

NONCONFORMIST

CATECHISM;

OR,

REASONS

FOR NOT BELONGING TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



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THIS Catechism is taken from Dr. NEWMAN's edition of the excellent work written by Mr. PALMER, an eminent Congregational Minister who lived in London in the last century. Only such modifications have been made, as seemed necessary to adapt it for the use of Canadian readers.

Judging from the spirit now manifested, and the efforts now made by Episcopalians, both High and Low, in this land, it is hoped that many Nonconformists will consider this Catechism a seasonable and welcome addition to our religious literature. It is especially designed for instructing the younger members of Nonconformist families and congregations.

·NONCONFORMIST CATECHISM.

Q. What are the grand principles on which the Protestant Nonconformists ground their separation from the Church of England?

A. The right of private judgment and liberty of conscience, in opposition to all human authority in matters of religion; the supremacy of Christ as the only head of his church; and the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice.

Q. Do not the Scriptures require us to be subject to the civil magistrate, as the minister of God, for conscience' sake?

A. Yes, doubtless, in all civil affairs,* but not in matters of religion, much less in things contrary to the law of God, for God cannot deny himself; so that all human laws which are inconsistent with the divine, ought to be disobeyed.

* Rom. xiii. 1—5. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

Q. But is every private man to judge for himself, whether the laws of his country are agreeable to the laws of God?

A. Certainly, in the affairs of religion, every man ought to judge for himself, since every man must render an account of himself to God,* who has given us an infallible rule in his word to guide us, and reasonable faculties to understand it; which private persons are as capable of using, to discover the way of truth and duty, as magistrates and large bodies of men. Besides, religion is a personal thing, and no farther deserves the name than as it is the effect of conviction and choice.

* Rom. xiv. 12.

Q. But are we not required in Scripture† to obey our spiritual rulers?

A. We know of no spiritual rulers, who have a juster claim to implicit faith and unlimited obedience than civil magistrates. The word of God expressly forbids Christians giving up conscience to the directions of any man; † and the Apostles themselves disclaimed all dominion over it, ‡

and urged it upon their hearers to examine and judge for themselves. ||

† Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

‡ Call no man your Father upon earth—neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master even Christ.—Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.—Matt. xv. 9. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.—Gal. v. 1.

|| Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.—2 Cor. i. 24. Neither being as lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock.—1 Pet. v. 3.

§ Philip said to Nathaniel, Come and see.—John i. 46. Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?—Luke xii. 57. Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.—Acts iv. 10. These [Bereans] were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.—Acts xvii. 11. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.—1 Cor. x. 15. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.—Rom. xiv. 5. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.—1 Thes. v. 21.

Q. *Have we any instances in Scripture of wise and good men's refusing to conform to the national established religion?*

A. Yes; Daniel followed the dictates of his own conscience, in praying to his God, as he had been used to do, when the King had issued out a decree against it;* as also did the three Hebrew youths, in refusing to conform to the worship of the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up.

In like manner the apostles of Christ disobeyed the Jewish priests and rulers, in not conforming to the religion of their country; and when reprov'd by the High Priest, for violating their command, bravely answered,—“We ought to obey God rather than man.”†

* Dan. vi. 10.

† Acts v. 29.

Q. *May a few men who are dissatisfied with the national religion publish their private sentiments, and worship God according to them in places of their own?*

A. If men have a right to think for themselves, they must have an equal right to act according to their judgment and conscience, and are in duty bound to do it. So that where persons think the established forms of religion unscriptural or defective, a regard to their own edification, and the cause of pure religion, requires them to dissent. On this principle the first Christians dissented from the Jewish church, the Gentile converts from Pagan establishments, and the Church of England from the Church of Rome.

§ See Dr. *Furneaux's* masterly *Essay on Toleration*, § 3.

Q. *What are the principal things in the Church of England on which the Objections to it are founded?*

A. 1. Its general frame and constitution as national and established.

2. The character and authority of certain officers appointed in it.

3. The imposition of a stated form of prayer, called the Liturgy, and many exceptionable things contained therein.

4. The pretended right of enjoining unscriptural ceremonies.

5. The terms on which ministers are admitted into their office.

6. The want of liberty in the people to choose their own ministers. And

7. The corrupt state of its discipline.

§ *I. Of the General Frame and Constitution of the Church of England.*

Q. *What do the Nonconformists think to be the scripture idea of a Church of Christ?*

A. A congregation or voluntary society of Christians, who commonly meet together to attend gospel ordinances in the same place. And they think every such society has a right to transact its own affairs according to the judgment and conscience of the members thereof, independently of any other society whatsoever, or without being accountable to any but Jesus Christ, or restrained by any laws but his.

Q. *How doth it appear that this notion of a Church of Christ is the scriptural one?*

A. A number of Christians assembled for divine worship in a dwelling-house, is in scripture called a church.* A church is spoken of as coming together in one place.† When affairs were to be determined relating to a church, all the members were called together to give their opinion.‡ And we do not find any superior authority acknowledged or claimed.

* Rom. xvi. 5, Greet the church that is in their house. See also 1 Cor. xvi. 19, and Philem. 2. It is observable, that the several congregations of Christians in the same province, are spoken of, *not in the singular, but the plural number*: e. g. The churches of Judea, the churches of Galatia, &c.

† Acts ii. 1, 46. v. 12, 14. 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

‡ Acts vi. 2, 5. xv. 4, 22.

Q. *Is not the word church used in scripture in a larger sense than as denoting a particular congregation?*

A. Yes, it sometimes denotes the whole body* of Chris-

tians throughout the world, commonly called the universal, or *catholic* church. But the church of England is not, and does not pretend to be the same with this, † for all intelligent persons must allow that many may, in this sense, belong to the church of Christ, who are not members of the Church of England.—Hence it follows that the body of people through the nation, who adopt the established mode of worship cannot be called a church in the sense in which the word is used in the New Testament, where it always means either a particular congregation or the whole body of Christians.

Acts xx. 28. Ephes. v. 25, &c.

† N. B. The church of Rome expressly makes this arrogant claim. Hence the origin of the term *Catholic Church* and probably of national churches.

Q. What do we object to the general constitution of the Church of England?

A. That it is a civil establishment; it being framed by human authority—its laws founded on Acts of Parliament, and enforced by civil sanctions—and the chief magistrate, as such, being its supreme head. Whereas a church of Christ, according to the scripture account of it, is a society of persons united merely on religious views,* whose laws are no other than the word of God, † which they have a right to interpret for themselves, ‡ the sanctions of which are purely spiritual, § and whose supreme and only head is Jesus Christ. ||

* John xvii. 16, xviii. 36. † Psa. xix. 7. Ephes. ii. 20.

‡ See Q. 4, note || § 2 Cor. x. 4. || Ephes. i. 22.

Q. What power has the King in the Church of England, which constitutes him its supreme head?

A. The King, (or Queen,) “is vested with all power to exercise all manner of ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical persons, have no manner of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by and under the King’s Majesty, who hath full power and authority to hear and determine all manner of causes ecclesiastical, and to reform and correct all vice, sin, errors, and heresies whatsoever.” ¶ The appointing of Bishops also is his prerogative, and the power of ordination is derived from him, and held during his pleasure.

This power Henry VIII. transferred from the Pope to himself, (when he quarreled with him about the Queen’s divorce,) and the Kings and Queens of England have enjoyed it ever since.

¶ These are the words of the Act 26 Henry VIII. Cap. 1.

Q. What objection have Nonconformists to this authority of the King?

A. Though they think it their duty to honour and obey the King in *civil* matters, they apprehend such power as our present constitution gives him in affairs of *religion*, to be not only foreign to the province of the civil magistrate, but highly derogatory to the honour of Christ, whom God hath appointed "Head over all things to the Church," and a gross infringement on the liberty of Christians, who in matters of faith and conscience, are forbidden to be servants of men. 1 Cor. vii. 23.

Q. *May it not be of service to religion to have the authority of the Chief Magistrate on its side?*

A. The religion of Jesus does not want the support of human power; his church is founded upon a rock more stable than any earthly establishment, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. (Matt. xvi. 18.) The interference of the civil magistrate in affairs of religion, has often been more injurious than beneficial, and this authority in matters of faith is exceedingly dangerous, and indeed the claim is more absurd than that of the Pope himself, who has the pretence of infallibility as the ground of it.

Q. *Have the Kings of England been used to exercise this authority in matters of faith?*

A. Yes; and the Queens also, in so great a degree as to reverse the votes of Parliament, and stop the proceedings of a whole Convocation of the Clergy. So did Queen *Anne*, in the case of Mr. *Whiston*, who was condemned for heresy.

Q. *Was not the Jewish church national, and as such established?*

A. The Jewish church was doubtless *national*, and *established* likewise; but not by the power of the *civil magistrate*, but by *Jehovah* himself, who was its king and law-giver: and no human authority was admitted to interfere in the constitution and government of it. That church is therefore highly unfit to be made the model of one under so different a dispensation as the Christian is, and never was intended to be so.

Q. *What evil has arisen from the civil establishment and domination of the English Church?*

A. Much in every way. The Monarchs, or the State in their names, have visited Nonconformists with civil disabilities, with confiscation of property, with imprisonment, with banishment and with death.

Q. *How was the Puritan party treated in Queen Elizabeth's reign?*

A. They were treated with great severity; particularly the *Brownists*, † for opposing the Hierarchy, partly through the Queen's desire to please the Papists, and partly through

the imposing and cruel disposition of some of the Bishops.† An Act was passed which subjected those that did not conform to the ceremonies of the Church, to banishment, and in case of refusal, or return, to death.—In this reign the *High Commission Court* was instituted.—The court of *Star Chamber* also constantly sat in this reign, and was to the last degree severe in its censures and punishments.

† The followers of one *Robert Brown*, who was educated in C. C. *Cambridge*, and was a preacher in the diocese of *Norwich*. He wrote very vehemently, and went about the country, preaching against the discipline, and ceremonies of the Church. His principles were in the main the same with those who were afterwards called *Independents*, excepting that he was more uncharitable towards persons of different sentiments.

† Archbishops *Parker*, *Whitgift*, *Buncroft*, Bishop *Aylmer*, &c.

Q. *How were the Puritans treated in James's reign?*

A. Both those that were out of the Church, and those that were in it, were persecuted by the Bishops with great violence. Several hundreds of the most conscientious ministers were silenced, imprisoned, and excommunicated; and many of them fled from the persecution into *Holland*, and afterwards into the wilds of *America*.

The first who settled in *Holland*, were the followers of Mr. *Robinson*, who is considered as the father of the *Independents*. He fled thither in the last reign, with other *Brownists*, and founded a church at *Leyden*, on the congregational plan. Mr. *Henry Jacobs* there imbibed his sentiments on church-government, and when he returned to *England* founded the first *Independent Church*, in the year 1616.

Q. *Did the Puritans meet with any favor from Charles I?**

A. No; but on the contrary they were persecuted by him, while Papists were encouraged through the influence of his Queen, (who was a bigoted Papist,) and several of the Bishops, particularly Archbishop *Laud*, who was strongly attached to Popish ceremonies.†—In this reign the *English Liturgy* and Episcopal Government were introduced into *Scotland*.

* He came to the crown A. D. 1625.

† See the curious account of his consecrating *Katherine Creech Church*, in *Neal's Hist.* or *Bennet's Mem.* He made some alterations in the Liturgy, in favour of Popery; licensed Popish books; and suppressed Protestant ones, viz. Bishop *Jewel's Works*, and *Fox's Martyrology*.

Q. *Which was the most remarkable Act in Charles II's reign, relating to religion?*

A. An Act which took place on *Bartholomew day*, Aug. 24, 1662, called the *Act of Uniformity*, which required all

ministers who would continue in the Church, or be admitted to livings, to use the same form of worship, to subscribe the Thirty-nine articles, and declare their assent and consent, to a new edition of the Common Prayer Book, though many of them could have no opportunity of seeing it within the time.

Q. *What was the effect of this Act ?*

A. It obliged above *two thousand* worthy conscientious ministers, (many of whom had had *Episcopal* ordination,) to leave the Established Church, and take their lot among the Nonconformists who hereby received so large an addition, that they may be considered as the fathers of the Nonconformist interest.—The name of *Puritans* was now changed to that of *Nonconformists*.

Q. *Had they liberty to worship God according to their conscience after they left the Church ?*

A. No ; they petitioned for a Toleration three days after the Act of Uniformity took place,* and soon after, A. D. 1664, the *Conventicle Act* passed, by which any person above sixteen years of age, present at any meeting for any religious exercise, not according to the Church of England, where there were five or more persons besides the household, was for the first offence to suffer three months' imprisonment, or 5*l.*—for the second, six months, or 10*l.*—and for the third, to be banished for seven years, or pay 100*l.*—and in case of return or escape, to suffer death without benefit of clergy.

* Lord *Clarendon* and Archbishop *Sheldon* opposed their being tolerated, with peculiar warmth, and prevailed with the council. See an account of their lives and sufferings in the Nonconformists' Memorial.

Q. *Was any other Act passed to harass the Nonconformists ?*

A. Yes ; the year following, (1665,) the *Oxford Act*, or *Five-Mile Act*, passed, which restrained all their ministers, (on the penalty of 40*l.*) who would not take a most unreasonable oath, † therein specified, from coming within five miles of any city, town-corporate, or borough, or any place where they had exercised their ministry ; and from teaching any school.

† The oath was not merely “ that it is not lawful, on any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms against the King, &c.” (which few of them would have refused taking,) but it had this addition : “ I swear that I will not, at any time, endeavour any alteration of government either in church or state.”

N. B. This Act was passed at a time when the *plague* reigned in *London* to such a degree as to carry off 8,000 or 10,000 in a week ; which occasioned most of the Established Clergy to desert their

parishes, though the people had then most need of their help, and were best disposed to receive it. Some of the ejected ministers, moved with compassion for the souls of men, in this deplorable situation, had ventured to preach in these deserted pulpits, but this gave umbrage to those in power, and was a motive to the passing of this scandalous act.

Q. *What was the disposition of the Bishops towards the Nonconformists in this reign ?*

A. They were for the most part very diligent in persecuting them, and greatly encouraged informers ; particularly Archbishop *Sheldon*, who sent orders to all the Bishops of his province to return all the names of the ejected Nonconformist ministers, with their places of abode and manner of life, with a view to enforce the laws more strictly against them.

Q. *What was the design and the effect of the Test Act which passed in this reign ?*

A. The *Test Act* required all persons, taking any office under the government, to receive the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the Church of England, within three months after their appointment. The design of the Commons in bringing in this bill, was to exclude *Papists* from places of trust and profit : several of whom the court had greatly promoted. But it was expressed so as also to exclude the *Protestant Dissenters*.

N. B. The Corporation and Test Acts, though flagrantly inconsistent with the common rights of good subjects, remained in full force to A. D. 1827.

Q. *What was the effect of all these Acts against the Nonconformists ?*

A. Great numbers of them suffered the most extreme hardships, in being fined, plundered, driven from their families, and imprisoned. Their loss in their trades and estates, in the space of three years, is computed at *Two Millions* ; and *Eight Thousand* are said to have perished in prison in this reign. The same persecutions were also carried into *Scotland* : and there as well as in *England*, many, to avoid the fury of their persecutors, fled their country.

Q. *What was the character of James II. who succeeded to the crown on the death of Charles ?*

A. He was a professed *Papist* ; had imbibed the most arbitrary principles of government, and persecuted Nonconformists, by enforcing all the penal laws in being against them, with the utmost rigour. Many for their safety transported themselves into *Holland* and the *American* colonies. Great numbers who staid at home, not only endured the utmost severities that the laws inflicted, but were treated

by their enemies with the greatest cruelty ; particularly by Judge *Jefferies*,* by whom many were butchered in the most barbarous manner.

* See a specimen of his persecuting spirit, in his treatment of Mr. *Baxter* at his trial. *Noncon. Memorial*, II. p. 533. Also of Mr. *Thomas Rosewell*, whose trial is reprinted in the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*.

Q. *Is there any danger of ecclesiastical domination in Canada ?*

A. Most evidently, if we may judge from the language and conduct of our leading Episcopalians, who style their own sect "The *Established Church in Canada*," and claim the right to establish *Rectories* at the national expense, *which has already been done in 57 instances*. And in addition, they now monopolize the *National University* at Toronto, where their sectarian theology is to be taught at the public expense. Their principles and plans will inevitably lead to domination and persecution, unless the colonists jealously guard their own sacred liberties.

‡ II. *Concerning the Officers appointed in the Church of England.*

Q. *What Officers are employed in the Church of England under the King, to whom the Nonconformists object ?*

A. Archbishops, Diocesan Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, Prebendaries, Canons, Minor Canons, Chancellors, Vicars-general, Commissaries, Officials, Surrogates, Proctors, &c. officers which Christ never appointed, and which nothing in the New Testament warrants, but are the effect of an unnatural alliance of the Church with the state, and mostly of Popish origin.

For an account of the nature and origin of most of these officers, see *Wilton's Review*, p. p. 153—159.

Q. *How many orders of ministers are there, in the Church of England ?*

A. Three : Bishops, Priests, and Deacons ; for which the Nonconformists apprehend there is no scripture warrant. The *Bishops* we read of in the New Testament, were no more than the pastors of particular congregations, often called *Elders* or *Presbyters*.* The term *Priest* is never therein applied to ministers as distinguished from other Christians, the priestly office, (since Christ once offered up himself,) being for ever abolished.† The scripture *Deacons* are not ministers of the gospel, but temporal officers appointed to take care of the poor. (See Acts vi.)

* These words are often used as synonymous with *Bishops*, the Greek word for which plainly signifies no more than *overseers*.

† The office has a relation to sacrifices : and the application of

the term to Christian ministers, is to be accounted for from the Popish doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass, and of a real sacrifice in the Eucharist. See *Wilton's Review*, p. p. 120, 121. Note.

Q. *What are the number, office and authority of the Bishops in the Church of England?*

A. Besides the Archbishops, who are two, and who preside over the others, the Bishops are twenty-four. They have the sole power of ordaining the Clergy, and very great authority over them. They perform the rite of confirmation, and consecrate churches and church-yards. They are also invested with great secular power and dignity.

Q. *What have you to object to the superiority of the Bishops over the Clergy?*

A. No such distinction of ministers is appointed by Christ in his church, but on the contrary, he has expressly forbidden any of them to assume dominion over the rest.* And as to the office of an *Archbishop*, none pretend to produce any scripture warrant for it.

* See Matt. xx. 25—29. “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them—but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” Chap. xxiii. 8. “Be ye not called *Rabbi*, for one is your master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your Father upon earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven.” N. B. The Bishops are called *Lords* and Right Reverend *Fathers* in God.

Q. *Is there not something exceptionable in the manner of making a Bishop?*

A. There is a great deal of pomp and parade in this business, in which the canonists say there are these eight things: nomination, *congé d'élire*, (or leave to choose,) election, royal assent, confirmation, creation, consecration, and installation, or, as to an *Archbishop*, enthronement.

The *Congé d'élire* is sent from the King to the *Dean* and *Chapter*, with a recommendation of a person whom his Majesty thinks fit to fill the vacant see, whom accordingly they always elect to it. The ancient custom for the bishop elect to say, *Nolo episcopari*, it seems is now disused; various ceremonies, however, are still retained, which it might seem invidious here to particularize. The reader who wishes for further information respecting them is referred to *Nelson's Rights of the Clergy*, p. 103, or to *Burn's Eccles. Law*.

Q. *What is objected to in the manner of ordination by Bishops?*

A. They require all whom they ordain to declare that they are moved by the Holy Ghost, in undertaking the ministerial office; and then pretend (or seem as they pretended) to confer the Spirit by the imposition of their hands, saying, “Receive the Holy Ghost.”

Q. Can none officiate as ministers in the Church of England, who have not been ordained by her own Bishops ?

A. No : all other ordination is pronounced invalid, excepting that of Roman Catholics, who, if they conform to the Church of England, are not required to be re-ordained.

Q. What is the common argument for the exclusive right of the Bishops to ordain ?

A. That they have derived it by uninterrupted succession from the apostles.

Q. What is objected to this right by uninterrupted succession ?

A. The scriptures nowhere mention it as necessary to render ordination valid. The Church of England cannot prove that she is possessed of it. And if she could, she must have received it through the corrupt channel of the Church of Rome.

Q. What do the Nonconformists in general think concerning ordination ?

A. They apprehend that every man who is qualified for the ministerial office, by ability and piety, has a right to exercise it in any society that calls him to it ; and that ordination is by no means necessary to the useful discharge of it. Accordingly, many of their ministers preach several years before they are ordained. But they think it very decent and useful, and agreeable to the scripture model, when they are about to settle with any people as pastors, to have the approbation, the prayers, and the advice of some of their brethren ; who pretend to no authority to constitute them pastors, which is derived solely from Christ and the choice of the people.

Q. What is the extent of a Bishop's charge and authority in the Church of England ?

A. Each Bishop is the pastor of the whole Diocese, and has the charge of all the souls in it and the government of all the Clergy, who really are only his Curates ; a trust too great for any man to execute, as each Diocese comprehends some hundred parishes.

Q. What is the authority of a Bishop over his Clergy ?

A. He not only has authority to inquire into their conduct, to exhort them in their duty, and to demand an oath of obedience to himself, according to the canons, but also the power of suspension ; which seems too great for one man to be intrusted with, and especially for one Christian minister to exercise over his brethren.

Q. What is the nature and design of the rite of Confirmation as performed by the Bishops ?

A. It is designed for young persons thereby to take upon

themselves the vow which their Sponsors made in their name at their baptism.

Q. *What does the Bishop perform on these occasions ?*

A. He thanks God for having regenerated them by water and the Holy Ghost, and forgiven all their sins. He then lays his hand upon the head of every person, and, "certifies them all, by that sign, of God's favour, and gracious goodness towards them."

Q. *What is required of persons in order to their being thus confirmed ?*

A. Nothing more than their having a certificate from their minister, that they can say the Lord's prayer, the creed, the ten commandments, and the catechism; and their answering *all together* in the affirmative, to the question, which is read of course,—“Whether they renew the vows made in their name at their Baptism ?

Q. *What do Nonconformists object to this ceremony ?*

A. That it has no foundation in reason or scripture,* and is attended with very dangerous consequences. Besides, should the propriety of the rite itself be allowed, every parish minister seems to be as capable of performing it as a Bishop.

* The principal text urged in favour of confirmation, is nothing to the purpose; viz. Acts viii. 14; &c., which refers to the extraordinary gifts conferred by Peter and John. The confirmation, spoken of, Chap. xiv. 22, and xv. 41, was not by imposition of hands, but by *preaching*.

Q. *What dangerous consequence is likely to arise from this rite ?*

A. Ignorant people, who have too good an opinion of the Bishop to think he would declare a falsehood, are likely to look upon themselves to be, what he has declared they are, pardoned, regenerated, and interested in God's favour, and so conclude their state is safe, while they continue in their sins.

Q. *What do Nonconformists object to the consecration of churches and burying-grounds by the Bishop ?*

A. They think no ceremony can make one place more holy than another; that if it could, the common priests are as able to perform it as the Bishops, and that their pretensions of this nature tend greatly to promote a superstitious veneration for the places so consecrated, as well as for themselves.

§ III. *Of the Liturgy.*

Q. *What is the mode of worship in the Established Church ?*

A. A form of prayer is stately used, called the Liturgy or common prayer.

Q. Do Nonconformists think forms of prayer in themselves sinful?

A. No; they think it far better to pray by a form than not at all, or in an indecent, incoherent manner; but they do not approve the use of a Liturgy, or stated form in public worship.

On this subject see an admirable Sermon lately published by Dr. Smith, of Homerton.

Q. What are the objections commonly urged against Liturgies in general?

A. 1. That the scripture is silent with respect to the necessity or expediency of them, and refers to none in use, though it treats largely on divine worship, and mentions the prayers of good men, on various occasions.

We have no certain account of the use of any Liturgies in the first ages of the church; those of St. Mark, and St. James, and that of Alexandria, being manifestly spurious. They are first mentioned in the latter end of the fourth century, and then every Bishop was left to draw up a form of prayer for his own church. Neal's Hist. Vol. I. p. 37.

2. It seems unreasonable that Christian ministers should be confined to an invariable form in their prayers, more than in their sermons.

Q. What are the principal disadvantages of a Liturgy?

A. 1. It tends to promote indolence in ministers, as far as it prevents the exertion of their faculties.

2. The constant repetition of the same things tends to deaden the affections of the worshippers, and promote formality.

3. Liturgies cannot be adapted to all the circumstances of different societies, and the several events which may occur, and which ought to be noticed in public prayer.

Q. What is objected to the Liturgy of the Church of England in particular?

A. 1. That it is imposed by human authority, so that ministers must make no variation from it, whatever the peculiar circumstances of things may require; and no alteration can be made in it, however proper and necessary, without an Act of Parliament, which cannot easily be procured.

2. That there are many things exceptionable in the Liturgy itself; *e. g.* in the general form and construction of it—in the sentiment in several particular parts—and frequently in the language.

3. That the manner of reciting it is unnatural and unedifying, especially that used in cathedrals.

Q. What is exceptionable in the general form and construction of the Liturgy?

A. 1. The method is irregular and confused. The several prayers, collects, &c. are without any order or connexion.

2. The parts into which it is divided are too many and too minute.—Some of the distinct prayers, and especially the collects,* seem to have no distinguishing object, but are little more than introduction and conclusion.

* v. g. Col. for 2d Sunday after Epiph. 2d before Lent ; 3d, 4th and 5th in Lent.

3. It is full of tautology and vain repetitions.† “Lord have mercy upon us,” and *gloria patri*, are introduced much too frequently. The Lord’s prayer is used three or four times, and may occur six times in the same service.

† See Matt. vi. 7.

4. It is in some views very defective.—The confession is much too general ; as indeed are the petitions and thanksgivings. And some cases are not provided for.

5. The whole of the service is too long, and might with advantage be abridged or divided.

Q. *What is exceptionable as to sentiment in particular parts of the Liturgy ?*

A. 1. *In the Office of BAPTISM.*

Such expressions are used concerning the efficacy of that rite, as naturally lead persons to conceive of it as a saving ordinance :* which however is rendered ridiculous by the questions put to the infant in the person of the sponsors, and the answers they make in its name, concerning its faith and future conduct.†

* God is thanked for having *regenerated the child by his Holy Spirit*. The water is called the *laver of regeneration* by which the child, being born in original sin and in the wrath of God, is received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. Accordingly, in the *Catechism*, the child is taught to say of its baptism,—“Wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” A sentiment as dangerous as it is unreasonable and unscriptural.

† Q. *Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works, &c. ?* A. I renounce them all. Q. *Dost thou believe in God, &c. ?* A. All this I steadfastly believe. Q. *Wilt thou be baptized in this faith ?* A. This is my desire. Q. *Wilt thou keep God’s holy will, &c. ?* A. I will.

N.B. Baptist Nonconformists utterly reject Infant-baptism under any circumstances, because they can discover no warrant for it in the Bible. Nor can they see any use in the ceremony, since they believe that ALL who die in infancy are in a saved condition, whatever may be their natural descent, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free.

2. *In the COMMUNION SERVICE.*

Some expressions strongly favour the notion of Christ’s

real presence in the bread and wine † a superstitious regard to which is encouraged by the use of the term *consecration*: and particularly, by the repetition of the consecration prayer if the first quantity be not sufficient.‡

† “Grant us therefore so as to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and so to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body,” &c. When the minister gives the bread he says, “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul;” and when giving the cup, “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul,” &c.

§ The order of the rubric respecting the bread and wine that is left, savours strongly of Popish superstition, and appears somewhat ludicrous. “If any of the bread and wine remain unconsecrated, the curate shall have it for his own use; but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church, but the priest and such other of the communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall immediately after the blessing *reverently eat and drink the same.*”

3. *In the VISITATION of the SICK.*

After the sick person has declared his assent to the articles of the Creed, and professed his repentance and his charity with all men, he is to be “moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled.” After which confession, the Priest is required, “if he humbly and heartily desire it,” to *absolve him*.

The form of absolution is really shocking, and downright Popery. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who had left power to his church to absolve all sinners, who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by *his authority* committed to me, *I absolve thee from all thy sins*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Amen.

4. *In the BURIAL SERVICE.*

This one service is read at all funerals, without distinction; whatever the age, circumstances, or character of the deceased may be; yea, though they are known to have been the most abandoned sinners, and hardened Infidels, and to have died without any signs of repentance; excepting they were *unbaptized*,* self-murderers, or *excommunicated*; which last case very rarely happens.† In this service the minister is required to style the deceased,—“Our dear brother—to express a sure and certain hope of his resurrec-

* The refusal of this service at the burial of *Infants*, who happen to die before they are baptized, is grounded on the shocking idea that they cannot be saved.

† These cases, however, in which persons are excommunicated *ipso facto*, are so many, that it is often impossible for a Clergyman to know whether he is authorised to read the burial service, or not.

tion to eternal life—to thank God for having taken him out of the miseries of this sinful world," &c., expressions which, (during the present relaxation of *church discipline*) must often hurt the conscience of ministers, † and be attended with very dangerous consequences with respect to the people; who may naturally encourage themselves to go on in sin, on the presumption of obtaining happiness at last, while they so often hear persons of the most infamous characters, pronounced happy when dead.

† On account of this Office, Archbishop *Sancroft*, (as he told Dr. *Tillotson*,) would never undertake the cure of souls. See *Cal. Life of Baxt*. Vol. 1, p. 226.

5. *In some of the services for HOLY DAYS.*

Particularly that for January 30, and May 29. In the former of which, the death of Charles I. and in the latter, the restoration of Charles II. are commemorated in a manner founded on falsehood, and bordering upon profaneness.

On Jan. 30, Charles I. is absurdly styled a *Martyr*. A character is given him much greater than (from his history) he appears to deserve: and his death lamented, the guilt of it confessed, and the judgments of God on account of it deprecated, in a manner highly unjustifiable, even supposing his character had been what it is represented. But the most shocking part of the service is, the reading portions of scripture relating to the *sufferings of Christ*, as applicable to him.

The thanksgivings offered May 29, for the restoration of Charles II. as "our most gracious sovereign: and for restoring to us [by him] the public and free profession of God's true religion and worship—his sacred truth and gospel to the great comfort and joy of our hearts;" are such as we cannot heartily join in, when we think of the vices of his character, his attempts against the liberties of this country, and the immoralities and persecutions of his reign; unless we believed there was and could be no public and free profession of God's true religion, &c. without the Hierarchy and Liturgy of the Church of England.

6. *In the use of the APOCRYPHAL BOOKS:*

From whence lessons are appointed to be publicly read, and that in the room of some part of the sacred writings: which seems to give the Apocrypha equal authority with the Bible. Some of these Lessons contain the most ridiculous stories in the whole book.

v. g. The fabulous and gross legends of *Bell and the Dragon*, of *Judith* and *Susannah*, (the former of which was first appointed to be read by the Common Prayer of Charles II.) and above all, the magical romance of rescuing a fair virgin from the enchantments of her infernal lover, and conjuring away the amorous devil *Asmodeus*, by the fumes of a fish's liver. *Towgood*, p. 101.

7. *In the ATHANASIAN CREED.*

This creed, (which was taken *verbatim* from the Popish *Mass Book*) seems not calculated to explain or support the doctrine of which it treats. The damnatory clauses of it are particularly exceptionable,* and render the church highly inconsistent, as she admits persons to her communion without requiring their belief of it, and expresses her hope of the salvation of all over whom the burial service is read, though they were known to deny it.

* Abp. Tillotson expresses his wish that the Church was well rid of this creed altogether.

Q. *What is objected against the manner of reciting the Liturgy?*

A. The chanting it, as in the cathedrals, is unsuitable to the nature of prayer, and the simplicity of gospel-worship.* And the manner in which the people join with the priest, in the parish churches, is unedifying, unnatural, and arbitrary: sometimes making responses† to the petitions he offers; sometimes repeating a prayer along with him; sometimes saying broken parts of sentences after him; sometimes concluding the sentences he had begun; and in the Psalms, he and they reading a verse alternately.

* *Chanting* was first introduced into the church at Antioch, by *Flavianus*, a man of loose morals, but fond of ceremonies. The church of *Rome* adopted it, where it was improved under several Popes, and was completed in the time of *Gregory*, about the year 620, and from him entitled the Gregorian chant. Austin the monk brought it into England. Pope *Vitalian I.* (A. D. 683,) first appointed organs to be used. Dissert. on Cathed. Worship.

N. B. The book of Homilies, (to which every Clergyman subscribes, as containing a godly and wholesome doctrine,) expressly condemns chanting and playing upon the organ, as *sorely displeasing to God, and filthily defiling his holy house.* Hom. on the *Place and Time of Prayer.*

† Responses are used in no other Protestant Church. (*Neal.*) These also were introduced by Pope *Gregory.*

N. B. The alternate recital of the Psalms is not commanded by the Church.

Q. *How is it to be accounted for that there are so many exceptionable things in the Liturgy?*

A. The plain reason is, the greater part of it was taken from the *Popish Liturgy*;* from which the first Reformers prudently made as little variation as possible. But their successors, resting satisfied with what they had done, have made no material alteration since. Our Church governors, either through indifference or an aversion to innovations, or an apprehension of endangering the whole Church by re-

pairing part of it, have hitherto rejected the proposals of many learned Clergymen in the Church,† as well as the Presbyterian ministers in 1661, for improving the established form.

* *Calderwood* in his *Church Hist.* says, That the Common Prayer is little less than a translation of several parcels put together of the *Roman Breviary, Missal, and Ritual.* These six Canticles are word for word from the *Mass Book.* *Benedicite omnia. Benedictus Dom. Magnificat. Nunc dimittis. Quicumque vult,* (or the *Athanasian Creed*) and *Te Deum* with *Gloria Patri* after every Psalm—When, therefore, the *Devonshire men* were stirred up to rebellion on account of the alteration of their *Mass Book,* King *Edward VI.* tells them, in a letter to quiet them, “As for the service in the English tongue, it perchance seems to you a new service, but yet indeed it is *no other but the old: the self-same words* in English.” Accordingly, some of the *Popes* offered to confirm the English Liturgy. See *Deluane’s Plea,* 47—52.

† See *Free and Candid Disquisitions relating to the Church of England, addressed to our Governors in Church and State, by Dutiful Sons of the Church.*

Q. *In what manner is the public worship of the Non-conformists conducted?*

A. By extemporary prayer, or, as it is sometimes called, free prayer; in which the minister prays according to his own judgement and ability, without the help of a book.

Q. *What warrant have they from Scripture for this way of praying?*

A. It was evidently in use long before Liturgies were or could be; for men had prayed to God two thousand years before any books were written. And there are examples of extemporary prayer in the sacred writings.

See Acts i. 24, 25. iv. 23—30.

Q. *What advantage do the Nonconformists suppose to attend extemporary prayer?*

A. 1. That it obliges ministers, (who use it in a *proper manner,*) to a habit of diligence in conversing with divine things.

2. That it tends to keep up the attention, and excite the pious affections of the worshippers.

3. That it is capable of being best suited to the circumstances of the congregation, and to various, sudden, and interesting occurrences, which ought not to pass unnoticed in public devotion.

Q. *How can the people join in extemporary prayer, since they must wait for the close of every sentence before they can understand it?*

A. 1. In order properly to join in prayer with another, it

is not necessary to adopt every word as it is uttered : it is sufficient to assent to a petition when the whole is delivered.

2. However, those prayers which are called extemporary, are not, (and ought not to be) always entirely *new* : many of the same expressions will often occur, and especially scripture ones, which may generally be understood and assented to, almost as soon as begun.

Q. *Are not extemporary prayers liable to great improprieties in method and expression ?*

A. It is allowed, they are not always so accurate as forms might be made. But persons of good natural abilities may, by diligent care, acquire a habit of expressing themselves with a degree of accuracy sufficient for all the purposes of social devotion. And Churchmen should remember that there are improprieties in the Liturgy, equal to most in the prayers of the regular Nonconformists.

Q. *But is it not requisite that Christians should maintain uniformity in their own worship ?*

A. If uniformity in divine worship had been necessary, Christ himself would have told us so, and the Apostles and first Christians would have maintained it ; which there is no proof of their doing. And it is strange that uniformity should be thought more necessary in prayer than in preaching, or in other things in which variety is esteemed beautiful.

It was not till *Austin's* time that the Church began to consult about an agreement of prayer ; but still there was no uniformity. Nay, in the darkest times of Popery there was a variety of forms in different sees : witness the offices for *Sarum, Bangor, York, &c. Neal.*

Q. *Did not Christ teach his disciples to pray by a form, called the Lord's Prayer ?*

A. It is not allowed, that he intended it to be always used in his church as a form : many consider it only as a directory for our prayers.* But could the contrary be proved, this would not warrant the use of a *Liturgy*, drawn up by fallible men, much less the imposition of it by the magistrate.

* In this manner pray ye. Matt. vi. 9.

§ IV. Concerning CEREMONIES.

Q. *What is the opinion of Nonconformists respecting ceremonies in divine worship ?*

A. They disapprove of such as are of human invention, especially when made necessary, and think themselves bound to refuse complying with them.

Q. *Are the ceremonies of the Church of England forbidden in scripture ?*

A. They are not expressly forbidden in scripture; (because they were not in use early enough) but all *will-worship** is, of which these are one kind; and their not being *commanded* is a sufficient reason for refusing them.

* See Col. ii. 20—23. “Why are ye subject to ordinances—after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility.”

Q. *Does not the Church claim authority to decree rites and ceremonies in divine worship?*

A. Yes, expressly, in the 20th Article; but Nonconformists deny the claim, and cannot submit to any of her ceremonies, till she can prove her authority to enjoin them from scripture.

Q. *Is nothing to be required in the worship of God, but what is commanded in scripture?*

A. Nothing but what is either expressly commanded, or necessarily implied in a command.

Q. *Are not these ceremonies indifferent? Where then can be the harm of complying with them?*

A. Though they be allowed indifferent in themselves, they may not be so in all the circumstances of them; and if they were, they would cease to be so when made terms of Christian communion.

See 1 Cor. vi. 12. “All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Vide *Furneaux's Letters to Blackstone*, pp. 156—160. 2nd edit.

Q. *What harm can there be in submitting to authority in things indifferent for the sake of peace?*

A. It would be acknowledging in those who have assumed the office of government in the Church, a right which Christ never gave them, the pretension to which is derogatory to his honour: and it would be giving up that “liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,” and in which we are exhorted to *stand fast*. Gal. v. 1.

Q. *Are we not commanded to “let all things be done decently and in order?” May not, therefore, the heads of the Church appoint whatever is necessary thereunto?*

A. All Christians must judge for themselves what is decent and orderly. Some think those things to be so which others deem the reverse. And no persons whatsoever have a right to determine for any but themselves, for we own no heads of the church upon earth.

Q. *Are any bad consequences likely to arise from those few ceremonies which the Church of England has appointed?*

A. They can do no good, and may be abused to bad pur-

poses. They tend to destroy the simplicity of divine worship; they encourage superstition, and lead the way to Popery, which abounds with human inventions.

Q. But does not the Church of England disclaim the errors of Popery?

A. It does so in words, but not in fact, so long as it claims authority in matters of faith, or a right to decree ceremonies. These ceremonies which it uses, are evidently of Popish original, and upon the same principle that it adopts these, it might admit all the rest.

Q. What are the ceremonies used in the Church of England?

A. 1. Bowing towards the East. 2. Bowing at the name of Jesus. 3. Signing with a Cross in Baptism. 4. Particular gestures in worship, especially kneeling at the Lord's Supper.

Q. What is there exceptionable in the Church respecting gestures in divine worship?

A. The Church authoritatively requires the people to be continually changing their postures; to stand in particular parts of the service, to kneel in others, and to sit in others, while neither scripture nor reason point out the difference;* and always to kneel at receiving the sacrament.

* The most unaccountable instance of this kind is, the order to sit when the *Epistles* are read, and to stand at the reading of the *Gospels*.

Q. Is not the reverent posture of kneeling the best suited to the solemn ordinance of the Lord's supper?

A. If so, our Saviour certainly knew it, and would have enjoined it, or taught us to use it by practising it with his disciples, when he first instituted the ordinance.

Q. Is the posture of the Nonconformists the same that our Lord and his disciples used?

A. No; but it is certain they used the same posture with that in which they received their common meals.† The Nonconformists therefore think that as sitting is the common table posture now, they come the nearest to our Saviour's pattern in using it at his table. This is most suitable to the idea of the Lord's supper as a feast; and it was doubtless the converting the *table* into an *altar*, that introduced the custom of kneeling at it.‡

† viz. The recumbent posture, which was, lying on sofas round the table, supporting themselves by leaning with the left elbow on it.

‡ Pope *Honorius* ordained it. A. D. 1214.

Q. But why should Nonconformists object to so trifling

a ceremony as kneeling at the sacrament, since they do not scruple kneeling at prayer?

A. 1. They cannot think it a trifling ceremony, when, as enjoined by the Church, it looks greatly like the adoration of the elements, and took its rise from the Popish adoration of them, as the very body and blood of Christ.

2. Besides, the Church of England imposes kneeling as a necessary term of communion; for which reason alone, (supposing it indifferent in itself,) it ought not to be submitted to.

Q. Do not the Nonconformists make it a term of communion to receive sitting?

A. No; the communicants among them are entirely at liberty to use the posture they like the best, and some few have been known to kneel.

Q. Are there not some other ceremonies observed in the Church of England?

A. There are several customs which partake of the nature of ceremonies, and are liable to much the same objections; e. g. Wearing particular habits.—Observing certain days as holy.—The distinction of places.—And the use of sponsors in baptism. All which are mere human and arbitrary appointments.

§ V. Concerning the CHOICE of MINISTERS.

Q. How are congregations supplied with ministers in the Church of England?

A. Many livings, as they are called, are in the gift of the King (as all Bishoprics in effect are); some of the Lord Chancellor; some of the Bishops; and some of the Universities: but many belong to the nobility and gentry. Every person having a living in his gift, (who is called the patron) may present whom he pleases to it, and the people have no liberty to object, nor the Bishop to refuse (except in a few cases) giving institution and induction.

N. B. These livings, (i. e. the advowson, or right of presentation) are to be bought, and are commonly advertised in the public papers.

Q. What is the ill consequence of this power of patrons?

A. The minister thus appointed is often disagreeable to the people, and sometimes shamefully disqualified for his office; as preferment is more commonly obtained by favour than by merit. Irreligious patrons of livings will rather give them to such clergymen as will make themselves agreeable companions, or serve a political interest, than to such as will be faithful to the souls of men.

Q. How do Nonconformists think that congregations should be supplied with ministers ?

A. They think that no person whatsoever is authorised to impose a minister upon others, but that every congregation has a right to choose its own.

Q. How do they vindicate this opinion ?

A. It seems as reasonable that all persons should choose their own ministers, as their own lawyers or physicians. An imposition in the former case is, indeed, much more unreasonable than in the latter, as the interests of the soul are more important than those of the body.

Q. Is it not better for the Clergy, that the people should be obliged to receive those who are thus sent them ?

A. It is better, doubtless, in a temporal view for those who have interest with great men, and nothing to recommend them to the people ; but not for the generality of the Clergy, or the most deserving of them, much less for the Church ; for true excellence of character, especially humility and faithfulness in the sacred office, are too often found rather a hindrance to promotion, than the means to obtain it. Whereas, if the choice of ministers resided in the people, the best preachers would commonly have the preference, and thus there would be a powerful motive to emulation among the clergy.

Q. Is not the choice of ministers among the Nonconformists often attended with contentions and divisions ?

A. Sometimes it doubtless is ; but this is not, comparatively, often the case, much less necessarily so. However, the best regulations may be attended with some inconvenience, and the same argument equally affects the choice of Representatives in Parliament.

Q. But are the people proper judges of a minister's qualifications ?

A. In general they may be supposed as good judges for themselves, in this case, as the patrons of livings are for them, who are often utter strangers to the parishioners. If in any instance they judge amiss, they are accountable to God only. And if, upon trial, they find they have chosen an improper person, they can dismiss him at their pleasure.

Q. Does the scripture invest the people with the right of choosing their own ministers ?

A. This seems to be a natural right : it is therefore incumbent on those who would divest them of it, to prove that the scripture has plainly given them this authority. However, the right of the people to choose their ministers, is what the scripture very clearly vindicates.

Christians are exhorted not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God. 1 John iv. 1. To beware of false prophets. Matth. xxiv. 24. And to take heed what they hear. Luke viii. 18. Which is inconsistent with a submission to those as their spiritual guides, whom other persons impose upon them.

When an Apostle was to be chosen in the room of *Judas*, the *whole body* of the disciples was applied to on the occasion. Acts 1. And even the seven *Deacons* were not chosen by the Apostles, but by the *whole multitude*. Acts vi.

Q. But cannot a parish remove a Clergyman who shall prove grossly immoral, or ignorant?

A. Not without citing him into the spiritual court; the proceedings of which are so slow, and so expensive, as to discourage persons in common life, from lodging their complaints in them.

§ VI. Concerning CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

Q. What is objected to in the Discipline of the English Church?

A. That it is shamefully defective and corrupt, particularly in the admission of persons to the Lord's table.

Q. Whom does the Church admit to her communion?

A. No persons whatever are refused, who have been confirmed by the Bishop, and are not excommunicated, though they be guilty of gross immoralities.

Q. May not the minister refuse those who are known to be immoral characters?

A. No; Though the rubric orders the Clergy to "advertise any evil-liver, that he presume not to come to the Lord's table," the most infamous sinner in the parish, if he should be refused, may appeal to the Ecclesiastical Court; and if he can secure the favor of the Chancellor, he may demand admission, and defy the minister, and even the Bishop himself, to exclude him.

Q. But does the Church suffer no notice to be taken of the immorality of its members?

A. Yes; but neither the minister of the parish, nor any of the congregation, can exercise any sort of discipline: their offences must be brought before the Spiritual Court, where Chancellors are the Judges, who are often *Laymen*, whose determination will stand in law, though contrary to that of the Bishop.

Q. What are the crimes cognizable by the Spiritual Court?

A. Adultery, fornication, simony, heresy, schism, slander, perjury, neglecting the sacraments, and the like.

Q. What are the punishments inflicted on persons guilty of these crimes?

A. Chiefly those of a mere carnal nature, which the gospel does not warrant; such as fines, imprisonments, deprivation, and excommunication. Even this last, is more of a carnal than of a spiritual nature, and the effects of it are dreadful.

Q. What are the effects of excommunication?

A. By the *lesser* excommunication a person is only disqualified for the sacraments; but by the *greater*, he is excluded from attending the prayers of the Church, and delivered over to the devil. He is also cut off from commerce with Christians in temporal affairs: and any one who converses with him, after being admonished to the contrary, is excommunicated himself. He cannot commence a suit in law, nor be a witness in any court, nor be an attorney for another. And if he obstinately persist forty days, the King's writ sends him to prison, where he must continue till he makes satisfaction to the Church; and if he dies without having done it, he is denied Christian burial.

Q. To what persons does the power of the Spiritual Court extend?

A. Not merely to all those who profess to belong to the Established Church, (whether they receive the Lord's supper or not) but to all kinds of persons who dissent from it; and it has been sometimes used to excommunicate those from the Church, who never belonged to it.

Q. Does the Church often proceed to severity with persons for the crimes above-mentioned?

A. Very seldom, unless they are persons of substance, who can stop the proceedings by a sum of money. And in order to obtain large mulcts from such, causes in this court have often been very corruptly managed.

Q. But since this is the Bishop's court, may not he interpose if he apprehend any cause is corruptly managed?

A. No; he cannot; the Chancellor is supreme and uncontrolled in this court, not liable to be restrained, or directed in his judicial proceedings, but finally and absolutely determines even in cases of excommunication. (*Towgood, p. 70.*)

Q. What kind of discipline does the Church maintain with respect to her ministers?

A. It is so lax as not to prevent the admission of unqualified ministers into the Church, nor to eject them from it.

Q. What qualifications are required of Clergymen in order to their getting ordination?

A. They are required by the Canons to pass an examina-

tion* by the Bishop, with respect to their learning, and to produce to him a recommendation from three Clergymen concerning their moral character. But it is well known, that it is no difficult matter for persons very poorly qualified, in both these respects, to get into orders and even into good benefices.

* Note. The Bishops are prohibited ordaining any man "unless at the least he be able to yield an account of his *faith*, according to the 39 Articles in *Latin*, and confirm the same by sufficient testimonies out of the holy scriptures." Can. 35. But their Lordships find it sometimes necessary to dispense with this: so little care being taken at our Universities, in the education of the Clergy, that many come for ordination who cannot pass such a test. Witness that well-known lamentation of Bishop *Burnet* on this head: Our *Ember Weeks*, (says he) are the grief and burden of my life. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained, are ignorant to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it," &c. *Burnet's Past. Care*, New preface, p. 5. See also the Confessional, p. 347.

Q. *But are ignorant and immoral ministers suffered to remain in the Church?*

A. Though the Canons relating to the character and conduct of the Clergy are very strict and good,* it is well known they are very little regarded: whilst those respecting mere *forms* and *ceremonies* are rigorously observed. The consequence of which is too well known.†

* "No ecclesiastical person shall at any time—resort to any Taverns, or Alehouses—nor give themselves to drinking or riot, spending their time idly by day or night, playing at dice, cards, or tables, or any other unlawful game, but—always endeavoring to profit the church of God, having always in mind that they ought to excel all others in purity of life," &c. Canon 65.

† N. B. It ought, however, to be acknowledged, and it is here acknowledged with pleasure, that many of the Clergy are persons of distinguished learning, and exemplary piety. They will own, with grief, the truth of the above deplorable account.

Q. *What do the members of the Church think of the discipline of it?*

A. The most sensible and candid are obliged to own that it is very corrupt; and the Liturgy itself teaches them once a year, (viz. on *Ash Wednesday*,) to wish the godly discipline of the primitive church restored.

Q. *Why then is it not restored?*

A. The plea always has been, that the times would not admit of it. But the truth of the case seems to be, the discipline of the Church is so corrupt, that those who wish an amendment know not where to begin, and those whose

province it is, are too much interested in its present corrupt state to attempt it.

§ VII. INFERENCES *from the Whole.*

Q. *What inferences may be drawn from the foregoing account of the Church of England?*

A. 1. That the Church of England is very imperfectly reformed from *Popery*, and still bears too strong resemblance to the Church of *Rome*.

See this in a striking manner illustrated in *Delaune's Plea for the Nonconformists*, pp. 34—56.

The reflection of the Earl of *Chatham*, when the Clerical Petition was before the House, was not more severe than just. "We have a *Popish Liturgy*, *Calvinistical Articles*, and an *Arminian Clergy*."

2. That therefore it behoves those who have power in the Church, to exert themselves in order to carry on the reformation; and endeavor to perfect what the first reformers so nobly began, with greater difficulty and hazard than their successors have in the present day any reason to fear; that so the Church of England may truly and consistently call herself Protestant.

3. That while those on whom this work properly devolves will take no steps towards a further reform, but on the contrary are determined to keep things as they are, it is the indispensable duty of those who are dissatisfied with them, and whose consciences would be uneasy with conformity, in a peaceable manner to dissent.

4. That they should also be grateful to their civil governors, the king, and those in authority under him, through whose clemency they enjoy advantages (though no other than their natural right) far superior to what their ancestors enjoyed in former reigns; and to testify their gratitude by approving themselves good subjects, endeavouring to promote the prosperity of their country, and preserve its peace, with a due regard to the liberty of the constitution.

5. That they ought to be steadfast in their adherence to the cause of Nonconformity, zealous in maintaining the great principles of it, and liberal and active to support and increase it, by all such methods as are consistent with peace, liberty, and charity; still making it to appear that their zeal is principally directed to the cause of practical godliness, and the interest of Christ at large, even in that Church from which they dissent.

They should love good men of every name, and rejoice

wheresoever "Christ is preached and God is worshipped in spirit," though the mode be different from their own, making all proper allowance for the prejudices of education, which often have too great influence on the best of men. But a true catholic spirit does not require men to give up their own principles, or be indifferent to the support of them; nor ought we to conform to unscriptural modes, or submit to human impositions, merely because they are approved by many whom we believe to be eminent for piety, or to hold the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

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