrine; whoever protected an Arian; or
" offered to plead for him in a Court of Juſtice,
" ſhould immediately ſuffer death by the hands
" of the common executioner. Thus thoſe
" hare-brained Shepherds, incapable of re-
" claming ſtrayed ſheep by mildneſs, and in the
" power of the Spirit, threw away the crook
" and took in hand the Rod, laying (to the ir-
" reparable damage of truth and of poor ſub-
" miſſive Souls) a reſtraint on Conſcience,
" which nature itſelf abhors. But the conſe-
" quence was anſwerable to ſuch deteſtable
" means. For, ſoon after, the erroneous Sect
" of the Arians became more powerful than
" ever, they even wrought ſuch a change in
" the Emperor himſelf, that he repealed all the
" acts of the Council, received the Arians into
" favour, baniſhed Athanaſius, and did inex-
" preſſible miſchief to the Church. The Arians

" followed

" followed the example of the too precipitate
" Orthodox, hewing them down on all ſides
" with the ſame ſword with which the latter
" had ſo furiouſly attacked them. Now this
" divine judgment ſhould naturally have open-
" ed the Eyes of the Clergy, had they not been
" utterly eaten up with an unſatiable deſire of
" lording it over mens Conſciences, which
" Paul however ſets forth in very black colours,
" as the moſt dangerous Hereſy, the very
" badge of Antichriſt, who places himſelf in
" Chriſt's judgment ſeat, aſſuming dominion
" over his brethren in matters of faith(*s*)."

If theſe things be ſeriouſly conſidered, what good can be expected to accrue to a State by attempting ſo impracticable and ruinous a Scheme as that of defining Hereſy more ſtrictly, or concerning themſelves in ſuch metaphyſical diſputes, which, as I obſerved, the new Teſtament always avoids? What benefit would it have been to England, if, in the late differences between South and Sherlock, the Government had interfered, and ſided with Dr. South, and the Oxford decree, that the doctrine of three infinite Spirits (for which Val. Gentilis was beheaded by the Proteſtant Senate of Bern) was impious and heretical; or with Dr. Sherlock, that the contrary doctrine (for which Van Pere was burnt in Smithfield) viz. that there was only one infinite

(*s*) Buan. Herport; pa. 169, 170, 199.

Spirit,

Spirit, was Hereſy and Nonſenſe, (as the different parties expreſſed themſelves) and had proceeded upon it to hang, fine, and impriſon, not only the Learned, but the tradeſmen and mechanics upon this Teſt; Would any man in the nation have been made a better ſubject, or even a better Chriſtian? and would not many good and uſeful Subjects have been brought, eſpecially among the divided Clergy, into great diſtreſs?

The behaviour of Gallio a Roman Magiſtrate, the brother of Seneca, in theſe circumſtances, would be well worthy the imitation of the Chriſtians. When Gallio was Deputy of Achaia, the Jews made an inſurrection with one accord againſt Paul, and brought him to the judgment ſeat, ſaying, This fellow perſuadeth men to worſhip God contrary to the Law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio ſaid unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked Lewdneſs, O ye Jews, reaſon would that I ſhould bear with you: but if it be a queſtion of words, and names, and of your Law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of ſuch matters: and he drove them from the Judgment Seat. Acts xviii. 12, &c.

Now what have the Magiſtrates in this Country to do with the metaphyſical Diſputes of the Chriſtians, where there is no matter of wrong or wicked lewdneſs, any more than the Roman Magiſtrate

giſtrate had with the complaints which were brought againſt St. Paul by the Jews? What was it to Gallio how St. Paul worſhipped God, as long as he did not moleſt his neighbours? and what is it to the Chriſtian Magiſtrate how we worſhip him? It is a matter out of his province, and out of his power to make us worſhip him at all. If it was a matter of wrong or wicked lewdneſs, the Magiſtrate would have reaſon to interfere; but as to matter of worſhip, every man muſt be left to do it as he thinks beſt pleaſing to God: and without this, it will be no worſhip, though the outward Ceremonies be ever ſo punctually performed. For every man has an unalienable right to believe according to known evidence: indeed it is impoſſible that he ſhould do otherwiſe: and conſequently no man or magiſtrate on earth can have a right to hurt another for becoming a Jew, a Mahometan, a Chriſtian, a Socinian, an Arian, or a Pagan; the Religion makes no difference in the Argument(*t*).

" It is worth notice, ſays Buan Herport in his " Eſſay, 193, that under Conſtantine the Great " the Church was in ſome meaſure moulded " into a political form; and thus looked on " as other civil communities, whoſe real welfare

(*t*) Tertullian ſays, Humani juris ac poteſtatis naturalis eſt unicuique quod putaverit colere: nec alii obeſt aut prodeſt alterius Religio, ſed nec Religionis eſt colere Religionem quæ ſponte ſuſcipi debeat, non vi cum et hoſtiæ ab animo libenti expoſtulentur. Ad Scapulam.

" conſiſts

" conſiſts in outward tranquillity, which is not " to be obtained but by wholeſome Laws, with " penalties annexed as compulſive." But the Church ſtands upon a very different footing: it is contrary to its nature [as Tertullian obſerves] that the true end of it ſhould be obtained by ſuch compulſory means. Again, its true welfare does not conſiſt in outward Tranquillity, Confeſſions, Canons, &c. [but in true genuine Chriſtianity, which is preferable to every thing elſe upon this account, that, when once it is admitted, it will, of itſelf, produce all the bleſſings, that can be wiſhed for, even by thoſe who think of nothing farther than Civil Utility] Non ſtudemus Paci in detrimentum veræ doctrinæ—ut facilitatis & manſuetudinis famam colligamus, &c. ſays Greg. Nazianzen.

It was the great fault of the Romaniſts, as Luther obſerves, in his anſwer to Vigerius the Pope's Nuncio, to eſtabliſh the Church with Governments taken from human Reaſons, as if it were a temporal State. This is that kind of *wiſdom* which is accounted *fooliſhneſs* with God. And on the contrary, not to regard thoſe politick reaſons, by which Rome doth govern, but to truſt to God's promiſes, and to refer to his Majeſty the management of Church affairs, is that human *folly* which is wiſdom with God (*u*).

(*u*) Father Paul's Coun. of Trent, by Bret, pa. 76.

And

And Biſhop Hoadly infers, from what he had before ſaid in his famous Sermon on the nature of the Kingdom or Church of Chriſt, that " the " groſſeſt miſtakes in judgment about the na- " ture of Chriſt's Kingdom or Church, have " ariſen from hence, that men have argued from " other viſible Societies, and other viſible King- " doms *of this world*, to what ought to be viſible " and ſenſible in his Kingdom: conſtantly leav- " ing out of their notion the moſt eſſential part " of it, *that Chriſt is King in his own Kingdom:* " forgetting this *King* himſelf, becauſe he is not " now ſeen by mortal eyes, and Subſtituting " others in his place as *Lawgivers* and *Judges*, in " the ſame points in which he muſt either *alone*, " or not *at all*, be Lawgiver and Judge; not con- " tented with ſuch a kingdom as he hath eſta- " bliſhed and deſires to reign in, but urging " and contending that *his* Kingdom muſt be " like *other* Kingdoms. Whereas he hath poſi- " tively warned them againſt any ſuch arguings, " by aſſuring that this Kingdom is *his* King- " dom, and that it is not *of this world*; and " therefore, that no one of his Subjects is Law- " giver and Judge over others of them in mat- " ters relating to Salvation, but *He alone*; and " that we muſt not frame our ideas from the " Kingdoms of this world, of what ought to " be in a viſible and ſenſible manner in his

" Kingdom." The difference between theſe Kingdoms ſhall be conſidered by and by.

Another hindrance to the propagaton of the Chriſtian Religion in this Kingdom, which is of much the ſame nature as the laws againſt hereſy and falls in with them, is the Authority of penal laws againſt Apoſtacy, which are common to the Proteſtant and Popiſh Churches; in both which we are allowed to uſe our reaſon ſo far as to take in the force of the arguments uſed in our converſion; but afterwards, if the ſame Reaſon ſhould cauſe us to apoſtatiſe, we are ſubjected to fines and impriſonment. " If any " Perſon educated in, or having made pro- " feſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, ſhall by " writing, printing, or adviſed ſpeaking deny " the Chriſtian religion to be true, or the holy " Scripture to be of divine authority, ſhall for " the firſt fact be rendered incapable of holding " any office or place of Truſt: and for the " ſecond incapable of bringing any action, " being guardian, executor, legatee, or pur- " chaſer of lands, and ſuffer three years impri- " ſonment without Bail(*x*)." And Bp. Hare obſerves, that though a man [perhaps] cannot be convicted of Hereſy [i. e. oppoſing the doctrine of the Catholick Church] " He may be " convicted of writing or ſpeaking againſt the

(*x*) Blackſtone, Vol. IV. 49, 50. Stat. 9, 10. Wm. 3. c. 32.

" eſta-

" eſtabliſhed Doctrine of the Church, and that " will draw on him the ſame Conſequences that " Hereſy would do—the doctrine of the eſta- " bliſhed Church will readily be ſuppoſed to be " the doctrine of the Catholick Church, and " therefore to oppoſe the doctrine of the one, " is in effect to oppoſe both. So that a man " ſhall be deem'd a heretic to all intents and " purpoſes, and ſentenced to the ſame Puniſh- " ment; though in the ſentence itſelf, for his " COMFORT, the word hereſy may be left " out (*y*)"

Who can read without amazement the Reſolution of the Whig parliament in 1689, to charge the Earls of Saliſbury and Peterborough, Sir Edward Hales and Mr. Walker with high-treaſon for their converſion to Popery (*z*)? The firſt Proteſtant Reformers would have taken it rather for a Reſolution of the Inquiſition, and ſtarted back at ſeeing the mark of the Beaſt ſo ſtrongly impreſſed upon it; as the daughter of Inachus is deſcribed to have done, when ſhe firſt viewed her new form in the water, and heard herſelf low.

——————— ſeſe externata refugit,
Pertimuitque ſonos, propriâque exterrita voce eſt(*a*).

The firſt thing that immediately ſtrikes one, upon hearing this law is the danger a man runs

(*y*) Difficult. and diſcouragements, page 23. (*z*) Dalrymple's Mem. pt. 2. page 102. (*a*) Ovid's Met.

into by becoming a Proſelyte to Chriſtianity; and the reflection how much ſafer he ſhould live in a Chriſtian country (where the laws are ſo ſevere againſt Apoſtacy) if he ſhould never take the chriſtian Religion upon him, and ſo avoid the danger both of Hereſy and Apoſtacy; dangers, which may equally attend him after Baptiſm, whether he alter his opinion or not. For though he may have received Chriſtianity at firſt as a religion agreeable to reaſon, and worthy of all acceptation, as laid down in the Scriptures; yet if his teachers ſhall afterwards convince him, that there are other doctrines belonging to the ſame Revelation which appear to him to contradict the divine attributes, or ſuch as are abſolutely abſurd; why ſhould he oblige himſelf to continue the profeſſion of it any longer contrary to his judgment and conſcience?

Or, why ſhould he engage, under the forfeiture of his liberty and property, that he will change his opinions whenever the Governors of the Church ſhall alter their's, and the Parliament and Convocation ſhall think fit to call that Hereſy, which before they told him was Orthodoxy, and he believed it and entered into the Church upon that belief? In neither of theſe caſes can a man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian without riſquing his natural rights as a man. And how can it be defended as a common act of Juſtice in our Chriſtian Governors, to admit their

Pro-

Proſelytes upon the belief of one plane Creed, and then to puniſh them for objecting to another obſcure one, which they had never agreed to.

One would think there could not be a greater diſcouragement to affright men from the Chriſtian font, than theſe are: For who can anſwer for his future Sentiments? If ſo great a man as Mr. Chillingworth could embrace Popery, and after that return again to Proteſtantiſm, upon ſuch ſubſtantial reaſons, what man would chuſe to lay himſelf under the ſevereſt penalties upon ſuch uncertainty, and deprive himſelf for ever after of his right of judging for himſelf, as reaſon and evidence ſhould preſcribe?

The reflection of the Fox in Horace is a ſufficient argument againſt openly profeſſing chriſtianity upon ſuch terms——

Olim quod Vulpes ægroto cauta leoni——
Reſpondit referam, quia me Veſtigia terrent
Omnia te adverſum ſpectantia, nulla retrorſum.

One cannot help reflecting with how little reaſon, and how much to its own diſgrace, Proteſtantiſm here takes example from Popery; as if there was no difference between truth and falſhood. In Popery there are a thouſand contradictions to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, which may require force and violence to keep men ſteady in the *profeſſion*, or at leaſt in the *belief* of that Religion; whereas genuine Proteſtantiſm may be truſted to itſelf, to rational

nal argument, to the common ſenſe of mankind; and it is not eaſy to imagine, that any conſiſtent Proteſtant can have the leaſt ſuſpicion that it ſtands in need, either of rewards, or of threats to ſupport it.

It is in vain to ranſack Reaſon or Revelation in defence of theſe intolerant Principles, ſo detrimental to human ſociety, ſo deſtructive to chriſtianity and the rights of mankind. And it is a particular happineſs to this nation, that the greateſt lawyers condemn them, and ſcruple not to declare in open Court, that "nothing is more "unreaſonable, more inconſiſtent with the rights "of human nature, more contrary to the pre-"cepts and ſpirit of the Chriſtian Religion, more "iniquitous and unjuſt, more impolitick than "Perſecution: it is againſt natural Religion, "reveled Religion, and Polity(*b*)."

But let us hear what is advanced in defence of theſe laws. "The belief of a future ſtate of re-"wards and puniſhments, the entertaining juſt "Ideas of the moral attributes of the Supreme "Being, and a firm perſuaſion that he ſuperin-"tends, and will finally compenſate every action "in human life (all which are clearly reveled "and forcibly inculcated by the precepts of our "Saviour Chriſt) theſe are the grand foundation "of all judicial oaths, which call God to witneſs "the truth of thoſe facts, which perhaps may

(*b*) Lord Mansfield.

"only

" only be known to him and the party atteſting;
" all moral evidence therefore, all confidence in
" human veracity, muſt be weakened by Irreli-
" gion and Infidelity(*c*)."

Reply. It is beyond all diſpute, that the Obligation of an Oath is weakened by Irreligion; and if by Infidelity, the Learned Writer meant Atheiſm, it is overthrown by Infidelity. But the buſineſs of this paragraph was, to defend the penal Laws that are made againſt Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian religion, whether it ſhould be to *no religion at all*, or to *any other religion*. And his argument, if concluſive, ſhould have proved not only that an Apoſtacy to Irreligion or Atheiſm weakened and overthrew the obligation of an oath: but, that an Apoſtacy to any *different religion* did the *ſame*; which he was not able to do. For though Chriſtianity contains the grand foundation of all religious Oaths, it is not the only Religion that does ſo. The Obligation of an Oath is common to all Religions, and is founded in all Religions upon the ſame principle of *Faith in God*. It is to be found in the Pentateuch, the Koran, and the Heathen Writers; that is to ſay, among Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans. But let us go on to examine the conſequence which is drawn from this obſervation (viz. that chriſtianity contains the grand foun-

(*c*) Judge Blackſtone.

dation

dation of religious Oaths) " Therefore all af-
" fronts to Chriſtianity, or endeavours to de-
" preciate its efficacy, are highly deſerving of
" human Puniſhment."

Reply. What has all this to do with the Apoſtacy of a Religious man from one Religion to another? from Proteſtantiſm to Popery, or from Popery to Proteſtantiſm? Has not a man a right to ſerve God as a Chriſtian in a Mahometan country, for fear it ſhould be looked upon as an *affront* upon Mahometiſm and an *endeavour to depreciate* its efficacy with regard to the obligation of an Oath? or has he the leſs right to do ſo, becauſe he was once a Mahometan? The argument is as good in one country as another, and alike in all Religions which hold the belief of a God, and the obligation of an Oath. And if the argument be valid and founded upon Truth, who could deſerve human Puniſhment more abundantly than the Apoſtles did, who travelled into many different countries, in order to inſtruct and reform mankind, and perſuade them to turn from Idols to the living God, or in the words of this Learned Writer, *to depreciate the efficacy of a Religion which held the obligation of an Oath.* In ſhort, this argument is either of no validity, or elſe it is an Apology, and a ſufficient one, both for the Jews and Pagans in all their Perſecutions of the Chriſtians, and even the crucifixion of Chriſt himſelf.

We

We are moreover told, in defence of theſe penal laws, that "about the cloſe of the laſt "century, the Civil Liberties which were then "reſtored, being uſed as a cloke of Maliciouſ-"neſs, and the moſt horrid doctrines, ſubver-"ſive of all religion, being publickly avowed, "it was found neceſſary for the Civil power to "interpoſe, by not admitting thoſe miſcreants "to the privilege of Society, who maintained "ſuch principles as deſtroyed all moral obliga-"tions—To this end was enacted the penal "Statute of 9, 10. of Wm. III. ch. 32," already quoted.

Reply. How can this Statute, which, it is ſaid, was made upon account of miſcreants who maintained principles that deſtroyed all moral obligation, extend, with any kind of Juſtice, to thoſe who Apoſtatiſe from Chriſtianity, either to Judaiſm, Mahometiſm, Paganiſm, or Deiſm, every one of which inſiſt upon moral obligation?

Murder and Adultery may indeed be propagated, as Athanaſius obſerves, by force and violence, agreeably to the author of them "who comes with axes and hammers to break "open doors," and requires nothing more than an external and hypocritical conformity: but true genuine Chriſtianity, in which nothing is religious but what is voluntary, can only be propagated by conviction; and there is no con-

viction in being told authoritatively, that ſuch is the ſenſe of Scripture; and if we will not believe it, we ſhall ſuffer in our liberty or property: for every man of common ſenſe, and who ever thought upon the nature of belief, muſt know, that the caſt of the die is as capable of convincing an honeſt man, as the formidable argument of fire and faggot.

It is allowed indeed by the great Lawyer, whoſe words I am conſidering, that it would be too ſevere to extirpate hereticks, and declared "that the officers of the Church ſhould "only have power to cenſure them:" or as the *Pretender*, in a letter to Mr. Charles Leſley, his Archbiſhop of Canterbury, expreſſes the matter more gently and with greater tenderneſs to our liberty and property, without the leaſt hint of danger to our lives, "The Church may "inflict Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures not extending "to any Civil Puniſhment."

Be it ſo: we know how that matter is managed in the Roman Church. The Church only cenſures, and delivers them over to the ſecular power; but the ſecular power is obliged to condemn and execute. But as to our Governors in this Country, if the Laws give a right to puniſh, it is mere trifling, as bad as among the Romaniſts to tell us, that we ſhould not extirpate. If they have any right at all to puniſh, or to lay on penalties upon account of

difference

difference of Opinion, which they may call Herefy, they have a right to do it as effectually as the Romaniſts, i. e. in ſuch a manner as to put an end to the evil by forcing a compliance with their deſires, whether it be neceſſary to that purpoſe to make uſe of fines, impriſonment, or Death. For all theſe Cenſures are ſuppoſed to be founded on the care of mens Souls; in compariſon with which, if a heretick continues firm in his principles, or, as the Ruling party would call it, obſtinate in his errors; and the paſſions of the Cenſurers are thereby ſufficiently heated, the expence of bloud will be looked upon as of ſmall account, when ſet in competition with the good of Souls, the cauſe of God, and the Peace of the Church: and ſo muſt end in Extirpation at laſt, whatever Antipathy the Cenſurers might have to ſuch Severity at the beginning of the Proſecution.

Even Bucer, though otherwiſe a man of gentle diſpoſition, did not ſcruple to declare in the pulpit, that Michael Servetus deſerved to have his entrails pulled out, and be torn in pieces: and Farrel, in a letter to Calvin, uſes an argument, which few, if any of the half-perſecutors would be able to withſtand. " It will be a " mighty thing if he (Servetus) dies a true pe- " nitent, undergoing but one death, though he " deſerves to die a thouſand times: and if he " endeavour to edify the Spectators, having

" made it his buſineſs to pervert many people
" that are dead, and others that are ſtill living,
" and even thoſe that ſhall be born hereafter.
" The judges muſt be very *cruel*, and perfect
" *Enemies* to Chriſt, if they are not affected with
" the horrid blaſphemies with which that per-
" nicious heretick attacks the divine Majeſty,
" and endeavours to overthrow the Goſpel, and
" to corrupt all churches. But I hope thoſe
" that are commended for inflicting a juſt pu-
" niſhment upon thieves and ſacrilegious per-
" ſons, will do their duty in this caſe, by *taking*
" *off* a man who has ſo long and ſo obſtinately
" perſiſted in his hereſy, and undone ſo many
" people—I beſeech you behave in ſuch a man-
" ner, that no one may be ſo bold in the time to
" come, as to publiſh new doctrines, and occa-
" ſion ſo much diſturbance as this man hath
" done."

Theſe are the diabolical aggravations by which the half-faced perſecutors are puſhed on, from ſmaller penalties, ſuch as are even now impoſed in this Country upon thoſe who differ from us in Religion, to fines, impriſonment and bloud. If we allow the Church or State a right to judge in Church queſtions, or matters of Faith, we ſhall ſoon find we have given up our Liberties and lives; which will from that time depend upon the will of others, and the temper of the times.

Luben-

" Lubenjecius tells us, that this Farrel, not " only determined that Servetus ſhould be cut " off, but the extirpation of all hereticks; " which gave Grotius occaſion to ſay, that the " ſpirit of Antichriſt reigned not only at the " Tiber, but alſo at the lake of Geneva."

Both Calvin, and dreaming Beza, as Sir Iſaac Newton calls him, wrote in defence of puniſhing hereticks by the Civil Magiſtrate. Each of theſe Reformers, ſays Lubenjecius, taking a dart out of the quiver of the Church of *Rome* and her *adherents*, to thruſt it with greater fury into the ſides of Hereticks of their *own making*.

Some indeed will tell us, " that the Dutch " Divines at Dort, and the Proteſtants in gene- " ral, allow of Church authority in the deciſions " of Church queſtions or matters of Faith." But what does it ſignify who allows or claims it, if nobody has a right to it? Mr. Hales, in his letter to Abp. Laud, ſays very truly, that, " in Church cauſes and matters of Fact, Eccle- " ſiaſtical Perſons, in caſes of their cogniſance, " have the ſame authority as any others have, " to whom power of Juriſdiction is committed; " their conſiſtories, their courts, their determi- " nations, ſtand upon as warrantable evidence " as the deciſions of other Benches and Courts " do. But in point of Church queſtions, if I " ſay the authority of the Church is *none*; I " know of no Adverſary that I have, the Church

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" of Rome only excepted: For this cannot be
" true except we make the Church a judge of
" controverſies; the contrary to which we ge-
" nerally maintain againſt the Church of
" Rome(*d*)."

The favourers of Church authority in matters of Faith, have no way to anſwer this, but either by actually diſclaiming their Proteſtant principles, and denying the word of God to be the only judge of Controverſy; or giving up the queſtion. And it is by no means ſufficient to reply, as it has been anſwered to the Author of the confeſſional, the learned Mr. Archdeacon Blackborne, " We know not what farther limi-
" tations, perhaps very ſufficient ones, Mr.
" Hales might be reduced to, in his private con-
" ference with the Abp. (*e*) (Laud)."

Let theſe writers, the favourers of Church authority in matters of Faith, ſpeak out, and ſay, what arguments they *themſelves* can produce, or what they imagine the Archbiſhop *did* or *could* produce, or what limitations can be *ſuppoſed to be produced*, to which Mr. Hales was reduced; and not tell us, *perhaps* he might be reduced we know not *how*, to we know not *what*.

But in truth we are here left in the dark; becauſe whatever arguments the Archbiſhop might *perhaps* have produced, were not able to bear

(*d*) Hale's Tracts page 224. (*e*) Third Letter to the Author of Confeſſional, page 125.

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the light as may be proved à Priori: For an authority to interpret ſcripture one way at Rome, and another way at Dort, and another way at London; that can damn us in one Country for believing the real Preſence, and in another for denying it; that decrees for the worſhip of images in one country, and in another againſt it; that is an Arian in one Country, Sabellian in another, and Socinian in a third: Calviniſtical in one Church, Lutheran in another, and Arminian in a third; and yet orthodox in all; could never come from the God of the Univerſe, but from the diſtracted minds of weak and fallible men; For God is not the author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints, II. Cor. xiv. 33.

"This locality of Truth, ſays Bp. Hall, of "Norwich, is the moſt idle and childiſh plea "that ever was impoſed upon men; away with "this Foppery (*f*);" and the Chriſtians who defend ſuch an inconſiſtent authority deſerve no other reply, than in the words of Phormio, quid vos malum ergo nos ludificamini? Nolo, volo; volo, nolo, rurſum; Cape, cedo; quod dictum indictum eſt, quod modo erat ratum irritum. The apparent abſurdity of this notion, ſhews the miſtake of the Churches in general, in hurrying up creeds and articles of Faith mere-

(*f*) Shaking of the Olive Tree, page 403.

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ly by a majority of votes, upon queſtions, before they underſtand the Subject, and frequently upon ſuch, as always were, and perhaps always will be problematical: Whereby they not only break that Unity, which they might otherwiſe preſerve among the different Churches; but create differences and cauſes of animoſity, even among Proteſtants of the ſame country. Epiſcopius hints at this miſtake, when, ſpeaking of the Nicene Creed, he ſays, præcipitata potius quam a compoſitis animis profecta(*g*).

The Papiſts act more wiſely. It was a publick advice, which John Baptiſta Cigala, Bp. of Albenga, gave at the Council of Trent, in forming their anathemas, ſo as to condemn the Lutherans, and keep peace among themſelves, to tolerate all the opinions in which they differed from one another, and to take care that no one do condemn another, but all might live in peace—To bring this about, the Cardinal of Santa Cruze obſerved what was diſliked in any Congregation, and took it away; and there was ſcarce a day in which he did not alter ſomething. He ſaw it impoſſible to bring ſo many Divines to a Uniformity of *ſentiment*, and therefore only attempted a Uniformity in *words*. And thus in general, they live together in peace and Unity, under a nominal Uniformity, as if it had been a real one in opinion: while the Proteſtants, by

(*g*) Ben Mordecai, Lett. I. Note xv.

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attempting that Uniformity of opinion, which they wiſhed for, and looked upon as practicable, loſt their labour in purſuit of a phantom, and broke into different Sects and Parties: and in thoſe particulars in which any thing more is required than a nominal Conformity, the Popiſh Sectaries are as much at war with one another, as the Proteſtants.

"There is no *middle* way between ſuffering every "thing to be freely diſcuſſed, and ſo acknow- "ledging the poſſibility of a miſtake on any re- "ceiv'd opinion; or the avowing this abſurdity; "that though bodies of men are liable to miſ- "take, yet their determinations are abſolutely "to be ſubmitted to, and acquieſced in without "farther inquiry. The little Genius's, who "would preſerve the method of half perſecution, "either have not conſidered this matter, or elſe "(in oppoſition to the conviction of their own "minds, in oppoſition to that ſacred Liberty, "which has advanced Truth in the world, ſo far "as it already obtains) they would propoſe "means for its defence, which would at firſt "have prevented the Knowledge of the Truth, "and have totally deſtroyed it afterwards from "the Earth(*b*)."

The Engliſh indeed appear to perſecute with great moderation towards the Papiſts, when they only double tax them: but there is no truſting

(*b*) London Journal, May 10, 1729

to a moderation that is not founded upon principle. If the Papiſts be in Truth dangerous to the State, and enemies of Society, ſuch a compromiſe is mere trifling with the public peace and Happineſs; But if they are peaceable, uſeful, and affectionate Subjects, we have ſurely gone too far, and admitted of a Doctrine, which will carry us into all the injuſtice, and Severity of the Romaniſts.

But ſome perhaps will defend theſe Severities, and argue, that Individuals, by entering into the Church, do give up ſome of their natural Rights for the ſake of enjoying the advantages of a religious Society, and among theſe, the power of *judging* and *acting* for *themſelves*; juſt in the manner as men are ſuppoſed to give up ſome natural rights, for the ſake of political advantages, when they enter into an alliance with one another to form a ſtate.

But this is a miſtake, even with relation to Civil Society; as hath been ſhewn in an excellent pamphlet, entitled, An Inquiry into the principles of Toleration, pa. 8. " A Man does " not in a State of Society, and under Civil " Government, part with any of his Original " Rights; he only Submits [or rather agrees to] " certain conditions and regulations, by which " thoſe Rights are, in a more effectual manner, " ſecured." He gives no man, or ſet of men, a power againſt himſelf: nor indeed do they ſtay

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for any ſuch leave; but exerciſe the right of ſelf defence againſt all men in general. When a man agrees with others, I'll defend you againſt injury, if you will defend me; there are no rights parted with on either ſide; but mutual rights defended. No man has a right to injure another; and conſequently, a general agreement between many, that none of them ſhould be injured, can take away no right from any one of the Society: a man can never give up the right of injuring another, becauſe he never had that right; and we muſt not confound Right with power.

But farther: the caſe, in matter of Faith, is ſomewhat different from that of *civil rights*. There are ſome things, and particularly the right of judging for ourſelves in all matters of Faith, and the right of acting accordingly, which are unalienable; no man can, without Sin, give up his belief in God, or in Chriſtianity; he is preengaged by prior and ſtronger obligations.

Thoſe therefore who urge this argument, as if the entering into the Church was like underwriting any other bargain or Covenant, where you ſee what you are bound to, and may refuſe if you do not like it, would do well to ſtate the parallel properly, and the caſes in which it will hold; and where it will not hold, there not to preſs it. " The bargain or Covenant made with " the Church by entering into it, cannot poſ-

" ſibly be abſolute, and without condition, and
" limitation; for neither can ſhe make ſuch
" compact with me, nor I with her: we are both
" under previous contracts, and Obligations.
" Our agreements, can be no other than mutual
" engagements, which members of a body cor-
" porate are under, to obey the bye-laws of the
" Society; which, we know, do always imply
" this condition, that they be not contrary to
" the Laws of the land; for if they contravene
" that; both the makers of ſuch bye-laws, and
" thoſe who yield obedience to them, will find
" themſelves obnoxious to puniſhment; and any
" ſingle perſon who ſhall have confined his obe-
" dience to ſuch bye-laws within the meaſure of
" the law of the land, will be found innocent
" and clear in the higher Courts; however he
" may be called promiſe-breaker, or bargain-
" breaker, or Oath-breaker, by theſe lower and
" inferior legiſlators; who have had the igno-
" rance or impudence to invade the province of
" the ſupreme Lawgiver, in bargaining away *his*
" right, and pretending to hold men to ſuch co-
" venants as are repugnant to *his* commands,
" and reſtipulate, on their own parts, ſuch
" things as are oppoſite to *his* authority."

No Chriſtian therefore can poſſibly have a right to enter *abſolutely* into any agreement with any Church, or State, by giving up the unalienable right of private judgment in mat-

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ters of Faith, and conſequently, no Church or State can have a right to demand it of him.

" I hear what ſome Whiſperers ſay," ſays Bp. Hall. " It is the determination of the Church " which makes what points ſhe thinks fit de " fide, and fundamental. Let me confidently " ſay, this is the moſt dangerous innovation " that can fall into the ears, hearts, and hands " of Chriſtians. If the Church can make ano- " ther God, another Chriſt, another heaven, " other prophets and Apoſtles, ſhe may alſo " lay another Foundation. But that you may " perfectly diſcover the fraud; what Church is " it, I beſeech you, by whom this power is " arrogated, and by whom is it uſurped? None " but the Roman, and that is but a particular " Church. I ſpeak boldly, there never was ſo " palpable a gullery(*i*)."

If this be the caſe, the Church and State, even though ſuppoſed, by Bp. Warburton, to be in alliance, can extend their power no farther than when they were ſeparate, either at Rome, or Dort, or England: for no power on Earth can have a right to require of any man what he has no right to part with; and therefore all Church-authority muſt be confined, as Mr. Hales obſerves, to outward forms of Church government, worldly concerns, and ſuch determinations as the Society has a right to

(*i*) Shaking of the olive tree.

entruſt

entruſt them with; all which are human. And if they ſhould attempt any legiſlative Power with regard to Church queſtions or matters of Faith, they ſhould encroach upon the Authority of Chriſt, who is the only Legiſlator in his own Church; and thoſe who would make ſuch Laws would be the Sciſmaticks, and not thoſe who ſhould be obliged in conſcience to ſeparate from them, rather than obey them(*k*).

But in truth, the very notion of an Alliance between Church and State at this time of day, and in this Country, in order to procure a power of right in matters of Faith, is not only imaginary, but wholly abſurd; and when it had a ſuppoſed Exiſtence, it was founded in bloud. For though the profane Rant of the Perſecutor Neſtorius, to the emperor Theodoſius, might be then looked upon as a preliminary article of Alliance between Church and State (clear me the earth of Hereticks, and I will in return give you the Kingdom of Heaven; aſſiſt me to deſtroy the Hereticks, and I will aſſiſt you to deſtroy the Perſians) becauſe two Supreme Authorities were then believed, one of which had power in the next world, and the other in this; by which means they were enabled on both ſides to furniſh their quotas; and the one might murther the hereticks, and the other

(*k*) Hale's Tracts, 179, 184. Chillingworth's Relig. of Proteſtants, p. 1. ch. 3, § 64.

abſolve

abſolve them from the guilt; yet where the Church is known to have no ſuch power in the next world, the Alliance is a mere fancy. The Romaniſts indeed pretend to retain the power ſtill, and declare their abſolutions and excommunications to be authoritative; and ſome there are among the Proteſtants, who ſtill talk of the power of the Keys, and hanker after the ſame Authority. But the following Letter from J. R. in which this pretended Authority is aſſerted, will expoſe the abſurdity of any ſuch ſuppoſed alliance, and the miſchief that muſt follow, if it was real.

Urbino, Nov. 29, 1717.

I thank you for the particular account you give me in your's of the 29th October, of the affair of Doctor Hoadly before the Convocation: to which there was a ſtop put, by a prorogation, to prevent an Inquiry into his Doctrine, and in all appearance a juſt Cenſure thereof in their own Eccleſiaſtical way. This, with many other proceedings of the Elector of Hanover, ſeems to be deſigned by Providence, to ſhew the Church and People of England, how little ſecure their Laws and Privileges are, under the preſent Government. For by the beſt Information I can have, the intrinſic ſpiritual power of the Church or Power of the Keys, as it was exerciſed by the Apoſtles, and the moſt

pure and primitive Church in the three firſt Centuries after Chriſt, hath ever been thought an eſſential Right of the Church of England. So that it may INQUIRE into Doctrines of its own members, and inflict eccleſiaſtical cenſures *not extending to any Civil Puniſhment.* Now the Civil Government putting a ſtop to ſuch proceedings, is in effect taking away that undoubted Right of the Church, which if it pleaſe God to reſtore me to my own juſt Right, I am ſincerely reſolved to maintain to it. The many repeated aſſurances that I have given of maintaining inviolably the Church of England, and all her juſt Rights and Privileges, ſecured to her by *ſo many Laws,* of confirming thoſe Rights in our firſt Parliament, and of giving what farther reaſonable Security on that head ſhall ſeem good to my People, is, I think, more than enough to quiet and ſatisfy the moſt ſcrupulous and apprehenſive, as to the ſecurity that Church will enjoy under my lawful government. And if the People would but compare what they now feel and ſee, to what they may then expect, the concluſion cannot but be very much to my advantage; for the opening the eyes of thoſe now deluded, and convincing them, that doing Juſtice to me, is the only ſolid Foundation for a laſting peace and happineſs in the Church and State.

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Having ſo far an opportunity, I could not but ſignify thus much to you, and you may communicate it to whom you think fit. I don't doubt but the Convocation will now ſoon meet again; for it would be too groſs to put it off a ſecond time: and then to be ſure it will take this caſe of Dr. Hoadly again under its Conſideration, and I ſhall be glad to hear from you what is done in it.

I am the more glad of your health, that you know how concerned I was at its not allowing you to ſtay longer in this Climate, which agrees better with my health than my Inclination. But I hope in God's mercy better times may come; and I wiſh we may ſoon meet, where we both ſo much deſire to be, and where I ſhall be able to ſhew you the ſingular regard I have for you

J. R.

Under the letter, from which the above Copy was taken by the writer of this pamphlet, was written,

Pretender's
The ~~King's~~ letter to Mr. Charles Leſley his Arch Bp. of Canterbury.

The word *King*'s was ſcratched out as above, and the word *Pretender*'s written above it, in the hand of Dr. *Benjamin Hoadly*, late Biſhop of *Wincheſter*, and after the words *Charles Leſley*, the words *his Arch Bp.* of *Canterbury*, are alſo written in the Biſhop's own hand; the reſt is all in another hand. The letter I copied at Chancellor Hoadly's houſe at Southampton.

We ſee by this letter (which no doubt was ſo worded as to be perfectly calculated for the principles of thoſe of a certain claſs who were deſigned to read it, that the Church of England has no power to inflict Civil puniſhment; it can only INQUIRE into the doctrines of its own Members, and inflict eccleſiaſtical cenſures. On the other hand, the State has not the power of the Keys; and has therefore no right to examine into the doctrines of its members, relative to religious matters. This being the caſe, we find, that in all Popiſh Countries the Church and State have entered into an Alliance, by which means the one condemns, and the other puniſhes: and this I ſuppoſe was to have been the method (the Laws of the land with regard to Hereſy all running that way) had J. R. and Mr. Charles Leſley met where they both ſo much deſired to be.

Here moreover we may obſerve, that the Church of England has an undoubted right, an intrinſic *ſpiritual* power, the power of the Keys, as it was exerciſed by the Apoſtles, which the State at that time refuſed to acknowledge, and which J. R. promiſes to maintain to it againſt its lawful Prince, with whom it was then in alliance (if there be any meaning in that whimſical notion.) And I am afraid there were many Churchmen at that time ſo apprehenſive of the Church's danger, that they were ready, if it could have been done with ſafety, to have left

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the alliance with King George the 1ſt. and entered into an alliance with J. R. and they might have defended their Treaſon upon the new-fangled principles of Bp. Warburton.

For, " The alliance between Church and " State ſubſiſts," ſays the Biſhop, " ſo long as " the Church thereby eſtabliſhed, maintains its " ſuperiority of Extent. Which when it loſes " to any conſiderable *degree*, the alliance be- " comes void; for the united Church, being no " longer able to perform its part of the Con- " vention, which is formed on reciprocal con- " ditions (viz. that it ſhall apply its utmoſt in- " fluence in the ſervice of the State, and the " State ſhall ſupport the Church,) the State be- " comes diſingaged."

Thus formerly, ſays the Biſhop, the Alliance between the Pagan Church, and the Empire of Rome was diſſolved; and the Chriſtian eſtabliſhed in its place; and the late Alliance between the Popiſh Church and the Kingdom of England, was broken, and another made with the Proteſtant in its ſtead(*l*).

By this way of reaſoning it follows, that if the Church and State ſhall differ, and the State becomes (let the cauſe be what it will) to any conſiderable degree unable to defend the Church, in what ſhe calls her rights and privileges, the Alliance becomes void on that ſide. For the

(*l*) Alliance, 176, 179, 246, 254.

State, not being any longer able to perform her part of the Convention, which is formed upon reciprocal conditions, the Church becomes diſengaged, and may enter into alliance with any other power that is able to ſupport it. either J. R. or any one elſe: [or, in other words, ſhe has a right to Rebel.]

It is amazing how far this ingenious ſcheme of Church power goes beyond the old ones; for, before this ſyſtem of Alliance was invented, all chriſtian eſtabliſhments, even at Rome itſelf, went upon a ſuppoſition that they built upon *Truth*, and never acted upon ſuch a barefaced ſyſtem of Politicks, with regard to Religion, as this does: " No man in the world, except " Enthuſiaſts and madmen," ſays Biſhop Taylor, " ever obtruded a doctrine upon the church, " but he pretended Scripture for it, or Tradi- " tion." page 98. But what ſays the Biſhop of Glouceſter?

He tells us, " the defenders of an eſtabliſhed " Religion have all along gone to ſupport it on " motives of TRUTH, and not UTILITY; " Whereas the TRUE END for WHICH RE- " LIGION is eſtabliſhed is, NOT TO PRO- " VIDE FOR THE TRUE FAITH, but " CIVIL UTILITY(*m*)."

Let us compare this notion, with the poſition lately advanced by his Grace of York, and we

(*m*) Alliance, 254.

ſhall

ſhall ſee in what a miſerable condition the chriſtian Church is left till the ſecond coming of Chriſt. His Grace informs us, that Religion is not able to rely on its own Energies, and it is the buſineſs of the State to provide for Goſpel truths. But if we apply to the State for that purpoſe, we are told, by Biſhop Warburton, that the true end for which Religion is eſtabliſhed is, not to provide for the true Faith; but, for civil Utility. So that between theſe two Divines, the Goſpel-truths have no ſupport at all, either from internal Pillars, or external Buttreſſes. The Eſtabliſhment hath clear'd its hands of ſuch an incumbrance, and directs its Energies to the ſupport of Civil Utility; and conſequently, wherever the Civil Utility ſhall appear to contradict the Goſpel, it tends to the ruin of the Chriſtian Church. For ſo far as a Chriſtian Church receives and eſtabliſhes articles of faith, contrary to the doctrines of Chriſt, ſo far it becomes apoſtate; and ſo far as it eſtabliſhes falſe doctrines, *knowing them to be ſuch*, ſo far it ceaſes to be a Chriſtian Church. In this, both Proteſtants and Papiſts, who have conſidered the ſubject moſt carefully, are agreed. Mr. Knot, in his ingenious book, called Charity maintained, &c. aſſerts, that any error which is maintain'd by the Church againſt God's Revelation, deſtroys the Church: and Mr. Chillingworth, in his excellent anſwer, allows it to

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be ſo, with this Proviſo, if the Church receives it, knowing it to be an error; but he adds, that it is impoſſible the Church ſhould do ſo, for, ipſo facto, it were a Church no longer"—And yet, what have we ſeen in the Church for many centuries but ſuch doctrines eſtabliſhed, as not one of our governors can believe to be true, becauſe they are contradictory. The principle of Civil Utility may require ſuch double dealing, but it muſt be at the riſque of an Apoſtacy; if either Mr. Chillingworth, Mr. Knot, or Sir Iſaac Newton have argued ſoundly.

But let us not confound the ſenſe of words in ſuch an unguarded manner, as to call the eſtabliſhment of Utility an eſtabliſhment of Religion. It may be called an aſſociation, a convention, a party, a Society, a Club; but an eſtabliſhment, which has no other end in view than CIVIL UTILITY, can never with any propriety, be called a RELIGIOUS eſtabliſhment.—Religion is a private affair, between God and our own Souls; and the State can neither encourage, nor diſcourage it; how much ſoever it may influence the outward profeſſion of it, and encourage hypocriſy. The Church therefore, conſidered as capable of alliance with the State, can only be conſidered as a political Society, in which Religion is quite out of the queſtion. And the Biſhop implicitly allows of this; for he tells us, in his dedication, that the Object

ject of Religion is *Truth*; and here, that the true end for which Religion is eſtabliſhed is not to provide for (Truth or) the true Faith, but Civil Utility. Hence it follows, that ſuch an Eſtabliſhment, not having Truth for its object, is not a *Religious*, but a political Eſtabliſhment.

Some learned men have argued from the words of St. Paul; that we ought to obey thoſe who have *rule over us*(*n*), and ſubmit ourſelves, becauſe they watch for our Souls; which argument he uſed, in order moſt effectually to perſuade the Hebrews to receive and obey the Goſpel, which he preached, for their Salvation; Not as having dominion over your Faith, ſays the Apoſtle, but as helpers of your joy, I Cor. i. 24. Now if the Apoſtles had no dominion over their Faith, though they watched for their Souls, moſt certainly the Civil magiſtrate can have none, who only watches for Civil Utility. So that, whatever authority the Apoſtles had, (which they never claim'd as reſiding in themſelves, but in the doctrines which they preach'd, never giving divine Authority to their private opinions) whether it be called Church authority or ſpiritual authority; the magiſtrate, who does *not* watch for our *Souls*, but merely for *Civil Utility*, and can teach us nothing but what we can teach ourſelves in matters of Faith,

(*n*) See Hoadly, Vol. II. p. 817, for the ſenſe of ſuch Phraſes.

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can have no claim to our obedience in that reſpect.

It may perhaps be ſaid, that a Church may be built up by the agreement of Perſons to unite in publick aſſemblies for the performance of Religious duties; and it is very true, that ſuch a Church or Society will have the authority to make what Laws or articles ſhe pleaſes, not contrary to the Laws of the land, or the Religion they profeſs; and they may bind one another to their agreement under pain of excommunication or expulſion; juſt as Ben Johnſon and his companions agreed upon articles and Rules for their Club at the Devil Tavern at Temple Bar: But then the Authority of thoſe Rules was merely human, and muſt have continued the ſame, though they had transferred it from the Members to the Civil Magiſtrate. And the Biſhops eſtabliſhed Church, is not at all the better in this reſpect, if there is not ſome Care taken to provide for Truth and Chriſtianity, as well as for Civil Utility.

But what is it that the Biſhop here calls the Church? It cannot be the viſible Church of Chriſt, as defined in the XIX Article of the Church of England, to be a Congregation of faithful Men, in which the pure word of God is preached, &c. for the Religious principles of theſe are unchangeably determined; but the Biſhop's Church is a mere party in Politicks, of the

the Chameleon kind, that can change and change again, as the hopes of Riches and Grandeur ſhall direct. In ſhort, a mere faction in the ſtate, and a very dangerous One.

And what is this but an alliance of the very ſame Nature, as Judge Burnet has deſcribed in his humourous dedication to the ſecond tale of a tub, between a hungry Author and his Patron. What was there intended to expoſe the conduct to Ridicule, is uſed by the Biſhop as a ſerious argument, and an example to be followed by the Church. " It " is the cuſtom of Mankind," ſays the dedication, " to follow the fortunes of a great man, " as long as he continues to be a ſupport to " his dependants; but when once his Power " is loſt, the croud forſake his Levée, and even " Shun the Idol to whom before they had paid " their homage."

But I cannot help obſerving before I leave his Lordſhip, that if his Lordſhip had been a real friend, even to the Temporalities of the eſtabliſhed Church, he ſhould never have ſuffered ſo dangerous a notion to become publick. For if ever the political governors of the Church become convinced, that our Religious Eſtabliſhment hath nothing more in view than CIVIL utility, they will immediately caſt their Eyes upon the revenues of the Church, and conſult, whether Civil utility may not be more

effectually promoted by expending them upon our fleets and armies, than in ſupport of Biſhopricks, Deaneries, Prebends, and Canonries, &c.

But the notion is as falſe as it is antichriſtian and ſcandalous. The whole Body of the people know, that they pay their Clergy, not for promoting Civil utility, for that is taken care of by other Taxes; but for ſtudying and preaching the Goſpel, and explaining its doctrines; not for the ſake of ſupporting a Hierarchy to make a Religion for them, but they ſupport the whole Body of the Clergy for the ſake of learning Goſpel Truths.

But all theſe wild miſtakes ariſe from conſidering the Church or Kingdom of Chriſt to be of this world, which Chriſt himſelf has declared, that it is not.

The plain truth of the matter ſeems to be this. The church of Chriſt, as by him fully and unalterably eſtabliſhed, to which nothing can be added without preſumption, is ſuperior to all States; but the Church of England, as by Law eſtabliſh'd, is dependent on the State, and has therefore no power to enter into alliances at all, any more than the army or navy. And nothing more can be mean'd by this church, as diſtinct from the Church of Chriſt, and dependent on the State, than a particular Society, encouraged by the State, which can make ſuch

private

private Laws as the State allows of: but this will give it no ſpiritual authority, nor any authority at all, except by compact, over its own members. They may agree to receive or pay for the performance of particular acts, which they may call religious, (but the religion of all actions lies in the heart, and not in the outward action) and they may agree to expel or excommunicate from that Society upon ſuch and ſuch defaults. All this they may do, as a Civil Society or Church; but as a Chriſtian Church, they have no right to do ſuch things, except upon Chriſtian principles. And therefore Wickliffe, who firſt ſowed the ſeeds of Proteſtantiſm in this Country, declares, that Excommunication, Suſpenſion, and ſuch like Cenſures, are not founded on the laws of Chriſt, but cunningly invented by Antichriſt. For as no man has a right, under a pretence of entering into a particular Society, to refuſe to any Subject the common Rights that belong to him by the laws of the land; ſo neither hath any particular Chriſtian Church, or member of it, a right to refuſe to any Chriſtian thoſe common Rights which belong to him by the laws of Chriſt(*o*).

Now the king of England is head of the Church of England, as well as of the State;

(*o*) Faſciculus rerum Expet. 136.

and there is no other ſupreme power in his Kingdoms, either eccleſiaſtical or civil, with whom he can poſſibly enter into an alliance. The State may make laws about the affairs of the Church of England, and regulate the eccleſiaſtical Courts; and in order to do this properly, may, if it pleaſes, conſult the Clergy about it: and in like manner, it may make decrees about the affairs of the Law, and in doing this, may conſult the Counſellors and Judges; or it may make laws about Trade, and conſult the Merchants. But to call this an Alliance between Church and State, or Law and State, or Trade and State, is a mere fallacy and deception. The State is ſuperior to them all, and makes laws for them all, as a Superior; and for that very reaſon, becauſe it is their Superior, it enters into no Alliance with any of them, but either gives them new laws, or ratifies the private ſtatutes which they make among themſelves, as it thinks moſt proper; and thus the State acts with all Societies alike.—But then theſe laws, as Mr. Hales obſerves, can only relate to the outward affairs of Church-government, and by no means to Church queſtions, or matters of Faith. All matters of Faith, as I obſerved, have been ſettled long ago by divine Authority; and the Eccleſiaſtical Authority, or Church Authority, ſo called becauſe it relates to Eccleſiaſticks, is

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as much a part of the Authority of the State in ſuch matters, as the Authority of a Court Martial, which only relates to the military. And if a Chriſtian State ſhould make laws which are contrary to the laws of Chriſt, knowing them to be ſo, that State would be in open and avowed Rebellion againſt Chriſt.

On the other hand; if it be aſſerted, that there is any alliance between the State and the Church of Chriſt, conſidered as the Kingdom of Chriſt, this is no leſs impoſſible. "The "Church of Chriſt," as Bp. Hoadly obſerves, "is the Kingdom of Chriſt. He is King in his "own Kingdom. He is ſole Lawgiver to his "Subjects as Chriſtians, and ſole Judge in "matters relating to Salvation. His laws and "ſanctions are plainly fixed; and relate to the "favour of God, and not at all to the rewards "and penalties of this world. All his Sub-"jects are equally his Subjects, and as ſuch, "equally without Authority to alter, to add "to, or to interpret his laws, ſo, as to claim "the abſolute ſubmiſſion of others to ſuch in-"terpretations. And all are his ſubjects, and "in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed "by him. The nature of God's worſhip was "once declared by him, &c.(p)"

(p) Bp. Hoadly on the nature of Chriſt's Kingdom.

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" Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as King," ſays Mr. Wm. Allen, " and Chriſtians as his Subjects, " and Laws by which he governs them, make " up this Spiritual Kingdom. The People " who are the Subjects of this heavenly King- " dom, own and acknowledge his authority, " power, and empire to be, as indeed it is, par- " amount to, and over all Authority and Power " of Kings and Potentates on earth; and his " laws ſuperior to theirs. And although this " heavenly King is no Enemy to earthly Kings " and Potentates, farther than they make him " ſo, by their being enemies to him and his go- " vernment, but would have all his Subjects " live in due obedience to them, ſo far as their " laws do not croſs his; yet, if they do; he " does not allow any to break his laws to obey " theirs; but would have them patiently to " ſuffer the penalties of the laws, rather than " prove diſloyal to him, and will in con- " cluſion richly reward them for their ſuffer- " ings (q)."

Now if all Chriſtian States are Subjects of Chriſt as head of the Church, and obliged to pay an abſolute obedience to him as their Lord and King; it follows, that Chriſt will enter into no Alliance with them: foraſmuch as the

(q) Wm. Allen's State of the Church in future ages, p. 646.

Church,

Church, in this ſenſe of the word, gives laws to the State as its inferior. And accordingly we find it is by him alone that the laws of his Church or Kingdom are framed, and not by any of his Servants, either ſingly or united; ſo that nothing which is deviſed by human authority as any part of the Chriſtian Religion, can ever mix with it in alliance, or in any other manner; but will continue as diſtinct from it, as the different Authorities by which the divine and human laws are eſtabliſhed.

The Jewiſh Laws were guarded in a great meaſure by the rewards and puniſhments of *this* world. The Chriſtian Laws are guarded intirely by the rewards and puniſhments of a future State; and all the powers that any State can bring with it, when it pretends to enter into alliance with the Church, can be nothing more than thoſe worldly motives which Chriſt hath diſcarded, as being ſanctions unworthy of his laws, and only proper to guard the outward forms and ceremonies of worſhip in the imperfect State of Judaiſm.

Beſides, it is impoſſible, from the very nature of Chriſtianity, that it ſhould admit of any mixture or alliance with any human laws or powers whatſoever; becauſe whatever Obedience is paid to the laws of Chriſt, upon fear of puniſhment, or hopes of reward from any but himſelf, is no part of his Religion, nor will it

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be conſidered by him, and rewarded. On the other hand; let a man take ever ſo much pains to diſcover the will of Chriſt, and obſerve his commands, and ſerve God with faith, and a good conſcience; yet if he explains the Scripture better than the particular church he belongs to, and diſcovers to them their errors, inſtead of being rewarded for it, as he will be by Chriſt, he will ſubject himſelf to its ſevereſt cenſures: inſtances of this are to be found in all ages. And if the one rewards what the other puniſhes, what Alliance can there be between them, but what is merely nominal. On the other hand; when the Church puniſhes what Chriſt will reward, which may poſſibly happen, in many caſes, where a parliament and convocation, or a ſynod, or a council declare an opinion to be heretical without proper vouchers from Scripture, or wherever a Church rewards what Chriſt will puniſh, whatever that Church may be at other times, it becomes, pro hac vice, the patron of Antichriſt, and the Synagogue of Satan. See Hoadly's Rights of Subj. Vol. II. p. 762.

The XXth Article of the Church of England aſſerts, very juſtly, the power of the Church to declare Rites and Ceremonies: But declares in the ſame Article, that, though it be a Witneſs and Keeper of holy writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing *againſt* the ſame, ſo beſides

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the ſame ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for neceſſity of Salvation. From whence it appears, that the Church confines all authority in matters of faith merely to the Scriptures; and allows of no Authority to any of her decrees unleſs they can be proved by Scripture; and then the Authority on which they depend, and by which they oblige, is not the Authority of the Church (properly ſpeaking) but the Authority of Scripture. What follows therefore in the Article [and Authority in matters of faith] is either an impropriety of ſpeech, or a direct contradiction to what went before.

And from hence it plainly appears, that all other Authority in matters of Faith except holy Writ, is an impoſition; and the doctrines it impoſes may be ſafely rejected, if contrary to what appears to us to be the truth, and can no otherwiſe be conſidered than in the light of mere opinions of weak and fallible men; and to whoſe judgment no Authoritative interpretation of doubtful texts can be truſted, becauſe Chriſt has not given ſuch an Authority to any man, or any Set of men whatever. And conſequently, all attempts to define Hereſy more ſtrictly in an authoritative manner, is the higheſt preſumption. It is therefore the Proteſtant principle to go to Scripture itſelf, as the only Rule we have to truſt to: and we had bet-

ter leave a thouſand texts of ſcripture unexplained, than receive as authentic one erroneous explanation: for our ignorance will extend no farther; but one error may beget a thouſand.

The following words of Sir Iſaac Newton will ſhew this Concluſion in its true force, and give a farther confirmation of our Proteſtant principles. "In the Infancy of the nation of "Iſrael, when God had given them a law and "made a Covenant with them to be their God, "if they would keep his commandments; he "ſent Prophets to them to reclaim them as "often as they revolted to the worſhip of other "Gods; and upon their returning to him, they "ſometimes renewed the Covenant which they "had broken.—Theſe Prophets he continued "to ſend till the days of Ezra, and after the "prophecies were read in their Synagogues; "thoſe prophecies were thought ſufficient. "For if they would not hear Moſes and the "Prophets, they would hear no new ones, no, "not though they ſhould riſe from the dead. "At length, when a new truth was to be "preached to the Gentiles, that Jeſus was the "Chriſt, God ſent new Prophets and Teachers. "But after their writings were alſo received and "read in the Synagogues of the Chriſtians, "Prophecy ceaſed a ſecond time. We have "Moſes, the Prophets, and Apoſtles, and the

"words

" words of Chriſt himſelf; and if we will not " hear them, we ſhall be more inexcuſable than " the Jews.

" For the Prophets and Apoſtles have fore- " told, that as Iſrael often revolted and brake " the Covenant, and upon repentance renewed " it, ſo there ſhall be a falling away(*r*), [an " Apoſtacy] among the Chriſtians ſoon after " the days of the Apoſtles: and that in the lat- " ter days God would deſtroy the impenitent " revolters(*s*), and make a new Covenant with " his people(*t*). And the giving Ear to the " *Prophets*, is the fundamental character of the " True Church. For God hath ſo ordered the " prophecies, that in the latter days, the wiſe " may underſtand; but the wicked ſhall do " wickedly, and none of the wicked ſhall un- " derſtand(*u*).

" The authority of Emperors, Kings, and " Princes, is human, The authority of Coun- " cils, Synods, Biſhops, and Preſbyters, is " human. The authority of the Prophets is " divine, and comprehends the SUM of Reli- " gion; reckoning Moſes and the Apoſtles " among the Prophets; and if an Angel from " heaven preach any other Goſpel than what

(*r*) II. Theſſ. ii. 3. (*s*) Mat. xiii. 41, 42. II. Th. i. 7. Rev. xiv. 16. (*t*) Jer. xxxi. xxxii. Rev. xxi. Ro. xi. 27. (*u*) Dan. xii. 9, 10.

" they have delivered, let them be accurſed.
" Their writings contain the Covenant between
" God and his people, with inſtructions for
" keeping this Covenant, inſtances of Gods
" judgment upon them that break it, and pre-
" dictions of things to come. While the Peo-
" ple of God keep the Covenant, they *continue*
" *his* People; when they break it, they ceaſe
" to be his people, or Church, and become
" the ſynagogue of Satan, who ſay they are
" Jews, and ARE NOT; and no power on
" earth is authorized to ALTER this Cove-
" nant."

Can any man read this, and yet venture to eſtabliſh the interpretations of men, rather than the words of the Prophets; and thereby run the riſque of altering this Covenant? Can any man read this, and imagine, with his Grace of York, that *Religion is inſufficient to rely on its own Energies*? and that we have no right to expect any miraculous aſſiſtance? and that it is the buſineſs of *the State to provide aſſiſtance to Goſpel truths, by procuring them a hearing*? &c.— Do not the Scriptures plainly prove to us, that God has continually interfered in defence of his own Revelations? And as Mr. Gibbon expreſſes it, very properly, Has not the Chriſtian Faith obtained its remarkable victory over all the Religions of the earth, by the convincing evidence of the doctrine, and the ruling Pro-

vidence

vidence of its great Author? And have we not reaſon to believe, that if its own Energies are not ſufficient, it will be carried on by other ſecond Cauſes, or elſe in the ſame miraculous manner; eſpecially in the Converſion of the Jews and Gentiles?

But that we may fairly examine this queſtion, let us compare the Energies of Chriſtianity, with the Energies that oppoſe it. St. Paul has deſcribed the nature of the Energies which oppoſe it in his ſecond Epiſtle to the Theſſalonians. The myſtery of iniquity, he ſays, doth already work or put forth her Energies, ἐνεργεῖται(x), only he who letteth [the heathen Roman Emperors] will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then ſhall the wicked, i. e. the Apoſtate, be reveled, whom the Lord ſhall conſume with the Spirit of his mouth, and deſtroy with the brightneſs of his coming, even HIM whoſe coming is according to the energy (καὶ ἐνεργειαν) of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved; and for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them the Energy of error, ἐνεργειαν πλανης, that they may believe a lie, i. e. the doctrines of the Apoſtacy.

(x) II. Th. ii. 7.

Here

Here we ſee the outlines of the apoſtacy, and the means leading to it, and the Energy of error that was to oppoſe the Goſpel. We ſee the hypocriſy of liars, and the corruptions of the Church eſtabliſhed by Civil Authority under the Chriſtian Roman Emperors, after the heathen Emperors were taken away; many of which errors ſtill remain in it. But when, on the other hand, we weigh the power of the Chriſtian Energies, we ſhould conſider, that for above 1400 years, we have never experienced them unadulterated with human authoritative determinations, and the Energy of Error. We know by the Reformation, that as far as Chriſtians have relinquiſhed the commandments of men, and been directed by the Goſpel, the Energies of Satan have become lifeleſs, and his ſigns and lying wonders have loſt the influence they had in the days of Ignorance and Superſtition: and we have reaſon to think, if the genuine Energies of Chriſtianity were exerted without reſtraint, that they would eaſily prevail over the Energies of Error. But that which turns the ſcale againſt the truth, is the adventitious Energy of Civil Authority. That very authority which his Grace of York conſiders as neceſſary to the ſupport of Goſpel Truths, hath eſtabliſhed all the Idolatry of the Aſiatic Churches, and tranſplanted it into thoſe of Europe. It is that which has ſo long ſupported error, and

oppreſſed

oppreſſed the Truth; and ever will do ſo, as long as its authority in matters of Religion ſhall continue, and prevent a fair examination of Church queſtions. It was this that debaſed the Reaſon and Underſtanding of the heathen world, obſcured the reſearches of Philoſophy, and eſtabliſhed the cruel and laſcivious rites of the Pagans: It was the influence of Civil Authority in oppoſition to Philoſophy, and an adherence, under penalties, to the Religion in vogue, though ever ſo abſurd and impious, that kept the world in darkneſs.

So that a writer obſerves very juſtly, "The "Corruptions of Religion ſo prevalent in the "polite and civilized nations of the heathen "world, their Superſtition and Idolatry, were "not owing to the weakneſs of human reaſon "or its inſufficiency to the purpoſes of Religion; "but rather to the *ſtrength* of *human policy*, en- "couraging theſe Corruptions, and to the "weakneſs of human reſolution in not ſuffi- "ciently exerting itſelf againſt this palpable "abuſe of human and magiſtratical influence," &c. And what is it elſe that now overpowers the knowledge of the truth, and renders of ſo little ſervice to the world that light, which has ſo remarkably ſhone in this country for ſeveral years? I defy the Philoſopher or Politician to account for the Idolatry which was eſtabliſhed in the Aſiatic Churches, and ſtill continues in the

the Romun Church, upon any other principle than the ſilencing the common ſenſe and reaſon of Mankind by the Civil Power, and thereby reſtraining men from the right of *preaching* or *propagating* their *religious* and Philoſophical opinions.

But though the genuine Energies of Chriſtianity may continue for a long time reſtrained, yet they are all the while working, like leaven, and making their way ſecretly; and we are informed, in this ſame chapter, that the coming of Chriſt ſhall put an end to all the Energies of Satan; and the Chriſtian Energies will then exert themſelves without an obſtacle. When the force of Authority ceaſes, the force of Truth will prevail.

But more fully to ſhew the weakneſs of his Grace's hyhotheſis, and defend Chriſtianity from ſuch an unworthy imputation, as if it ſtood in need of Civil Authority to ſupport it, it will be ſufficient to obſerve, that Chriſtianity never made ſo rapid a progreſs, as it did againſt all the Civil Authority of the world before the days of Conſtantine (*x*). The very learned Dr. Lowth,

(*x*) " The ancient Church thought it an indecent and " unworthy thing to call in the Civil arm for the aſſiſt- " ance of Religion, and for the puniſhment of Errors in " Religion, or affronts offered by them to the Deity.— " St. Hilary, in his book againſt Auxentius, repreſents " them

Lowth, Biſhop of London, obſerves, that "the "rapid progreſs of Chriſtianity in the firſt ages, "in ſpite of all the oppoſition it had to ſtruggle "with, from the prejudice of the world ſup- "ported by all the power of it, in the midſt of "dangers and diſtreſſes, reproach and perſecu- "tion, has been deſervedly conſidered as the "immediate effect of a divine power co-operat- "ing with it, and a more ſtupendous miracle

"them who did this, not as Biſhops of Chriſt, but the "Servants of Antichriſt."

We ought, ſays Hilary, to pity the labour of our age, and groan under the fond opinion of the preſent times, in which men think to defend God *by men*; and labour to preſerve the Church of Chriſt by *ſecular ambition*. I beſeech you, *Biſhops*, who conceive yourſelves to be ſo, what ſuffrages did the Apoſtles uſe in preaching the Goſpel? and by what POWERS were they aſſiſted, when preaching Chriſt they converted the heathen world from Idols to God? Did they aſſume any Authority from the PALACE, when they ſang hymns to God in priſon? Did Paul gather a Church to Chriſt by the King's Edict, who was himſelf a ſpectacle in the theatre? Did he defend himſelf by the Protection of Nero or Veſpatian, by whoſe hatred againſt us, the preaching of our faith then flouriſhed?—But NOW, which is to be lamented, *earthly* ſuffrages commend *divine* Faith, and Chriſt is repreſented as DESTITUTE of power; whilſt the FAVOUR of men is purchaſed in his cauſe. The Church terrifies, and by Exiles and Priſons ſhe COMPELLS a belief, which was believed in Exiles and Priſons.—*She* glories that She is believed by the World, which could not be the church of Chriſt if the World did not hate her, &c. Ad auxentium, p. 347.

" than any of the ſeveral wonders by which it " was promoted (*y*)." Whereas, no ſooner were the Goſpel truths under the patronage of Civil authority, than they became ſhamefully corrupted. Ambition took place of piety, and every thing was carried on by party rage and private views, till Civil Authority, at laſt, eſtabliſhed Idolatry, and blaſphemy, the Apoſtacy, and the worſhip of the beaſt; and the Church of Chriſt became the Synagogue of Satan. " For how much ſoever riches and honours flowed in upon the Church, and how great ſoever the advantages of power were to them; yet the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity by the imperial Laws, not only had a tendency to, but was in fact, the means of corrupting the doctrines of the Goſpel, and of introducing notions different from thoſe which our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached (*z*)." The Lord Biſhop of London, in his excellent Sermon juſt quoted, obſerves, that Conſtantine embraced the Chriſtian faith; " but alas! from " this very æra of the ſecurity, proſperity, and " ſplendor of the Chriſtian Church, we muſt " date the decay of the true ſpirit of Chriſti- " anity. It ſtill continued, indeed, to increaſe " for ſome time outwardly in extent and num- " bers, but daily ſuffered, *within*, a much

(*y*) Viſitation Sermon, p. 4. (*z*) Dr. Sykes.

" greater

" greater loſs, in the viſible diminution of " faith, holineſs, humility, and charity. Ho- " nour, wealth, and power ſoon excited pride, " avarice, and ambition; and the conteſts for " theſe worldly advantages were but too often " carried on with the greater animoſity, under " pretence of contending for the faith (*a*). It was this that put a ſtop to the converſion of the Jews, gave riſe to Mahometiſm, and cauſed the defection of many countries from Chriſtianity, where it had been once eſtabliſhed. " Super- " ſtition, contention, and diviſion ſtill en- " creaſed *within*, and gave great advantages to " Mahometiſm, that aſſaulted Chriſtianity from " without, and at length laid waſte the Eaſtern " Church (*b*)."

This is the reaſon that his Grace and other partizans for the exerciſe of Civil authority in matters of Faith, endeavour to miſrepreſent an enquiry into this piece of hiſtory, as unprofitable, and ſceptical: for nothing can more effectually ruin the ſyſtem of Hobbiſm, and warn men againſt truſting Goſpel-Truths any more into the patronage of Civil Authority, than the knowledge that Civil Authority when ſo truſted, hath conſtantly betrayed them into the hands of Emperors and Popes.

(*a*) Dr. Lowth's Sermon, p. 9. (*b*) Ben. Mord. Lett. VII. p. 147.

His Grace ſpeaks of this Inquiry, not only as *the wandring of curious and unſettled minds*, but as *ſceptical* alſo (*c*); which is much more eaſily ſaid than proved. For how does it appear, that the belief of the Apoſtacy foretold by the Apoſtles, has any more *ſcepticiſm* in it, than the belief of any other prophecy? Or where is the Scepticiſm in attributing it, as St. Paul has done, to Philoſophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of this world? After the Fathers, and Councils, and Synods, and Popes, and Emperors, and Civil Authority, and not after Chriſt? Col. iii. 8.

In anſwer to ſuch ſuggeſtions, it becomes more neceſſary than ever to ſatisfy the unlearned Chriſtians, that the ſlow progreſs which Chriſtianity has made in the world for many Centuries, and the Loſs of it in many Countries where it once prevailed (both which are Deiſtical objections to it, and require a ſerious and ſolid anſwer) are not owing to the inſufficiency of the Chriſtian Religion to rely on its own Energies, but to the exertion of the Civil power in eſtabliſhing a multiplicity of Mediators, the worſhip of the dead, and all the errors of the Apoſtacy; and from the wicked compliances of the Hierarchy to ſatisfy their own Ambition and Avarice: or, in other words, it is owing to the corruption of its doctrines,

(*c*) His Grace's Sermon, p. 8, 9.

and

and the wickedneſs of its Profeſſors (*d*). And his Grace will find it as difficult to diſprove this, or to account for the fact upon any other principle, as to prove a man a Sceptic for examining and anſwering the objections of a Deiſt.

There is another queſtion, no leſs fatal to his Grace's hypotheſis, which he would likewiſe wiſh to remove out of ſight, by declaring, that "it does not concern us, and the examination "of it is dangerous." The queſtion is this, "Whether, before the concluſion of things, all "mankind are to be Chriſtians, or whether "they are only to *profeſs* Chriſtianity (*e*)." And here the Hypotheſis ſeems to labour. For if it ſhould be found, as it muſt be upon examination, that Civil authority can reach no farther than outward forms, and external profeſſion, it will follow undeniably, that true Religion, or the Dominion of Chriſt over the heart, can have no ſupport at all. But as this fatal Conſequence of his Grace's hypotheſis is not to be avoided, it muſt be artfully ſlighted, and removed out of ſight, as of no ſignification; and we are told that "*the queſtion does not concern us*;" as if it were the ſame thing to a Chriſtian, whether genuine Chriſtianity ſhould prevail at laſt over the world, according to the prophecies, or only a Hierarchy, and a hypocritical profeſſion of it.

(*d*) Ben. Mord. Lett. VII. p. 147. (*e*) Sermon, p. 8.

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The learned Biſhop Lowth has anſwered this queſtion very ſatisfactorily. He tells us, " it is " our Saviour's meaning that we ſhould pray, " that the Goſpel ſtate be ſtill advanced and " carried on, till at length it [illegible] at that ma- " turity and UNIVERSALITY, " unity, and [illegible], which Chriſt " has decreed and promiſed that it ſhall at " one time attain (*f*)." To the ſame purpoſe the Reader may conſult the following texts, which will fix the matter beyond all doubt. Pſ. xxii. 27. lxxii. 11. lxxxiv. 9. xcviii. 3. Iſ. xlix. 6. Pſ. ii. 8. Phil. ii. 10, 11, &c.

But the moſt curious part of the argument is this, that " it is dangerous to be buſy in ex- " ploring thoſe things which it is a part of " God's providence to keep concealed (*g*)." Does God then reveal himſelf by his prophets in order to keep concealed what he reveals? Or can we imagine, that we ſhall be able to inveſtigate what God's Providence would conceal? Surely there can be no ſuch danger; and he fears, where no fear is. But why then dangerous? Are we to let the prophecies of God lie neglected, without endeavouring to underſtand them?

The prophet Daniel was commended for exploring the ſenſe of the prophecy of Jeremiah (*h*);

(*f*) Dr. Lowth's Viſit. Sermon, in 1758, p. 1, 2. 11.
(*g*) His Grace's Serm. p. 8. (*h*) Dan. ix. 2.

and

and where then can be the danger of exploring other prophecies? Or, to what purpoſe can his Grace imagine, that the Church is informed in the book of Revelation, of the conqueſt of Chriſt over Satan, and the Beaſt, and the falſe prophet, if not to encourage it in the Faith, and Patience of the Saints, and a firm expectation, and hope, that true Religion and Virtue ſhall at length prevail over error and hypocricy? And if a ſincere Chriſtian is not concerned in this event, what can he be concerned in?

But, 2dly, Suppoſe that, according to the preſent State of things, the Chriſtian Religion is not ſufficient to rely on its own energies, whilſt it is reſtrained in almoſt all Countries from the free uſe of them by Civil Authority, which will *not ſuffer ſectaries to preach* and *propagate their* own opininns (*i*); yet have we not reaſon to believe, from the prophecies, that this will not always be the caſe; but that Providence will, in its own time, and manner, ſupport the Chriſtian cauſe, and promote its progreſs to Spiritual Perfection, by the free uſe of its Energies? Are we not promiſed that the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt the Chriſtian Church (*k*)? Can this promiſe be fulfilled, except by the Chriſtian Energies, or a providential interpoſition?--When his Grace therefore aſks, " Is it ſufficient to rely on its

(*i*) Serm. p. 15. (*k*) Matt. xvi. 18.

" own

" own Energies, and to reject the aſſiſtance of " Civil Authority?" and declares, " we have no " right to expect any miraculous aſſiſtance; we " are not ſo preſuming(*l*)." It is ſufficient to anſwer, that moſt aſſuredly the Chriſtian Religion is ſufficient to rely on its own Energies, if it is not debarred the free uſe of them; and if they fail through ſuch reſtraint, or any other cauſe, we have a right to expect that he will continue with his Church always, even to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 20. and that he will defend it againſt all the authority that ſhall oppoſe it; though the Kings of the Earth, or their Miniſters, ſhall ſet themſelves againſt it, and the Rulers take Counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed, Pſ. ii. and this we have a right to expect, either by his diſpoſition of ſecond cauſes, or by his own immediate power, without the leaſt preſumption: for where is the preſumption in expecting, that what Chriſt hath promiſed he will punctually perform? The ſuſpition of it rather favours of Infidelity and Scepticiſm, than the hopes of it do of preſumption.

Indeed, if by Religion or Chriſtianity, be meant Calviniſm or Lutheriſm, or the Church of England, or any particular Church with all its errors; divided from the reſt under Paul or

(*l*) Serm. p. 11.

Apollos,

Apollos, or Cephas, ſo deſtructive by their different and oppoſite Articles and Confeſſions to the Catholiciſm of the Church of Chriſt; I know of no promiſe in the New Teſtament that ſhould encourage us to believe, that God will ſupport it at all; the prophecies of Daniel and St. Jonn ſeem rather to threaten the contrary(*m*). But this is not the queſtion with his Grace; he conſiders Religion as intirely different from our worldly concerns, in page 10, and diſtinguiſhes true Religion, or the Dominion of Chriſt over the heart and mind, from what he allows "to be a very different thing, Chriſ-"tian Sovereignty, Chriſtian Eſtabliſhment, "and the formal profeſſion," page 9.—Now if there be ſuch a material difference between the Religion of Chriſt, and the formal profeſſion of it; Chriſtianity, or the Religion of Chriſt, may have a right to expect a miraculous ſupport, though the peculiarities of the different Sects may fail and be diſſolved, in order to reduce them all under one head, which they never can be while they indulge their fancies in making Articles and Creeds, which will neceſſarily keep them divided. "We "may therefore reſt ſecure, that the Goſpel, "like the ark of God, will not fall, though "unſupported by the arm of fleſh; and happy

(*m*) Ben. Mord. Lett. IV. p. 192.

" would it be for all mankind, if that opinion " prevailed more generally(*n*).

Beſides, we frequently find, that what Civil Authority looks upon as providing for Goſpel Truths, is in fact providing againſt them. It is undeniable that if Civil Authority encouraged Goſpel Truths under Conſtantine, it muſt have encouraged the contrary under Conſtantius: and the ſame may be ſaid of the Reigns of Q. Mary and Q. Elizabeth, in this Country. And if this ſhould be the caſe at any time, as it may be, when very little ſuſpected, that Civil Authority patroniſes falſhood inſtead of Truth, it muſt expect at one time or other, if it does not quit its errors, to fall a ſacrifice to them. For Civil Utility will not be able to ſupport doctrines which the people know to be falſe: no not the greateſt Civil Power upon earth.

P. 11. His Grace ſays, " We muſt conſider the " propagation of our Religion as a duty not " only belonging to common Charity, but " eſpecially enjoined by our Saviour himſelf."

Reply. It is true; and for that very reaſon the magiſtrate can have no right to interrupt any one in the practice of it, as long as he behaves peaceably. But it by no means follows, that, becauſe it is the duty of every man to propagate his religion, therefore Providence

(*n*) The Hon. John Hay, Chief Juſtice of New-York. Remembrancer, No. xxxiii. p. 96.

ſtands

ſtands in need of every man's aſſiſtance, and religion is unable to ſupport itſelf by its own energies: and much leſs that the civil magiſtrate has a right to propagate it by ſilencing ſuch as differ from him in opinion.

P. 15. His Grace argues, that "It has been "the practice of Sectaries to clame much more "than they are diſpoſed to give. And ſome, "who when poſſeſſed of power uſed it ſufficient-"ly, have afterwards made pretenſions to an "unreſtrained Right of preaching, and propa-"gating their opinions."

Reply. The fault which the Sectaries are here very juſtly accuſed of, is the very ſame which his Grace is defending, viz. the reſtraining other men from preaching and propagating their opinions; and what Bp. Taylor condemns in the German Divines, as ſoon as they got free from the inquiſition(*o*).

"How theſe pretenſions are founded" his Grace adds "it may be difficult to ſay, ex-"cept it be on ſome miſtaken texts of Scrip-"ture, which apply to the obſervance of the "Jewiſh Ritual, but are now made to carry a "releaſement from the laws of the State, un-"der the notion of Chriſtian Liberty."

Reply. If the propagation of our religion be a duty *not only* belonging to common Cha-

(*o*) See p. 33.

rity, but eſpecially enjoyned by our Saviour himſelf, as his Grace obſerves, p. 11. it is no difficult matter to inform ourſelves how theſe pretenſions are founded.—They are founded on the inherent Right in every man to perform his duty to God, which I preſume, is a ſufficient plea to releaſe his conſcience from every law of the State, which would reſtrain him from it, if it be done in a peaceable manner.

P. 15, 16. His Grace obſerves, "that the "ſecret intercourſe between a Man's ſpirit and "his Creator, excludes all foreign cogniſance: "But it is not ſo, when Sects are formed, "aſſemblies convened, a diſtinct ſyſtem of "doctrines framed, and men appointed to pro-"pagate them."

Reply. This is a very good deſcription of the State of Chriſtianity, when our Saviour gave Commiſſion to his diſciples to teach a doctrine contrary both to Judaiſm and Paganiſm, and all the Religions in the world. Let us hear whether ſuch a behaviour was criminal, and whether the ruling Powers had a right to prevent it.

"In this ſtate of things," his Grace goes on, "every legal Government, by its inherent "right of providing for its own SAFETY, is "juſtified in INQUIRING what theſe doctrines "are. They may be immoral, they may be

"ſe-

" ſeditious, they may be ſubverſive of Society " itſelf."

Reply. They may ſo, and then they ſhould be ſeverely puniſhed: but they may be as far from any thing of this nature as the doctrines of the Eſtabliſhment: And when they differ upon the interpretation of texts, as underſtood by ſober, learned, and honeſt men, who ſhall pretend to determine authoritatively on which ſide the truth lies? And how will the right of Inquiring what theſe opinions are, (which perhaps has been continually exerciſed for many Centuries) prevent the propagating them? except indeed the Inquiry partakes of the nature of an INQUISITION, and procedes to Puniſhment.

" Upon theſe Opinions," ſays his Grace, " when contrary to the well being of the Com- " munity, the authority of the State is properly " exerciſed."

Reply. Here we find, that the whole his Grace has to ſay upon the reſtraining the right of Sectaries to preach and propagate their opinions, is nothing more than a power to preſerve the Peace of the State, and to puniſh Immorality and Sedition; agreably to the declaration of Charles the IId. that no man ſhould be diſquieted, or called in queſtion for differences of opinion in matters of Religion, which do not diſturb the peace of the Kingdom, con-

firmed

firmed Oct. 5, 1660. But not the Shadow of an argument is here advanced againſt the clame of an unreſtrained right of preaching and propagating their opinions in a peaceable manner. However, there is ſtill a ſnake in the graſs; allow but the right of puniſhing immorality and ſedition, which properly belongs to the magiſtrate, and the Perſecutor will immediately repreſent Proteſtantiſm to be an immorality and ſedition, if he be a Papiſt; and Popery to be immorality and ſedition, if he be a Proteſtant; and ſo Arianiſm, Socinianiſm, Sabellianiſm and Athanaſianiſm, will all of them be repreſented to the oppoſite Sects as dangerous to the State. This was the accuſation againſt Chriſt himſelf, Luke xxiii. 5. He ſtirreth up the people. And thus they are blended together by Farrel, as I have already quoted: I hope, ſays he, that thoſe who are commended for inflicting puniſhment upon *thieves* and *ſacrilegious* perſons, will do their duty by taking off (that is murdering) a man who has ſo obſtinately perſiſted in his hereſy, and undone ſo many people. But for God's ſake, which of them was it that was guilty of the greateſt diſturbance and breach of the peace; Servetus by preaching up the Supremacy of the Father, or Calvin in getting him murdered for it? Men may diſclame Perſecution till doomſday; but it is abſolutely impoſſible to ſilence Sectaries upon any important

important Subjects, without it. No ſooner is one burnt, but another riſes to defend his Cauſe. They think it their duties to obey God rather than man; and give the ſame anſwer which was given by Peter and John, when commanded not to preach in the name of Chriſt, " Whether " it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken " unto you more than unto God, judge ye; " for we cannot but ſpeak the things which we " have ſeen and heard", Acts iv. 19, 20. In ſhort, if the State hath a Right to prevent the propagation of the religious opinions of the Sects or Sectaries, when carried on in a peaceable manner, they muſt have a right to do it, as I obſerved, in ſuch a way as to put an end to the ſuppoſed evil, whether by fines, impriſonment, or death; and as two oppoſite and contrary rights cannot exiſt at the ſame time, either Chriſt and his Apoſtles had no right to preach, and were juſtly executed for propagating Opinions contrary to thoſe of the State; or the State had no Right to prevent their preaching.

If the principle be once allowed, that Goſpel truths ſtand *in need of human authority to ſupport them, becauſe the Goſpel Energies are inſufficient*, it is in vain to complane of the violence and fanaticiſm of the Sectaries: for, that one principle will make way for both. It was upon this principle that the German Fanaticks aroſe to eſtabliſh the 5th monarchy, and by aſſiſting

to

to the Cauſe of God; and no other principle can ſupport a right to ſilence peaceable Sectaries from propagating their opinions. It was upon the ſame principle of ſupporting the Cauſe of God, becauſe the Chriſtian Energies were not ſufficient to that end, that the perſecutions were carried on in the Eaſtern Church, and the name of God was uſed to ſanctify their murders. And to this radical principle his Grace ſhould have aſcribed the Calamities, with which he ſays, " Mankind has been haraſſed for ſo many " Centuries; the Cruſades againſt infidels and " diſſenting Chriſtians, the devaſtations and " maſſacres; and that cauſe of all, the received " doctrine of the Lawfulneſs of Perſecution in " the cauſe of God(*p*)." This is all very well ſaid; but his Grace does not ſeem to reflect, that all this ariſes from the πρωτον ψευδος which he is defending, that Goſpel truths ſtand in need of human authority to ſupport them; for this fanatical Principle being once admitted, all the violence of Farrel's reaſoning, in his letter to Calvin, will follow of Courſe. The Expence of bloud will be looked upon as of ſmall account, when ſet in compariſon with the cauſe of God; and men will look upon themſelves as called upon by Providence to aſſiſt in ſo glorious a Cauſe. But our Saviour's precept is the very

(*p*) Serm. p. 6.

reverſe,

reverſe, Let the tares and wheat both grow together till the harveſt, leſt while ye gather up the tares ye root up the wheat alſo. Mat. xiii. 29, 30. However, it has been frequently the caſe among the different Governors of the Church, at different times, out of the abundance of their miſtaken zele, to root up the wheat, and let the tares remain: not knowing what ſpirit they were of.

" If it is our duty" his Grace ſays "to propa-
" gate our Religion, it muſt, like other
" duties, owe its operation and effect to ſuch
" honeſt means as human Prudence may ſuggeſt.
" When it is ſaid, be ye harmleſs as doves, it
" is ſaid, be ye wiſe as Serpents. Foreſight
" and Diſcretion are proper inſtruments in this
" warfare, though violence and injury are
" not."

Reply. It is without doubt our duty to propagate our Religion by all honeſt means; but violence and injury are not honeſt means, and peaceable Sectaries cannot be ſilenced without injury and violence. I muſt therefore reſtore the text to its original order(q); by which it will appear, that the wiſdom of the Serpent is to be reſtrained by the harmleſſneſs of the Dove, and not the harmleſſneſs of the Dove

(q) Be ye wiſe as Serpents and harmleſs as Doves. Mat. x. 16.

by the wiſdom of the Serpent. In a conference of the Jews, the wiſdom of the Serpent ſuggeſted it to be expedient, that Chriſt ſhould be put to Death: but the harmleſſneſs of the Dove would have agreed to no ſuch thing, unleſs the Sentence had appeared to be juſt; and beſides, though human Prudence be the rule of action in human governments, the Church of Chriſt is to be governed by more noble Conſiderations, ſuch as are alone capable of eſtabliſhing the Laws of Society, and the happineſs of mankind, upon the Principles of Rectitude and obedience to God. See p. 43.

But the truth is, that when any Sectary gets the lead, it is not contented to propagate its religious opinions by ſuch honeſt means as human Prudence may ſuggeſt, and by the harmleſſneſs of the Dove, by which Chriſtianity was at firſt propagated; but thinks itſelf juſtified in reſtraining the liberty of other men, who are as fully adorned with all advantages neceſſary to the inveſtigation of truth, and the interpretation of Scripture, as they are themſelves: and by this attempt they bring themſelves into ſuch circumſtances, that it is next to impoſſible, when ſufficiently heated by Contradicton, to avoid calling into their aid, not only the worldly wiſdom of the Serpents, but every inſtrument of violence and injury to ſilence thoſe whom they are not able to confute. And yet, paſs

but

but a narrow part of the Sea, and they become themſelves ſubject to the ſame injuitice.

Quam temere in noſmet Legem ſancimus iniquam.

His Grace ſays, p. 10, 11. "Though Religion is of a nature entirely different from "our worldly concerns, yet the connexion be- "tween Religion and this world is as intimate "as between ſoul and body."

Reply. It is true, that matter and ſpirit may be connected or joined, but matter will ſtill continue to be matter, and ſpirit to be ſpirit: and ſo it is in the affairs of Religion and this world.—But if his Grace means, that Religion and the affairs of this world are carried on by the ſame motives, or are directed to the ſame end, he ſhould ſhew, that the deſign of gaining the favour of God is intimately connected with the deſign of gaining riches, honour, and power, and that an action performed merely upon worldly motives, will be a religious action, and gain the divine favour. But this is ſo far from the truth, that though worldly motives ſhould produce the very ſame external action that religious motives may produce, yet it would loſe all its pretenſions to a reward from God as a religious action, and be conſidered by him as purely political or prudential. For no action

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can be religious any farther than it proceeds from a religious motive. See p. 73.

" But Civil Authority" his Grace ſays " ope-
" rates ſo far as to open ſources and clear
" channels, and procure the Goſpel a hearing, by ſending out Preachers, &c. p. 11.

Reply. This indeed is very commendable, whether it be done at a publick or private expence. But Chriſtianity made a greater progreſs before any thing of this nature was done by civil authority, than it has ever done ſince: However, if *opening Sources, and clearing Channels*, means nothing more than ſending forth Preachers, and maintaining Schools, his Grace's poſition is ruined by his own conceſſion, viz. by informing us " that the number of Churches
" in America is now encreaſed to ſome hun-
" dreds, CHIEFLY by the exertions of *private*
" Charity, beſides the proviſion for itinerant
" Miniſters, for School-maſters, and Cate-
" chiſts." For ſurely the ſame Chriſtian Energies which have influenced private men to do this, will operate in opening any *other* Sources, or clearing any *other* Channels, that may be obſtructed. *Publick Benefactions* may, without doubt, be uſeful, as well as *private Charity*, but can by no means be *neceſſary*, eſpecially if private Charities be CHIEFLY effectual. But this is a very different thing from Authority in matters of Faith; and beſides,

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when God has decreed the Event, as he certainly has in the propagation of Chriſtianity, he will certainly accomplish it in his own time and manner, whether Civil Authority favour or oppoſe it.—The Lord of the harveſt will ſend forth labourers into his harveſt, when ever he judges it to be fit and proper; not becauſe Religious Energies are unable to ſupport religion, and he ſtands in need of human aſſiſtance; but becauſe theſe Energies have convinced the Chriſtians that ſuch actions are agreeable to their duty as Chriſtians. In the mean time we know that theſe *Sources* have been already opened, and theſe *Channels* frequently cleared by Orthodox and Heterodox, (as they are called) and men of all perſuaſions; by Proteſtants and Papiſts, Quakers and Preſbyterians, Anabaptiſts and Independents, Arians and Socinians; ſometimes by Sects who held one ſet of Errors, and ſometimes another, but never by any people free from all. The Goſpel has been preached, and ſo continues to be, through envy and ſtrife, as well as through love and good will; and frequently with more contention for the peculiarities of the different Sects, than for Chriſtianity in general. But what then? as the Apoſtle ſays, notwithſtanding every way, whether in pretence or truth, Chriſt is preached, and I therein rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice.

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In ſhort, the very notion that it is the buſineſs of Civil Authority to provide for Goſpel-truths, becauſe its own *Energies are inſufficient to ſupport it*; as it leads to the groſſeſt Fanaticiſm on the one hand, (which ſeems to be his Grace's chief failing) by perſuading thoſe who believe the Revelation, that Providence ſtands in need of their aſſiſtance, to open *Sources* and clear *Channels*; So on the other hand, it muſt encourage infidelity in thoſe, who have too much good ſenſe to believe, that God would ever give mankind a Revelation that ſhould require the interpretation of the Civil Magiſtrate, who generally knows very little of the matter, as the Hobbiſts themſelves confeſs, and does not pretend to eſtabliſh it for its own ſake, but for the ſake of Civil Utility.

Add to this, that the method taken by Civil Authority of eſtabliſhing Religion by temporal rewards and puniſhments, after Sources are opened, and Channels cleared, is impracticable and abſurd, it is by urging temporal motives in order to make men act upon quite different ones; as if I ſhould bribe a man, in order to prevail with him to do an action out of mere gratitude. See p. 103—4, Hoadly Rights, &c. Vol. II. p. 762.

I believe the Roman Church has taken as much pains in clearing of *Sources*, and opening of *Channels*, as any other in the world; and par-

particularly under the reigns of Charles the Vth. and Philip the IId, as we find in the valuable hiſtories lately publiſhed. In the reign of Charles, it is ſaid there were above 50,000 Proteſtants ſlain for their Religion by Civil Authority; and Philip, to make himſelf the more acceptable to the Deity, declared his reſolution to dedicate his life to the defence of the Catholic Faith, and the extirpation of Hereſy," or, in the ſenſe in which the Proteſtants would explain it, the defence of Idolatry, and the extirpation of *Goſpel truths*; for he imagined Religion was inſufficient to rely on its own Energies without the aſſiſtance of Racks and Gibbets, and that Sources and Channels ſhould be clear'd with Blood.

But by collecting what he imagined to be goſpel Truths, from the Traditions and doctrines of men inſtead of the word of God, he miſtook the cauſe he mean'd to ſupport, and made uſe of his Authority to promote Idolatry and Blaſphemy. A misfortune, which we ſhall always be liable to, whenever we leave to follow the Scripture; and, to avoid the leſſer inconveniences of differing from one another openly, apoſtatize to the doctrines of Men, and return into the ſame Shackles, from which, as Proteſtants, we had happily been delivered.

But to return. The Apoſtacy from the Scriptures to the Doctrines of men ſeems at preſent

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to be at a ſtand. Our governors do not ſeem to have concerned themſelves either to encourage or diminiſh it, nor to have any apprehenſion of the inconſiſtency between the Laws of the land, which require the belief of many human Compoſitions, and the Articles of Religion which allow of no Rule of Faith but holy writ, the fundamental principle of Proteſtantiſm.

If we reject the Councils as Rules of Faith and Teſts of Hereſy, and adhere to the Scripture only, we ſhall be, as we think ourſelves to be, rational and conſiſtent Proteſtants. If we receive the Councils, as the Laws direct, we ſhall be involved in the ſame Errors and inconſiſtences in which the Greek and Roman Churches are involved; and muſt go on to explain the contradictory Creeds which have been eſtabliſhed by the Councils, in the ſame unintelligible manner as they do, viz. by tranſmutation of elements, commutation of Idioms, divine fecundity, the Sufferings of an impaſſible Being, eternal generation, unity of ſo tranſcendent a nature as to be a plurality, the wonderful effect of an Emperichoreſis, and other doctrines of a ſimilar nature, invented to defend their errors and inconſiſtences, which the Apoſtles never heard of, and the Clergy themſelves underſtand no better than the moſt ignorant

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mechanick (y); and in general have heard ſo little of lately, that they would be looked upon as new doctrines.

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(y) This Obſervation leads us to ſhew the weakneſs of the Argument ſometimes uſed, for denying the uſe of Reaſon to the bulk of mankind on Religious ſubjects, viz. "becauſe they are no more fit to judge of Religion than "of Sir Iſaac Newton's Principia." But how does this come about? Our Saviour reaſoned with the bulk of mankind upon this Subject, and ſo did the Apoſtles; and they have the ſame Capacities now which they had then, and therefore the change muſt be in the ſubject upon which they reaſoned. And the naked truth is, that what is now called by the name of Chriſtian Religion by the men who make this objection, is not the ſame thing which the Apoſtles preached, and called by *that* name; but a Syllabus of Metaphorical queſtions, which the New Teſtament every where avoids. And if the reaſoning be ſolid, that, becauſe the bulk of mankind are not capable of underſtanding ſuch ſubjects, they are not capable to judge of religious truths, it will follow, that the learned are no fitter judges of religious truths than the ignorant; for they know juſt as much of the Emperichereſis, the tranſmutation of Elements, &c. as the moſt ignorant: And this is the effect of mixing divine and human placits. We firſt make Articles which are unintelligible, and then would deprive the people of their natural Rights of private judgment, becauſe they are not able to underſtand them. When Dominicus Soto, and Catarinus, Biſhops of Minori, who were both preſent at the Council of Trent, differed in their opinions upon ſome articles that had been there diſcuſſed, each of them wrote to the Council, declaring his opinion to be that of the Synod. So that the Fathers were all divided into two parts. This

Thoſe indeed who plead for the impoſition of Articles of human invention, will tell us, that they are all taken from the Scripture and receive their Authority from thence. But why then are they not drawn up in the words of Scripture, but expreſſed in barbarous and new

ſeemed to put all Men out of hope to underſtand the meaning of the Council; ſeeing the principal men that were preſent in it did not agree.—Bret. Tranſ. of Father Paul, p. 230. The like difference of opinion happened between Soto and Father Andreas, with regard to the ſenſe of the Council, p. 216. So that I do not ſee why the common people may not ſee the truth as it is in the plane Text of the new Teſtament, as well as the learned Divines, even after the matter has been diſcuſſed in a general Council. Truth is as much in danger from the Artifice of the learned, as from the Simplicity of the unlearned; and when an argument is diſentangled from its Sophiſtry, they will judge of truth as well as the learned.

All are the Subjects of Chriſt, ſays Biſhop Hoadly, and in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed by *him*; their Faith was once delivered by *him*, the conditions of their happineſs was once laid down by *him*, the nature of God's worſhip was once declared by *him*. And it is eaſy to judge whether of the two is moſt becoming a Subject of the Kingdom of Chriſt that is a member of his Church, to ſeek all theſe particulars in thoſe plane declarations of their King and Lawgiver himſelf, or to hunt after them through the infinite contradictions, the numberleſs perplexities, the endleſs diſputes of weak men, in ſeveral ages, till the enquirer himſelf is loſt in the Labyrinth, and perhaps ſits down in deſpair and Infidelity. Rights of Subjects, p. 50.

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invented Terms, unknown to the Apoſtles, and never mentioned in the Scriptures, and capable of no certain and determinate ſenſe but what Authority ſhall impoſe upon them?

Surely it is one of the moſt extraordinary things in the world, that in all Religions, whether true or falſe, the people are no ſooner ſatisfied that a Revelation comes from God, than they immediately ſubſtitute ſome human Compoſition in its ſtead, and impoſe it upon the faith of their people, as if it was the Revelation itſelf, or at leaſt of the ſame Authority. Thus is the Sonna introduced among the Mahometans, the Talmud among the Jews, the Council of Trent among the Papiſts, and ſo many Articles, Catechiſms, Confeſſions, &c. among the Proteſtants, as has rent the Church in pieces, and divided it into ſects and parties, to the entire loſs of its Catholiciſm; which was formerly looked upon as of ſuch importance; ſo that the name of Chriſt is loſt among them; and upon the Authority of theſe human regulations they have made no ſcruple in the different Churches to condemn to death both learned and unlearned. And yet we know that nothing can be more contrary to the practice of the wiſeſt Courts of Judicature, than the producing any ſuch proofs of hereſy againſt a Culprit, whilſt the original Scriptures themſelves are in being; for at the beſt they can only be looked upon as

extracts, or Copies, or interpretations, from which the Culprit has an undoubted right to appeal, as Luther always did to the original Scriptures, from whence they are ſaid to be drawn; for the Copy, or Extract, or interpretation, ought to have no authority as long as the original itſelf can be produced.

There is another argument againſt Subſcription to Articles, which grows ſtronger and ſtronger every day, as the Scriptures are better underſtood, than when the Articles were firſt made; and it is this; that the doctrines to be believed are much more intelligible in the Scripture than they are in the Articles. "Some wiſe men," ſays Biſhop Taylor, "think "the Church had been more happy if ſhe had "not been conſtrained to alter the ſimplicity "of her Faith, and make it more curious and "articulate; ſo much, that he had need be a "ſubtle man to underſtand the very words of "the new Determinations." (Pol. Diſc.) The diſciples of Chriſt were ignorant Fiſhermen, and they never mention any other doctrines than what are intelligible to the common People.

To what purpoſe is it then that the Articles ſhould be ſubſcribed? The preamble to them informs us, that it is to avoid diverſity of opinions.—But does it ſerve this purpoſe? By no means. It not only divides the Churches, which ought to conſider themſelves throughout the world, as under one and the ſame head,

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and as one and the ſame Church; But it does not from the very time of the Subſcription, keep even the members of the ſame Church united; no, not even the Clergy. For when a young man receives Prieſt's Orders he ſolemnly declares, " that he is determined to inſtruct " the people committed to his charge, and to " teach nothing as required of neceſſity to Sal- " vation, but that which he ſhall be perſuaded " may be concluded and proved by Scripture, " and to drive away all ſtrange and erroneous " doctrines contrary to God's word." And can it be imagined that a ſubſcription to the Articles fruſtrates this declaration, and precludes him from the uſe of his application to the Study of the Scripture all his life after? Is he to grow no wiſer? Is he never to underſtand the Scriptures better than thoſe who formed the Articles? Or is he to keep his knowledge to himſelf, and preach what he knows to be falſe? Whatever a man believes when he ſubſcribes, it can no longer bind him than till he ſees reaſon to change his mind. And therefore as to any uniformity of Doctrine by a Subſcription, it is all a fancy. When he ſees that the Scripture contradicts the Articles, every good man will contradict them too; and not defend a falſity merely becauſe he has once ſubſcribed it; and continue to declare, the *Lord hath ſaid*, after he knows the Lord hath not ſaid it. There was as much Uniformity of opinion in the Church

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when there was no Subſcription to Articles, as there is now. Every man preaches what he thinks is agreeable to Scripture, and he ſo far does his duty. But the Uniformity at preſent, as far as it goes, conſiſts in preaching contrary to the Articles; for thoſe who obſerve them are looked upon to be Methodiſts.

Thoſe who objected to the Clerical Petition were ſenſible of this, and therefore obſerve, that *neither the truth* nor the *Importance* of the Articles are concerned in the debate.—My argument relates chiefly to the Rulers of the Church, who cannot conſcientiouſly require a Subſcription to what is falſe, or what is of no importance. And therefore it is very much to my purpoſe to conſider both; and eſpecially to remember, that ſo far as a Chriſtian Church receives and eſtabliſhes articles of Faith contrary to the doctrines of Chriſt, ſo far it becomes Apoſtate, (ſee p. 93.). And ſo far as it eſtabliſhes falſe doctrines, knowing them to be ſuch, ſo far it ceaſes to be a Chriſtian Church. If theſe things be true, ſurely the Impoſition of Articles is a Thing not to be trifled with. For whoever ſhall ſtudy the ſubject to any purpoſe, will find, that the Subſcription is not to be defended even in the important article of Truth. I ſhall only inſtance in regard to the three Creeds. That which is commonly called the Apoſtles Creed, was *not compoſed* by the *Apoſtles*; nor

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appeared complete till the middle of the Fourth Century. What is impoſed upon the Subſcribers as the *Nicene* Creed, is *not* the Nicene Creed. And that which is called the Creed of St. *Athanaſius*, is not the Creed of St. Athanaſius; nay more, it is contrary to the Faith of St. Athanaſius, and its doctrine is condemned by him. Again, let us conſider the doctrines ſubſcribed.

1. That there is only *One* divine Subſtance to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, is eſtabliſhed by the Council of Lateran, and received into the Church of England, in her ſecond and fifth Articles, and the proper Preface to the Communion ſervice for Trinity Sunday.

2. That there are *Three* divine Subſtances *joined* together *inſeparably*, is the ſenſe of the *Nicene* Creed, as explaned by the learned.

3. That there are *Three Separate* divine Subſtances of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, each of which is of *Himſelf* both *God* and *Lord*, is the doctrine of the Athanaſian Creed (*a*). Now how can our Rulers, with any regard to the Truth of Chriſtianity, require a Subſcription to ſuch plane contradictions? If they know not on which ſide the truth lies, why is not the queſtion ſuffered to reſt till they do? It requires

(*a*) See Ben. Mord. Lett. VIII. p. 34.

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no great knowledge to be aſſured, that they cannot all of them be true.

Can a Subſcription to theſe Contradictions produce a Conformity in opinions? Or, will not men of contrary opinions defend them, as South and Sherlock did, by appealing to the ſame Articles? Again,

What has the Church gained by requiring a Subſcription to the Calviniſtical Articles; has it ſecured the Calviniſtical Faith? By no means. Arminianiſm broke forth on a ſudden, and overbore the whole Calviniſtical ſyſtem. Archbiſhop Laud, Biſhop Bull, and others, as Biſhop Hoadly obſerves, departed manifeſtly from the received Senſe, not of one, but of ſeveral Articles: and the declaration of King James I. as I obſerved, openly patroniſed the Subſcribing the *ſame Articles* in *ſeveral* not only different but *contradictory* Senſes; and in effect, declared for the Honour of the *Articles*, that *this* ſhould be ſo, and that all ſhould acquieſce in it without mutual reproaches(*b*). What then becomes of that Uniformity of Opinion which the title to the Articles ſeems to require? Agreeable to this Declaration, a learned Biſhop of the Church hath taken no ſmall pains to prove them capable both of an Arminian and Calviniſtical ſenſe. If they *are* ſo, of what uſe is a Subſcription towards preventing a diverſity of

(*b*) Hoadly, Vol. II. p. 910.

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opinions? If they are not ſo, with what Conſcience can our Governors require a Subſcription to Calviniſtical Articles which they do not believe? If they are doubtful, of what uſe can it be to ſubſcribe to what is uncertain and indeterminate? To what end then can it ſerve, but to divide the Churches and raiſe ſcruples in the mind of many honeſt men, and prevent them from entering into the Church; for all men are not ſo courageous as the late Biſhop of Glouceſter was, who, if I miſtake not, was writing againſt one of the Articles, at the ſame time that he was defending a Subſcription to them all.

Divine Legat. Vol. II. 446.

Future rewards and Puniſhments were not only not the Sanction of the Moſaick diſpenſation; but were not taught in it at all, and in conſequence of this omiſſion, the people had not this doctrine for many ages.

VIIth Art. of the Church.

Both in the Old and New Teſtament everlaſting Life is offered to mankind by Chriſt; and they are not to be heard which feign that the old Fathers did look only for tranſitory Promiſes.

Others there are of a more tender conſcience, and more fearful of the very appearance of prevarication, who are obliged, at a time when they have juſt fitted themſelves for the miniſtry,

to give up all their hopes in that way of life, [illegible] believe as their Examiners, the [illegible] of the people, and the two Houſes of Parliament believe, and imagine the Articles are contrary to that ſenſe, and incapable of it without violence in the interpretation. The more tender their conſciences are, and the more fearful they are of doing wrong by ſubſcribing to what they are not ſure of, or greatly ſuſpect; the more aſſuredly they are kept out of the Church; whilſt men of the vileſt principles, who can ſubſcribe to any thing, and believe nothing, find no difficulty to gain admiſſion. For how ſtrange ſoever it may ſeem, as things are now circumſtanced, the Governors of the Church are obliged to require a Subſcription to what none of them would venture to defend for fear of being looked upon as Methodiſts: And they refuſe many worthy and good men, not becauſe they differ in their Sentiments, but becauſe they agree. And yet there are ſome who chuſe to continue in theſe Shackles; *vident meliora probantque, deteriora ſequuntur.*

There are others, who after ſtruggling with their ſcruples for ſome time, have at length found it the only way of making their minds eaſy, to give up their preferment, and enter into another courſe of life. Many there are who have been drawn in by the example of great and good men, and afterwards thought

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the reaſons they went upon unſatisfactory. Some of which have at firſt conſidered them only as Articles of Peace. The learned and ingenious Dr. Balguy obſerves a great difference and diſtinction between terms of *Salvation*, and terms of *admiſſion* to *the Miniſtry*, and quotes the following words from Dr. Samuel Clark's Reply to Nelſon, p. 32. That particular Churches require man's aſſent and uſe of certain forms of words, not as a *Rule* of their Faith, but as *prudential means* of uniformity, and of preventing diſorder and Confuſion among themſelves. (Dr. Balguy's Charge.)

To which others reply, that they are not able to ſee things in that light; that the requiſition cannot mean, that the articles ſhould be conſidered as Terms of *admiſſion* to the miniſtry, becauſe it extends to ſuch as are not *deſigned* for the miniſtry; and that it cannot relate to a Subſcription as to Articles of *Peace*, or *prudential Means* of Uniformity, becauſe the Preamble to the Articles declares the Subſcription is meant to *prevent diverſity of Opinions*, and therefore relates to the actual belief of *all* the Articles. Others have argued for a Subſcription from the nature of publick worſhip, and the neceſſity of imperfection in every Liturgy that can be compoſed by men; from whence it follows, that theſe imperfections muſt be connived at, or there could be no publick worſhip at all. And this is very true; but does not reach the caſe; becauſe we do not ſubſcribe that this faulty Liturgy is

without fault, but only to the uſe of it, with all its imperfections; which makes a very important difference. Thus by the requiring Subſcription to Articles, the Church of England is deprived of the moſt conſcientious of its members from entering into the Miniſtry: But this is an Evil which our Rulers perhaps may not feel, or not attend to.

In other Proteſtant Countries the Subſcription to human Compoſitions is much more ſevere, as we find in Buan Herport's Eſſay on Truths of Importance, p. 178. in which, conſidering the Church matters at Bern, where he was impriſoned and died, he ſays, " At firſt the Loci communes of the learned and moderate Melanchton, were recommended as a very good book; but ſoon all Candidates for holy Orders were to ſubſcribe to it as a complete doctrine. Diſſentions increaſing [inſtead of referring to the Scripture, and arguing, that if they are not there planely determined, they might ſafely be left undetermined] the Synod of *Lichtenburg*, in 1576, determined, that beſides the three Creeds, the *Augsberg* Confeſſion, its defence, *Luther's* two Catechiſms, and the *Smalcald* Articles ſhould be received as Rules. The Concordance book, compoſed by Dr. Schmiddi, was likewiſe eſtabliſhed as a Rule to be indiſpenſibly ſworn to. Some Country Miniſters aſking how this could be done with a ſafe Conſcience, having previouſly ſworn to

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Melanchton's Loci Communes, which in many places diſagreed with the Concordance, Schmiddi made anſwer, 'that the Aſſembly now abſolved them, ipſo facto, from obligation of any former Oath, and that Melanchton being under ſuſpicion, they muſt reſt ſatisfied and ſwear again.' A poor village Parſon took the liberty to reply, Conſcience ſhould not be laid under any reſtraint; but we poor people having Families to maintain, muſt take care not to be turned out of our Livings."

By this we ſee how one miſchief brings on another. Whence had the Proteſtants this diſpencing Power? One would imagine ſuch a queſtion would have ſtartled them, and brought them to conſider what Right they had to require ſuch Oaths. If they had conſulted the firſt Principle of Proteſtantiſm, they muſt have ſeen their Error, and avoided the whole difficulty; for, "The Reſtraining the Miniſters to "preach according to the ſenſe and interpreta-"tion of Scripture *approved by the Church*, is "one of the Articles of the Edict of Spires, in "1529, which was proteſted againſt by the fa-"vourers of the Reformatiom, and from which "they firſt obtained the name of Proteſtants "(*c*)." Which planely proved, that this aſſumed Authority is a relick of Popery.

But he who once hath miſſed the right way,
The farther he doth go, the farther he doth ſtray.

(*c*) See Archdeacon Blackbourne's Diſcourſes, p. 167.

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without fault, but only to the uſe of it, with all its imperfections; which makes a very important difference. Thus by the requiring Subſcription to Articles, the Church of England is deprived of the moſt conſcientious of its members from entering into the Miniſtry: But this is an Evil which our Rulers perhaps may not feel, or not attend to.

In other Proteſtant Countries the Subſcription to human Compoſitions is much more ſevere, as we find in Buan Herport's Eſſay on Truths of Importance, p. 178. in which, conſidering the Church matters at Bern, where he was impriſoned and died, he ſays, " At firſt the Loci communes of the learned and moderate Melanchton, were recommended as a very good book; but ſoon all Candidates for holy Orders were to ſubſcribe to it as a complete doctrine. Diſſentions increaſing [inſtead of referring to the Scripture, and arguing, that if they are not there planely determined, they might ſafely be left undetermined] the Synod of *Lichtenburg*, in 1576, determined, that beſides the three Creeds, the *Augsberg* Confeſſion, its defence, *Luther's* two Catechiſms, and the *Smalcald* Articles ſhould be received as Rules. The Concordance book, compoſed by Dr. Schmiddi, was likewiſe eſtabliſhed as a Rule to be indiſpenſibly ſworn to. Some Country Miniſters aſking how this could be done with a ſafe Conſcience, having previouſly ſworn to

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Melanchton's Loci Communes, which in many places diſagreed with the Concordance, Schmiddi made anſwer, 'that the Aſſembly now abſolved them, ipſo facto, from obligation of any former Oath, and that Melanchton being under ſuſpicion, they muſt reſt ſatisfied and ſwear again.' A poor village Parſon took the liberty to reply, Conſcience ſhould not be laid under any reſtraint; but we poor people having Families to maintain, muſt take care not to be turned out of our Livings."

By this we ſee how one miſchief brings on another. Whence had the Proteſtants this diſpencing Power? One would imagine ſuch a queſtion would have ſtartled them, and brought them to conſider what Right they had to require ſuch Oaths. If they had conſulted the firſt Principle of Proteſtantiſm, they muſt have ſeen their Error, and avoided the whole difficulty; for, "The Reſtraining the Miniſters to "preach according to the ſenſe and interpreta-"tion of Scripture *approved by the Church*, is "one of the Articles of the Edict of Spires, in "1529, which was proteſted againſt by the fa-"vourers of the Reformatiom, and from which "they firſt obtained the name of Proteſtants "(*c*)." Which planely proved, that this aſſumed Authority is a relick of Popery.

But he who once hath miſſed the right way,
The farther he doth go, the farther he doth ſtray.

(*c*) See Archdeacon Blackbourne's Diſcourſes, p. 167.

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This account which Mr. Herport gives us, deſcribes very naturally the tendency of the reformed Churches to the Principles of Popery. They firſt recommended a book to the Clergy, then required a Subſcription to it; and then, as their Confidence encreaſed, an Oath to another Book, and from thence proceeded to impriſon their members for diſobeying ſuch decrees, &c. p. 103. And thus the Proteſtants in this Country were led on by degrees to the convincing argument of Fire and Faggot, merely by not attending to the firſt queſtion, whether they had any Right to puniſh men for ſpreading their Religious Opinions in a peaceable manner. And we ſhall never be ſafe from the practice of Perſecution till we renounce the principles upon which it is founded, and has been lately defended under the notion of puniſhing Hereſy and ſilencing ſectaries. And if the Rulers of the Proteſtant Churches would reflect upon the Conſequence of ſuch a Conduct, they would find that the temporal intereſt of the Petitioners againſt a Subſcription to Articles is by no means ſo much concerned in the queſtion, as the Rulers are in getting rid of the danger they themſelves incur by impoſing them, whether they conſider themſelves as Proteſtants or Chriſtians. For, let them lay their hands upon their hearts and reflect upon what they are doing? Do they not as far as in them lies encourage the Apoſtacy, by ſubſtituting the or-

ordinances and fallible interpretations of men (into which they themſelves perhaps have never ſo much as examined, and perhaps are not capable of examining) inſtead of the word of God? Do they not ſtop the progreſs of the Truth, and prevent Chriſtianity from being better underſtood, than when the Articles were firſt compoſed, and thereby, as much as in them lies, deprive the people of all the light that has appeared in the writings of wiſe men for the laſt Century, and eſtabliſh all the errors of former ages, all the contradictions which prevent Chriſtianity from being defended in a conſiſtent manner, all the miſtakes of the Calviniſtical Syſtem which prevail in ſo many Proteſtant Churches, and which repreſent Almighty God as an arbitrary Being, whoſe ways are unequal, determining men to eternal puniſhment before they exiſted, and condemning them for Sins committed before they were born, with many other miſtakes of a very bad tendency (*d*)? Are theſe fit doctrines to be ſubſcribed

(*d*) I cannot forbear to ſay, and I care not if all the world heard me, for I ſpeak nothing but what is worthy of God and to the honour of my Maker [theſe are the words of the very learned and judicious Biſhop Ruſt] I can with more eaſe think that light ſhould ſpring out of the bottomleſs pit, that the ſun ſhould become the Source of darkneſs, that ice ſhould burn, and fire freeze, that the elements ſhould interchange their natures and contradictory terms be reconciled to one another, than that God ſhould

ſcribed to? Will they promote the belief of Chriſtianity? Will they increaſe our Love to God? Will they ſtand the ſcoff of Unbelievers? And if it be ſaid, the common people are no judges of ſuch things, is it not ſo much the worſe in their Rulers to deceive them? For what is done by the Articles, &c. is done by thoſe who impoſe them by their Authority, and they are anſwerable to God for the truth of every thing they order to be ſubſcribed as a matter of Faith. They preſumptuouſly alter the words of Scripture, or impoſe them when altered, and thereby take the doctrine upon themſelves. Mr. Wentworth's anſwer to the Archbiſhop of Canterbury, when theſe ſubjects were conſidered in Queen Eliſabeth's time, proves planely that he and thoſe who were in the commiſſion with him underſtood it ſo. No! by the faith of God, ſays he, *We* will paſs nothing till *we* underſtand what it is (*d*)." And would they have ſacrificed Truth to Politicks, and paſſed any thing which they did not believe? Or, with the light the Chriſtians now

ſhould *take up a thought* of making any of his creatutes miſerable without the conſideration of their provocation and continuance in it. And ſo fully hath God by natural and revealed light inſtructed my mind in this Truth, that if an Angel from heaven ſhould preach any other Doctrine, it were impoſſible I ſhould believe him. Bp. Ruſt's Remains, p. 12.

(*d*) Life of Chillingworth.

have,

have, would they have thought of recommending, much leſs of requiring a Subſcription to ſuch doctrines? In ſhort, it appears ſo contrary to the progreſs of Chriſtianity, to its perfection; that it falls little if at all ſhort of the crime with which the Governors of the Church are accuſed by Iſaiah; "This is a rebellious People, lying Children; Children that will not hear the law of the Lord, which *ſay to the Seers, ſee not, and to the Prophets, propheſy not unto us right things*, ſpeak unto us ſmooth things, Propheſy deceits." Iſ. xxx. 10.

The learned Dr. Balguy very juſtly obſerves, that it cannot but introduce doubts and perplexity in the minds of people, when they hear in the ſame town, perhaps in the ſame Church, the moſt irreconcileable contradictions of doctrine; when they are told in the morning, ſuppoſe, that Chriſt came down from heaven, &c. and in the afternoon, that he did *not* come down from heaven, &c. what *muſt* they, what *can* they think?

But whatever they may think they cannot be more perplexed, than when they read in the Scripture that Chriſt came down from heaven, and are told by their moſt eminent Divines, ſuch as South, Sherlock, Bull, More, Fowler, &c. that it could not be (*r*). And whence does

(*r*) See Ben. Mord. Lett. III. Poſtſcript.

this difference ariſe, but from conſtituting a Rule of Faith in Creeds and Articles of human invention, different and contrary to what we find in holy writ, which is, or ought to be, the only rule of Proteſtants. And how can it be prevented, except by adhering to Scripture as the Rule of Faith, and admitting no other? Moſt certainly not by a ſubſcription to the articles of the Church; for the very men who maintain theſe doctrines, which contradict the Scripture, were themſelves ſubſcribers to the Articles. And in fact, it is by eſtabliſhing for goſpel truths ſuch contradictory opinions, as articles of faith, which have been framed at different times by Chriſtians of oppoſite principles, that the Church has become ſo corrupted in ſome material doctrines, that its moſt learned and ingenious members have not been able to defend her Creeds without contradicting the New Teſtament: I mean particularly in thoſe articles which relate to the deſcent of Chriſt from heaven, his ſufferings and his death. We are told by Bp. Bull, that Chriſt deſcended only in ENERGY; and by Dr. Waterland, that he emptied himſelf of his glory only in APPEARANCE; and by Epiphanius, that the Sufferings of Chriſt were only RECKONED to him. I confeſs I have it at heart, and I think I cannot inculcate it too ſtrongly, or too often, that whatever doctrine does directly or indirectly, explicitly or in its conſequence require us to be-

believe, that Chriſt did not deſcend from heaven, ſuffer, and die, is no doctrine of Chriſt. And I lay this dilemma again (*f*) before all Chriſtians who are deſirous of receiving the truth on ſo important a ſubject.—If Chriſt is of the ſame Subſtance with the Father, (who is infinite and impaſſible, as all Chriſtians allow,) then he could not deſcend from heaven, and ſuffer and die: and all interpretation of Scripture to that purpoſe muſt be falſe. Or on the other hand; if Chriſt was παθητος, capable of ſuffering, as he is declared to be by St. Paul and all the Prophets (Acts xxvi. 23.); if he did actually deſcend from heaven, and ſuffer and die, then he is not of the ſame infinite and impaſſible ſubſtance as the Father, and all that is ſaid to the contrary in any of the Creeds is falſe. The queſtion therefore is in its conſequence of the utmoſt importance to all ſuch as have any regard to the honour of the church, and would wiſh that the whole tenor of her Articles and Creeds ſhould be conſiſtent with Scripture.

I am far from wiſhing that our Governors would enter into theſe or ſuch like queſtions; it is a great happineſs that they do not. But a time may come, that ſuch queſtions may again become the teſts of hereſy, and the pretext to perſecution: I can only wiſh, that while Power

(*f*) See Ben. Mord. Lett. VIII.

continues in the hands of truly liberal and ſenſible Chriſtians, that they would ſo far provide for the peace and liberty of the Subject, that an honeſt man may believe as his conſcience directs him upon ſuch Subjects, or not think of them at all, without any danger to his perſon or property. For Perſecution is a more dangerous hereſy than the five hundred mentioned by Prateolus, taken all together.

It has been by theſe human laws controuling our Faith under penalties, that the man of Sin, in carrying on the apoſtacy from the word of God, has found himſelf aſſiſted by the moſt pious, learned, and reſpectable among the modern Divines, ſuch as Dr. South, Sherlock, Fowler, Bull, Pearſon, Waterland, &c. as he was formerly aſſiſted in maintaining the worſhip of the dead, and the doctrine of many Mediators, by Chryſoſtom, Epiphanius, Athanaſius, Baſil, &c. and the Writers of the preſent age who endeavour to maintain the Credit of the Fathers, in oppoſition to the plane doctrines of Scripture, only expoſe themſelves to the ſame unſurmountable difficulties.

This being the Caſe, one might naturally enough have imagined, that it would have been looked upon by the Church, and particularly by the Clergy, as a praiſeworthy attempt to clear its defenders from ſuch embarraſſments, by appealing from Councils and Creeds, and

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Articles of human Compoſition to the Scripture; and thereby enabling both Clergy and Laity to give a Reaſon of the faith that is in them without the imputation of hereſy, or of acting a double part in defending contradictions.

And one might have hoped that the Clerical Petition, tending to deliver us from ſuch Chains, might, amongſt Proteſtants who allow of no Authority in matters of Faith but Scripture, have been highly approved of.

But the fate of the Clerical Petition has been very different; and it is amazing with what heat and violence its oppoſers have expreſſed themſelves upon the Subject, intimating that the Petitioners had dark and dangerous deſigns in view, both againſt Church and State.—But it is the nature of Error, that ſuch, as are involved in it moſt deeply, look upon thoſe as their greateſt enemies, who would deliver them from it: and the greateſt affront that can be offered to their Underſtanding is to diſcover the nakedneſs of thoſe human Syſtems to which they have ſolemnly ſubſcribed; for they had rather always continue in their miſtakes than once own they had been guilty of an Error. Am I therefore become your Enemy becauſe I tell you the truth? ſays St. Paul to the Galatians, iv. 6. moſt certainly he was, though they might be aſhamed to confeſs it openly.

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One learned Writer argues as follows: "That thoſe who underſtand the nature of the Petition will readily agree with him, that the queſtion between them amounts only to this; whether it is fit for Government to employ and reward equally the Miniſters of all Religions, or to ſupport one Religion and tolerate the Reſt? Or, whether Jupiter and Mahomet ought to have public honours aſſigned to them even in a Chriſtian country, on a principle of common equity, and out of a tender regard to the Right of private judgment? And again, the Queſtion is, Are we to have any eſtabliſhment or none?" But this is a very partial, and a very falſe repreſentation of the queſtion between us. This learned writer ſeems to forget, that the Petitioners were ready to ſubſcribe to the Scripture and to uſe the Liturgy as now eſtabliſhed, and to conform in every other particular except a Subſcription to the Articles. And, can it be imagined that a Subſcription to Articles ſuppoſed to be taken from Scripture, is more neceſſary to the nature of an eſtabliſhment, than a ſubſcription to the Scripture-itſelf? Or is it true, that a Pagan or Mahometan would conform to ſuch Requiſitions?

The ſame ingenious Writer makes it another queſtion, Whether the Petition aroſe from a diſlike of all eſtabliſhments, or from a deſire

of

of erecting a new eſtabliſhment on the ruins of the preſent one? But is there no third reaſon to be thought of? Is it poſſible that a Man who has ever heard of the Reformation, ſhould never recollect, that it might poſſibly ariſe from a deſire that the eſtabliſhed Church might reform its Errors, and become as conſiſtent as poſſible to the doctrines of the New Teſtament? Had the Reformers a diſlike of all Religions, or did they deſire to erect a new Religion upon the ruins of the old one? Moſt certainly neither the one nor the other; but they preferred the doctrines of the Goſpel, to that of the Eſtabliſhment. And as the Petitioners know their Church to be perfect in its fundamental Article, viz. the Sufficiency of Scripture as a Rule of Faith, they were deſirous that no alloy ſhould be mixed with the pure gold, that might debaſe its intrinſic worth.

But as this Writer has appealed to Biſhop Hoadly, let us do the ſame; for we ſhall not find a firmer friend to Chriſtianity nor to the preſent Eſtabliſhment in Church and State, nor a better judge of the duty which belongs to each. "We eſteem our Conſtitution either in Church or State better than others, ſays his Lordſhip, becauſe we ſuppoſe there are fewer Errors in it. But ſhall we think it therefore perfect? No, certainly, nor endeavour to make others think ſo. I know better what a

true

true affection to the Church of England imports, than to make it conſiſt in thinking it given down immediately from heaven, pure and blameleſs, without ſpot or wrinkle: and I know, I hope, my duty to God and to Chriſt better than to *proſtitute* the honour of the Goſpel to that of any Conſtitution in the world (*u*)." But, before I conſider Biſhop Hoadly's opinion, I ſhall quote the following words of Biſhop Burnet, which equally favour the Petitioners.

" My thoughts," ſays Biſhop Burnet, " have " run moſt and dwelt longeſt on the concerns " of the Church and Religion. I have always " had a true zele for the Church of England; I " have lived in its Communion with joy, and have " purſued its true intereſts with an unfeigned " affection. Yet I muſt ſay, there are many " things in it that have been very uneaſy to me. " The requiring ſubſcription to the Thirty-nine " Articles is a great IMPOSITION (*x*). I be-

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(*u*) Hoadly, Vol. II. p. 762.

(*x*) A Learned Writer againſt the Clerical Petition, takes notice, that the Phraſe of IMPOSING Articles is a ſtrange way of ſpeaking, much in uſe among Writers of a *certain Claſs:* and it is very true that Writers of the ſame Claſs with Biſhop Burnet and Biſhop Hoadly make no ſcruple to uſe it. Notwithſtanding which, it is very certain, as ſome of their charitable Brethren have obſerved, that a Subſcription is *impoſed* upon no man. Since every one, after ſpending his little patrimony at College to fit him for the Church, has an undoubted Right, if he

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" lieve them all myſelf," ſays his Lordſhip, " but as thoſe about Original Sin and Pre- " deſtination might be expreſſed more unex- " ceptionably; ſo I think it is a better way to " let ſuch matters continue to be the ſtandard " of doctrine with ſome few corrections; and " to cenſure thoſe who teach any contrary " tenets, than to oblige all who ſerve in the " Church to *ſubſcribe* them. Churches and Socie- " ties are much better ſecured by Laws than by " ſubſcription. It is a more eaſy, as well as a " more reaſonable method of Government. Our " worſhip is the perfecteſt method of devotion " that we find in any Church, ancient or mo- " dern; yet the Corrections that were agreed to " by a deputation of Biſhops and Divines, in " the year 1689, would make the whole frame " of our Liturgy ſtill more perfect as well as " more unexceptionable; and will, I hope, ſome " time or other be better entertained than they " were then. I am perſuaded that they are " ſuch as would bring in the greateſt part of " the diſſenters to the communion of the Church; " and are in themſelves deſirable, though there " were not a diſſenter in the nation." Hiſt. of his own Times, p. 634.

is not able conſcientiouſly to ſubſcribe, either to enter into the army, or navy, or become an itinerant Pedlar, and improve himſelf in the Knowledge of the world by travel, as Ulyſſes did, ὃς μαλα πολλα—πλαγχθη—δ' ανθρωπων ειδε αστεα κ' νοον' εγνω.

Here we ſee, that Biſhop Burnet not only wholly approves of the principles of the Clerical Petition againſt Subſcription to the Thirty-nine Articles, but looks upon the requiſition of Subſcription to them as a great *impoſition*, and an unneceſſary one; foraſmuch as the good propoſed by it would be better ſerved and better ſecured by laws than by a Subſcription. The Biſhop goes much further than the Petitioners have offered to go: He tells us planely and honeſtly, that the Articles in ſome things are exceptionable, and ſtand in need of Correction; and that the Liturgy is capable of amendment, and wiſhes them to be corrected and improved, by the agreement of 1689; and all this he conſiders as conſiſtent with zele for the Church, and purſuit of its true intereſts. And why ſhould not the Petitioners be thought to act upon the ſame reaſons as the Biſhops of Saliſbury and Wincheſter?

The words that are quoted againſt the Petition, from Biſhop Hoadly's works, are as follow:

" To propoſe the Amendment of ſome par-
" ticulars in the preſent Eſtabliſhment," ſays his Lordſhip, " in order to the making it more
" perfect, is what cannot well be complained
" of—but to propoſe a ſcheme which cannot be
" admitted without entire deſtruction and total
" abolition of the whole preſent Conſtitution,
" can end in no good."

Now

Now in the firſt clauſe of this paragraph the Petitioners are not at all concerned; they have propoſed no amendments, though if they had propoſed any, *in order to make the Eſtabliſhment more perfect*, they are hereby warranted by Biſhop Hoadly, as before by Biſhop Burnet.—And with regard to the latter Clauſe, (that *to propoſe a ſcheme which cannot be admitted without the entire* deſtruction *of the whole conſtitution, can end in no good*) the Petitioners are entirely of the ſame opinion, and have never thought of propoſing ſuch a pernicious ſcheme.

But perhaps it was the Objector's belief, that Biſhop Hoadly imagined the very propoſal to *take away Subſcription to the Thirty-nine Articles*, was *itſelf* a ſcheme of this *pernicious nature*; if this was his opinion, he was entirely miſtaken: Biſhop Hoadly knew the contrary; he knew that Churches can, and have exiſted, and we know that they do now exiſt without Subſcription. But hear his own words in the Poſtſcript to the anſwer to Biſhop Hare's Sermon, Vol. II. folio, p. 905.

" The propoſal which the Biſhop [Potter] ſo much condemns, has chiefly an eye to Lay communion; ſo, ſuppoſing it to extend to the Clergy and REQUIRE NO SUBSCRIPTION of them, but to the SCRIPTURE as the word of God, in which the Rule of Faith is contained. Suppoſing this to be the caſe in the

preſent Church of England, in that happy State in which it is at this time; yet this would not hinder but the Biſhops, as the Officers veſted with the ordinary power of appointing or ordaining miniſters under themſelves, would ſtill be judges of the qualifications of theſe Perſons, of their morals, their temper, and the competent learning and ſenſe, neceſſary for their ſeveral offices: neither could any be admitted as Clergy in this particular Church, but ſuch as are approved and admitted by the Biſhops themſelves, any more than any perſons can be admitted to the Miniſtry in any other particular Church, without the previous examination and approbation of *thoſe* who are allowed *in that Church* to judge of their qualifications. So that I do not ſee that great Confuſion from this Scheme. Nay, it appears to me as conſiſtent with a Liturgy and an Epiſcopacy as any Scheme whatever, that does not engage or allow us to deny others a privilege of uniting with other forms of Churches according to their own Conſciences, and the beſt judgment they frame for their own Church."

Here we ſee beyond diſpute, that the Clerical Petition is ſupported by the judgment of theſe two great men, who were firm friends to the Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Eſtabliſhment of theſe Kingdoms; and if this ſhould be the method of examining the Clergy for Orders,

and

and requiring a Subſcription to Scripture only, the Church would at leaſt find this great benefit in it, that all the improvement which has been made in the ſtudy of the Scriptures, would be transferred into it, and the Clergy would not be obliged to maintain the old errors, knowing them to be ſuch. I might here direct the Reader to other places in Biſhop Hoadly's writings in defence of the right of private judgment, and the free uſe of Scripture; for almoſt all the arguments againſt the Petitioners are founded on principles which lead to Popery. Let him conſult his Rights of Subjects, ſect. v. vi. xi. His anſwer to the Committee, ſect. xx. And Mr. Chillingworth's Religion of Proteſtants, ch. ii. ſect. 12. 104. 114. 150, 151, 152. ch. iii. ſect. 88. ch. vi. ſect. 56. 66. ch. iv. 1. 6. and the laſt paragraph of the preface.

If it was not ſo long, I would quote the ſarcaſtick advice which Biſhop Hoadly puts into the mouths of his adverſaries; as it is, ſhall only copy the latter part of it, which ſuits the Enemies to the Petition very exactly.

" But, *my brethren*, let not the appearances of " theſe, or any other ſeeming inconſiſtences, " ſtand in your way. Acknowledge the *Pro-* " *teſtant principles* for *Decency* ſake; but ſtead- " faſtly adhere to the *Popiſh*. Let the Scripture " be in *words* the ONLY Guide, and a SAFE " Guide, but in *deed* and *truth*, let the Cuſtom

" of

" of the Church, in the framing TESTS, or the " *judgment* and *Practice* of it, very long after the " Scripture was written, be your Guide. And " then ONLY you may be ſure of EXCLUD- " ING thoſe whom you call Hereticks, and " having a *Glorious Church*, within as *narrow* " *bounds*, as the heart of man, made *narrow*, " either by *zele*, *avarice*, or *ambition* can wiſh " to ſee it (*e*)."

In ſhort, if the Scripture will ſerve to form Articles *from*, they muſt ſerve as a proper Rule to the Miniſters to preach from, as the Church requires them to do. Mr. Chillingworth ſays, " I, for my part, after a long, and I verily believe, an Impartial ſearch after the true way to happineſs, do profeſs planely, that I cannot find any reſt to the ſole of my foot but this rock only, and that the BIBLE is the Religion of Proteſtants."

But the Writers againſt the Petitioners declare, agreeable to other Popiſh Principles, that a Subſcription to the Scripture is abſolutely NOTHING, and conſiſtent with every imaginary abſurdity and miſchief: This may be thought a very extraordinary aſſertion to come from a Proteſtant: But it fully agrees with what we find in the writings of Bp. Hare and others of *that Claſs*. Bp. Hare aſſerts, that to leave every man to make the beſt of his Bible without

(*e*) Anſwer to Hare's Sermon, Vol. II. p. 916.

any

any farther direction or RESTRAINT, would NATURALLY tend to confuſion, and fill the Kingdom with all the wild Conceits, that Ignorance and Enthuſiaſm could produce." Bp. Hoadly has fully anſwered this in his Common Rights of Subjects, ſect. VI. page 732, &c. to which I refer the Reader, only quoting this one Sentence of his Anſwer, from page 736. " But " that theſe wild Conceits *naturally* ariſe from " every Chriſtian's being left to make the beſt " uſe of his Bible, (which I am ſorry to have " ever heard from ſo conſiderable and celebrated " a Writer) let him who has ſaid it prove it, " to the Confuſion of all Proteſtant arguments, " to the joy of every good Catholick, and to " the *ſhame* of the *Proteſtant* cauſe, and of all " that was ever yet called by the *name* of *Refor-* " *mation.*"

However if it be the Caſe, it muſt ariſe either from ignorance or diſhoneſty. Is it that the Scripture is capable of ſo many *different* Senſes, that the true Senſe *cannot* be *aſcertain'd?* How then can *certain* Articles be framed from it for our belief? Even then, it is a Subſcription to ſomething, viz. that the Scripture is true, or that it is the word of God. Or does the Writer mean, that men may from thence find plauſible texts to defend their *miſtakes?* This can by no means be univerſally prevented, unleſs all men were infallible. But may not the *Articles* be alſo *miſunderſtood*, and every other human Compoſi-

tion ?

tion? Even then it will be a Subſcription to the divinity of the Scriptures, which is the only direction to truth, that God has vouchſafed to us. Or perhaps it may ariſe from *diſhoneſty*; and the Author means, that men find in Scripture plauſible texts to defend their wilful errors, and there is no doubt but ingenious men, who are determined at all Events to defend an Hypotheſis which they know to be falſe, will be able by falſe repreſentation to deceive other men, and ſometimes themſelves. Men whoſe conſciences will ſuffer them to write in oppoſition to known truth, &c. and are αὐτοκαταχρῖται, ſelf-condemned in the very act, will ſuck poiſon out of the moſt wholeſome food, and wreſt both Scripture and Articles to their own deſtruction. But is Subſcription nothing upon this account? It is juſt the ſame as a Subſcription to any bargain or agreement, which they are reſolved not to ſtand to: and their Subſcription to articles, is as uſeleſs as a Subſcription to Scripture. Laſtly, if an *honeſt* Subſcription to the *true* ſenſe of Scripture be full of miſchief and abſurdity; the fault muſt lie in the book itſelf, and it will not be a ſubſcription to nothing, but a ſubſcription to an *abſurd* and *miſchievous Book*; and what can be expected then, but *abſurd* and *miſchievous Articles* to be taken out of it?—And if the Scripture is ſuch a Noſe of Wax, as Buan Herport and others tell us it is conſidered by

ſome

ſome people, ſo that it may be twiſted any way, and the Subſcribers can turn and wind it to their purpoſes with a ſafe conſcience. It follows unavoidably, that the *Articles* themſelves muſt be of the *ſame* nature; or elſe they are not *fairly* and *honeſtly* taken from the Scripture. For whatever is in the Article *more determinate* than it is in *Scripture*, cannot be proved from Scripture, and conſequently ſtands upon an uſurped authority.

But it may be ſaid, how elſe can we prevent Diverſity of Opinions? I anſwer firſt, that a Subſcription will not do it; and ſecondly, that we have no right to do it. If that right had exiſted in the Jewiſh Church or nation, Chriſt and his Apoſtles were to blame; If in the Romiſh Church, the Reformers were to blame. Every man of ſenſe muſt know, that the attempt muſt, in every Science and Art whatever, be the bane to all improvement, and to the inveſtigation of Truth.

But if the Churches will not be perſuaded but that a diverſity of opinions ought to be prevented, and that it will be more compleatly done by a Subſcription to Articles of human Compoſition than by a Subſcription to *Scripture* itſelf; there ariſes another difficulty, viz. who ſhall hold down this Proteus ſo full of all imaginary miſchief and abſurdity, to one certain and *determinate* ſenſe; eſpecially if they meaſure

by two different Rules of Faith? Quo teneat Vultum mutantem Protea nodo? Shall we truſt it to the Clergy? What ſays Mr. Wentworth upon this ſubject? "When I was ſent among "others," ſays Mr. Wentworth, "the laſt Par- "liament in 1575, unto the Biſhop of Canter- "bury, for the Articles of Religion then paſt "this houſe, he aſked me why we did put out "of the book the Article for the homilies, &c. "Surely, Sir, ſaid I, becauſe we were ſo occu- "pied in other matters, that we had no time to "examine them, how they agreed with the "word of God. What! ſaid he, ſurely you "miſtook the matter, you will refer yourſelves "wholly to us therein. No! by the faith I "bear to God, ſaid I, we will paſs nothing be- "fore we underſtand what it is; for that were "to make you Popes. Make you Popes who "liſt, ſaid I, for we will make you none(*f*)." Shall it then be truſted to the Laity? No ſurely; this, by the ſame argument, would be to make Popes of *themſelves*. Shall it be truſted to both Clergy and Laity, or Parliament and Convocation, as it was formerly truſted to the general Councils under the Emperors? Be it ſo; but then it muſt be remembered, that theſe Legiſlative aſſemblies can have no greater powers than their Conſtituents have a right to give

(*f*) D'Ewe's Journal, 239, 240.

them;

them; and no man has a right to give up his religious principles to his Repreſentative, and ſettle his faith by Proxy; and conſequently neither Laity nor Clergy can receive any ſuch power from their conſtituents, nor move a ſtep farther in requiring a Subſcription to their articles than the words of Scripture will allow, as our preſent Articles declare, viz. that General Councils [which conſiſted both of Clergy and Laity] have erred, and nothing is to be required of any man as an Article of Faith but what is read therein, or may be proved from Scripture. Art. VI. XXI.—And the Proteſtants are extremely ſevere upon the Romaniſts for exerting any farther authority. And thus they argue.

" So conſcious are the Roman Prelates of the " *groſs abſurdity* and *apparent Folly* of their own " doctrine, and the plain contradictions that it " bears in many *Articles* to the Scriptures, and " the cleareſt Reaſon; that they *dare not* permit " the meaneſt members of their Church to look " into the Scriptures, or make inquiry, or " ſearch into the *Articles* of their Faith; or " truſt a Child of twelve years old without an " Oath to bind him firm to their Superſtition. " And therefore it has been decreed by many of " their Councils, that all males of fourteen, and " females of twelve years of age, ſhall abjure all " Hereſy extolling itſelf againſt the holy Catho- " lic Church and Orthodox Faith, and ſhall

" ſwear alſo that they will hold the Catholic " Faith, which the Roman Church teacheth and " holdeth. And this Oath, by the decrees of " Thoulouſe and Alby, is to be renew'd upon " them every two years.—And again. Surely " ſuch unworthy arts do give juſt reaſon to all " conſidering Perſons, to ſuſpect the truth of " that Religion which needeth thus to be ſup- " ported by Oaths and Abjurations made by " children." See a diſcourſe already quoted at page 47.

But do not the Proteſtants condemn *themſelves* in this reſpect, when they require a ſubſcription to the XXXIX Articles from ſuch as cannot be ſuppoſed to underſtand them, and thereby make the firſt breach into that honeſty and Simplicity of Heart for which young minds are remarkable; and a way to farther Deviations from virtue. And yet are not the Children of our nobility and gentry ſubjected to this ſnare? And can any honeſt man wiſh to ſee the growing generation entangling their Conſciences at the beginning of Life by ſuch inſidious Trials?

It may be ſaid, as it has been with regard to the Clergy, that this ſubſcription is not *impoſed* upon any one, as there is no *neceſſity* for them to receive Academical honours, or take degrees in any Science: and it is true; but why ſhould they be debarred of them? to ſay nothing to the

the queſtion why one employ ſhould differ from another in this reſpect. The miſchief is not that they ſcruple this ſubſcription, but that from example, or ſome other reaſons, they make no objections to it; but conſider it as a mere matter of form, and ſign their names without inquiring whether what they ſubſcribe to, be true or falſe. Thus we ſee that both Clergy and Laity join together to lay a ſtumbling block in the way of Poſterity to all ſucceeding generations.

And by what right? Every honeſt man muſt know, that he has no greater right to require of other men a Subſcription to articles of Faith of human compoſition, than they have to require it of him. And it is this very Subſcription which cauſes ſo many ſects and ſciſms in the Church. This I have proved to be the caſe upon introducing the Homoouſian Doctrine; and it muſt naturally be the ſame upon all other Doctrines impoſed by Authority.

While the Chriſtians were contented with the words of Scripture, that Chriſt was of, or from God, ἐκ Θεοῦ, there was no diviſion upon the queſtion: when they would define Hereſy more ſtrictly, and added to this, by way of explanation, that he was ἐκ τῆς ὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ, of or from the *Subſtance* of God, they divided into ſects, and murdered one another. When they went on to a farther explanation of the words, they ſub-

divided;

divided; and this will always be the Caſe upon the impoſition of diſputed comments upon uncertain texts.

Laſtly, of what ſmall effect can the Subſcription to XXXIX Articles be, to the purifying of the Church, when the Hereſies recorded by Prateolus are above 500, which leaves 461 not provided againſt, to which we are not prevented from adding as many more as we can invent: whereas there is not one of the remaining 461, and the new invented ones, but what will be much better provided againſt by a Subſcription to Scripture, which every Subſcriber is ſuppoſed both by the Church and State to underſtand.

In ſhort, the whole Chance the people of this Country can reaſonably indulge that they ſhall be taught the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is this; that the Clergy will remember the promiſe made before the Biſhop for Prieſts orders, and pay no regard to their Subſcription to ſuch doctrines as appear to them to be erroneous. But as this regard to Scripture will not defend the Clergy from a proſecution for preaching the Truth, contrary to the Articles; ſo neither would the reſolution of the Clergy, in ſuffering for the cauſe, be any excuſe to our Governors in doing what they could to prevent it.

From

From what has been here ſaid it appears, that though the Laws require Submiſſion to General Councils as a Rule of Faith, with authority to determine what is Hereſy; yet the Church declares the contrary, viz. that there is no ſuch Authority but Scripture: And according to what every Miniſter ſhall judge to be the ſenſe of Scripture, he is by the Biſhop directed to preach. Whatever therefore might formerly be the Opinion of Biſhops upon many of the preſent Articles, perhaps they would not now think any one the leſs qualified to inſtruct the people in the Chriſtian Religion who ſhould diſbelieve ſome of them in their plain and obvious ſenſe. But it is of very little ſignification what are the real opinions of the Biſhops, as long as there continues to be a ſet of Articles to be ſubſcribed which they have no power to alter; but every thing gives way to the Articles, without any examination whether they be true or falſe; which was not the caſe when they were firſt drawn up: They then imagined them to be true; but did not conſider, that as the Roman Articles were the cauſe of our ſeparation from Rome; ſo they muſt in time produce Diſſentions among ourſelves, and be the ruin of that Church which they were intended to ſupport, if not timely prevented, by an abrogation; for to maintain them as they are, will be utterly impracticable.

If

If it be aſked then: Why do not the Biſhops put an end to the Subſcription? The anſwer is, that it is not in their power. But why then do they not apply to Parliament? What reaſon they may have, I know not; but it may be truly ſaid, that the interpoſition of the Civil Power in matters of Religion is extremely dangerous: That it is very difficult to perſuade a Parliament that they have no power to determine Church queſtions, or authority in matters of faith; that the whole ſyſtem of the Chriſtian Religion hath been already laid down by Chriſt, and is already unalterably fixt, and wants no amendment; and the Supreme Civil power can neither alter it, add to it, or take from it. Theſe are the great Truths which were maintain'd by Sir I. Newton, Bp. Hoadly, Mr. Chillingworth, &c. but were ſo ſtrongly oppoſed by men of a certain claſs, that they are almoſt obſolete: So that I ſhould not much wonder if it ſhould be now argued by the Hobbiſts, that if the Parliament hath a right to deliver the Subject from their preſent Shackles in matters of faith, it muſt have the right of framing others which they like better. But if our Rulers would recollect their own Principles as Proteſtants, and agree that Holy Writ is the only Rule of Faith, there would be no danger in their interpoſition. They might then relieve the Energies of Chriſtianity from all its Embarraſſments, without entering into any difficult queſtions

queſtions at all, or encroaching upon the prerogative of Chriſt (the only Lawgiver in ſuch matters) merely by allowing every man to make the beſt of his Bible, and religiouſly *encouraging*, inſtead of *reſtraining* the liberty of Prophecying, which every man has a natural and unalienable right to.

Having ſpoken thus much of the Apoſtacy of the Weſtern Churches, it remains that I ſay ſomething of the Greeks or Eaſtern Church; to ſhew, that the ſame kind of Apoſtacy, in founding the Rule of Faith upon the decrees of men, has been Univerſal, and that Chriſtianity, as Sir I. Newton obſerves, hath been corrupted in all Nations.

The Faith of the Greek Church is thus expreſſed in the Confeſſion of Faith, ſigned by their Patriarchs, Biſhops, &c. as publiſhed by Laurentius Normanus. " Furthermore it is fitting " that an Orthodox Chriſtian hold for certain " and indubitable, that all the Articles of the " Catholick and Orthodox Church are delivered " down from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt by the " Apoſtles to the Church; and the General " Councils have approved and explain'd them; " and that he believes them as the Apoſtle's " commands, II. Theſſ. ii. 15. Therefore " Brethren, ſtand faſt, and hold the Traditions, " which ye have been taught whether by [our] " word or our Epiſtles, εἴτε διὰ λογου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολης ἡμων·

" and I. Cor. xi. 2. Now I praiſe ye, Brethren, " that ye remember in all things, and keep the " Traditions as I delivered them unto you."—

From the texts here quoted it is plain that St. Paul only ſpeaks of the traditions or inſtructions which they had received from him; but the Greeks argue upon them juſt as the Papiſts do; that there are two kinds of doctrine δυο δογμαλα λογιων; the one committed to writing, the other deliver'd down from the mouths of the apoſtles, more fully declared by the Councils and holy Fathers; as follows in the Confeſſion.

" Hence it is manifeſt, that the Articles of " faith have their Authority and proof, partly " from the holy Scriptures, partly from Eccleſi- " aſtical Traditions, and the doctrine of Synods " and the holy Fathers; and that there are two " ſorts of Doctrine, &c."

Upon the ſame Authority of the Councils and Fathers they hold alſo that " Chriſt ſuffered *only* " in the *fleſh*, the divinity ſuffered *nothing*, nor " was fixed on the Croſs; and yet the Divinity " was never ſeparated either from the body or " the Soul."

προς τυτω πρεπει να κρατη διαβεβαιον και ακαμδολον ο ορθοδοξος χριστιανος, πως ολα τα αρθρα της πιστεως της καθολικης και ορθοδοξυ εκκλησιας ειναι παραδεδομενα απο τον Κυριον ημων Ιησυν Χριστον κι το μεσον των αποστολων τυ εις την εκκλησιαν· και αι οικυμενικαι συνοδοι τα ερμηνευσαν, και τα εδοκιμασαν· και να πιστευη εις αυτα καθα πρεσβευει ο Αποστολος, &c.

απο

απο τα ὁποια λογια ειναι φανέρον πως τα ἀρθρα της πιστεως εχουσι το κυρος και την δοκιμασιαν, μετα απο την αγιαν γραφην μερος απο την εκκλησιαστικην παραδοσιν και απο την διδασκαλιαν των συνοδων και των αγιων πατερων.—Εχει πως δυο λογιων ειναι τα ευαγγελια, &c.

It appears then, that all the Churches, both in the Eaſt and Weſt, have been corrupted; and the genuine Faith which was built upon TRUTH, the teſtimony of Jeſus, the Commandments of God, the Apoſtles and Prophets, has ſuffered an Apoſtacy from its original and divine Standard, by joining to them the Commandments of men, the Rudiments of this world, &c.

The preſent Orthodoxy of the Greek Church reſts upon the Scripture together with the Councils and Fathers, and is a mixture of doctrines divine and humane. In the Roman Church it is purely humane: the Church, for the time being, is Judge, and can alter the doctrines as it pleaſes; their orthodoxy being always what the Church believes or determines at any particular time, though ever ſo contrary to former decrees, and yet always, as ſhe contends, infallible. In this country the Teſt of Orthodoxy, or Rule of Faith, is underſtood by the common people to be the Bible only, according to the fundamental Principle of Proteſtantiſm and the 21ſt Article, viz. there is no Authority in matters of faith but holy Writ; but by the Laws of the land are added the general Councils,

and whatever may hereafter be decided by act of Parliament, with the conſent of Convocation, &c.

The whole difference therefore between the Chriſtian Churches is entirely of their own making, and is derived from articles of human compoſition; and if once they left theſe, and returned to the Original Rule of faith before theſe were compoſed, that is, *the Scripture*; their differences would all Subſide, together with all uncharitableneſs; and their names of diſtinction would be loſt in the name of Chriſt, the head of all; and the whole Church together, would be Catholick, and at Unity. It is true, that to do this every Church muſt give up ſomething; but *that ſomething* is only human, and of the ſame nature in them all, and is the only part of their Eſtabliſhments which was never worth the keeping.—And this puts me in mind of a ſaying of General Wurts, reported by Mr. de St. Evremond; "When men have once taken out of "Chriſtianity what they have foiſted into it, "there will be but one Religion, as plain in its "doctrine as pure in its morals(*g*)."

And we are told the very ſame thing in other words by Mr. Chillingworth. "The preſumptuous impoſing the Senſes of *men* upon the "words of *God*; the *ſpecial* Senſes of men upon "the *general* words of God, and laying them

(*g*) St. Evremond, Vol. II. page 168.

"upon

" upon mens conſciences together, under the
" equal penalty of death and damnation: This
" vain Conceit, that we can ſpeak the things of
" God better than the *words of God*; This
" Deifying our Interpretations, and Tyrannous
" enforcing them upon others; this *reſtraining*
" of the Word of God from the *latitude* and
" *Generality*, and the underſtandings of men
" from that *liberty*, wherein Chriſt and the
" apoſtles left them, is, and hath been the only
" fountain of all the Sciſms of the Church, and
" that which makes them immortal; The com-
" mon Incendiary of Chriſtendom, and that
" which tears in pieces not the Coat but the
" bowels and members of Chriſt, Ridente Tur-
" ca nec dolente Judæo. Take away theſe
" walls of ſeparation, and all will quickly be
" *one*. Take away this perſecuting, burning,
" curſing, damning of men for not ſubſcribing
" to the words of Men as the words of God,
" &c. ſo it may be hoped, that by God's
" bleſſing, Univerſal liberty, thus moderated,
" may quickly reduce Chriſtendom to Truth
" and Unity." Rel. of Proteſt.

But whatever be the Event with regard to particular Churches; whether they will, or will not quit their Corruptions, and return to the plain Truth, as it is in the Scripture; we are well aſſured by the Prophets, that the day will come, probably a time of great tribulation and

trial,

trial, and perſecution of the witneſſes to the truth (*b*); when genuine Chriſtianity ſhall flouriſh, and Providence ſhall work its way through the preſent Apoſtacy againſt all the powers of the world which ſhall reſiſt it, either by their Reformation or Deſtruction; and our Politicians, whether Civil or Eccleſiaſtick, may have it in their power *at preſent* to determine for which of them they pleaſe; but how long the opportunity may laſt God only knows.

St. Paul aſſures us that former things are written for our inſtruction; and we find through the whole courſe of Providence, recorded in Scripture, and verified in the hiſtory of the world, that when a nation, to whom God hath reveled his will, hath corrupted revelation, or ceaſed by a neglect of it, to carry it on to perfection in its native purity, he hath chaſtened them by afflictions; and when incorrigible by his correction, he hath caſt them off as improper inſtruments of his Providence, (for God Almighty works by ſecond cauſes) and transfer'd his favour to others who are more ready to receive and obey his will. And therefore though it ſhould be looked upon by the Politicians to be enthuſiaſtick, and perhaps a mark of fanaticiſm to admit the deſigns of Providence into their Syſtems of government, becauſe it has

(*b*) Rev. xi. 14. 15. Dan. xii.

been

been ſometimes done injudiciouſly, yet it ought to be conſidered at the ſame time, to be the ſign of great ignorance in the hiſtory of the world, not to have taken notice of ſuch an important Truth, and of extreme folly in the Politicians who call themſelves Chriſtians, not to avail themſelves of that Knowledge.

I ſhall end the whole with a Quotation from Dr. Sykes.

" The growth of Infidelity has long been the " ſubject of great Complaint amongſt ſerious " well-meaning people: may it not be worth " conſidering, whether the true cauſe of In- " fidelity does not lie among thoſe who profeſs " a faith which they call Chriſtian, and which is " found inconſiſtent with reaſon, and even com- " mon ſenſe? Every one that examines at all, " will ſee additions made to the great Articles of " Chriſtianity. How many additions were " made to what the Goſpel has ſaid concerning " the Son and the Holy Ghoſt in the ſeveral " Creeds made in the 4th Century? This poſſi- " bly was then done with a good deſign to fence " in and to ſecure a right Faith. But whatever " was the deſign, it has been attended with " conſequences fatal to Chriſtianity itſelf. The " *fences* have been conſidered as the *Thing fenced* " in: and when men have ſeen things that they " cannot comprehend or underſtand, taught as " *Fundamentals of Chriſtianity*, it is natural to

" re-

" reject what is unintelligible, as impoſſible to " be required by God: And thus muſt *Infidelity* " prevail.—Whereas if one takes the Religion " of Chriſt, *as it lies in the word of God*, it is " pure, peaceable, and no ways contrary to " Reaſon, *intelligible* by every body, ſo far as " every body is concerned. The Evidence for " its truth is clear, and plain, and eaſy. The " Poor had the Goſpel preached to them at " firſt, as well as the Rich; and the poor are " to be ſaved as well as the rich, and therefore " the one can *underſtand* what is required of " them by Chriſt, as well as the other. But " then, if men will preſume to take the word " of God into *their* Hands and will new *mould* " and *frame* it, as they think fit; and will " make what is eaſy, to be hard and unintel- " ligible, and then will anathematiſe and perſe- " cute men for refuſing to profeſs what they do " not underſtand; there will always be Infi- " delity cover'd under the maſk of Chriſtianity: " and Chriſtianity, or what is ſo called, will " be ſlyly or openly attacked; and till it is pro- " feſſed pure and uncorrupted, it muſt have its " Enemies: and if *Offences* ariſe, *Woe unto him* " *by whom the Offence cometh.*"

FINIS.