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THE  
X  
CHURCH AND THE CHAPEL:

OR

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED

BY THE

PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION  
IN RYDE.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

IN prefacing a few observations on the existing state of things in the town of Ryde, it is needless to remark that the present time is a very peculiar one. To say that among professing Christians it is a time of pain and disappointment, of doubt and practical difficulty, would be to express the feelings, if not to repeat the language, of very many. In order, however, to simplify the application of the following remarks, and render them, if the Lord will, of real practical benefit, the writer would state, at the outset, for what class of persons this tract is intended. The two buildings which have lately attracted most attention, are, a well-known Episcopal chapel, and one occupied by the Independents. In the first place, then, the writer wishes it to be distinctly understood, that he does not address those who are satisfied either with the one or the other. Though it is impossible that the advocates of two such opposite systems should be both right, he is willing, for argument's sake, to suppose that each in turn can satisfactorily defend his own position. He has no desire to uphold the one against the other. And if no other object presented itself than a body contented with the Church of England place of worship on the one hand, or a body of equally well-satisfied Congregationalists on the other, he would, while the Lord kept him in his present mind, abstain from writing on the subject altogether. The waters of controversy are bitter as well as deep, so that a Christian who values peace of mind, can hardly be too cautious how he approaches them. But there is a third class, of which neither the adherents of the Church nor the Chapel can deny the existence, and, consequently, whom it is impossible for either party to claim as their own. These are *dissatisfied* with both, and too decidedly so to admit

of a doubt as to what their feelings are, in whatever way those feelings may be expressed. At one time, it may be, seeking the comfort of sympathy, conferring with others in the same circumstances about what is best to be done; at another, openly and recklessly discovering to strangers the uneasiness of their minds; at another, repairing, with ill-dissembled sorrow, to the one place of worship, rather as a refuge from the other, than on account of any positive recommendation which itself possesses.

If, indeed, there is *not* such a class of persons in Ryde, the writer confesses that he is under a mistake, and his labour so far thrown away. But if there is, he does not despair of suggesting a few remarks, which may be rendered effectual to the comfort of some troubled minds. And he would add, that the very fact of persons being in such a state, is a sufficient warrant for his writing at all. It may suit the formality of a Levite, but it cannot be consistent with the spirit of a Christian, to pass by on the other side, or to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" With this view, he commends it to the Lord.



## THE CHURCH AND THE CHAPEL.

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THE spiritual wants of a sinner may be expressed in one word, "Peace." This little word may be said to comprehend the whole of gospel truth. Not because there is nothing of itself greater or of more importance (for the glory of God is, of course, greater than the comfort or happiness of man), but as the effect supposes the cause, and the work the author, to name the name of peace in the heart of man is to imply by the unbroken and indissoluble chain of gospel order all that God has done, nay, all that God is,—the unsearchable fulness of Jehovah Himself. With this explanation (needful for those who are jealous for the glory of God), we would repeat that the one thing man wants is *peace*; and though the idea is a simple one, it may be convenient to view it under a twofold aspect:

1st. In reference to a man's State;

2nd. In reference to his Actions.

We may, for instance, with regard to the first, consider the case of a death-bed. Practical difficulties are here out of the question. It is not, "What ought I to do? What is right? What *future* act will God approve or condemn?" so much as the question, "What am I?" My past acts are, as it were, a part of myself. What account does God take of them or of me? Is God my Father or my enemy? Am I an heir of glory or of condemnation?

A satisfactory answer to these and similar questions, would bring peace to a man in regard to his state; we may consider in the next place, What is peace in the soul of a man with regard to his actions?

Ultimately, indeed, the sinner who has peace with God regarding his state, has peace altogether; but we may yet suppose the case of one who knows that God is his Father; and who, therefore, must have been acquainted with the way to the Father, but who yet is troubled with



practical doubts, as to how he should walk so as to please God more and more.

It will easily be seen that the mind of a Christian, or of one who desires to be a Christian, may suffer acutely from want of peace in relation to one or other of the supposed cases, and that in connexion with the place of worship which he frequents :—

1st. He may, for instance, not know the Father or the Son. Apart from the consideration of other ways of arriving at the truth, it is hardly probable that a soul ignorant of the gospel, can receive the knowledge of it while habitually listening to one who does not preach it.

2ndly. Or again, he may know enough of the truth to be sensible that it is not preached fully where he attends, while yet he has never been able to feel the comfort of it, and at the same time under the impression that the building is the place where men ought to worship, he is thus placed in a painful dilemma.

3rdly. He may know the gospel himself, and yet be painfully exercised with doubts as to whether he ought to attend a place where it is not preached to others.

Or, lastly, his eyes may be open to see that preaching and worship are two very distinct things; that the truth proclaimed from the pulpit may be so contradicted in other parts of the church or chapel, as to leave it still very doubtful whether he is in the right place or no.

To persons exercised by all or any of these doubts, the thought can hardly fail to occur, What, after all, ought I to do? Is the embarrassment under which I at present suffer, my sin or my cross? to be borne as the one, or to be repented of as the other? Is the obligation under which I feel or suspect myself to be, from heaven or of men? For if it is of God, his grace can enable me to bear it. If of man, I am not the servant of men, and may yet be delivered. In the first place, then, dear reader, have you peace with God? This is the chief thing, in comparison of which all other questions, religious or not, are of very minor importance. It is too probable that the consciences of some will answer this question in the negative, "I have *not* peace." Let us then forget for the time, so to speak, the very

existence of church or chapel, and see if this peace is attainable anywhere. There may be different causes of the want of it. It may be, the defect is in the preaching; it may be in the word not being mixed with faith in them that hear it. First, then, are you sure that Christ is preached, and nothing else? Christ, without man's operation or co-operation, the blood of Jesus sufficient to put away *all* sin? If your disease lies deep, the remedy must be deep also. Till the power of the blood of Jesus is known in purging the conscience from the guilt of sin, there cannot be peace; and it cannot be out of place to state, however briefly, the connexion between true peace, and the doctrines of the New Testament. Let it be observed, then, that the gospel is eminently a gospel of peace. Peace is the very name of the gospel itself. Jesus "came and preached peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. ii. 17). Nay, it is the very name of Jesus, "He is our peace."\* It would indeed extend this little tract far beyond the limits which the writer proposed for himself, to trace all the ramifications of this blessed principle of peace throughout the whole texture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some particulars, however, it is indispensable to notice:—

First, There is peace between God and the soul. The ministry of the gospel is the ministry of reconciliation. Of the world it was testified that God *was* reconciling it; of the church, that God *had* reconciled it (2 Cor. v. 18—20). And this is the aspect of the gospel now. God *is* reconciling the world. God *has* reconciled the church. It would be indeed a grievous heresy to reverse

\* The strict interpretation of these words would perhaps require that they should be applied to the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile. But the combination of the two events is very instructive. The veil is rent, and the middle wall of partition falls *at the same moment*. No sooner is heaven opened to the Jew, than the Gentile comes in on the same ground. This crushes the pride of the Jew, and teaches the *nature* as well as the largeness of grace, that the loftiness of man may be bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted. It is no valid objection to this to say that the gospel came "to the Jew first." So it did *dispensationally*; but had they received it, all would not have been concluded in unbelief, and how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled? See the latter part of Rom. xi., and the whole of Eph. iii.

this order, and to say God *is* reconciling the church, for the church is reconciled already; or to say God *has* reconciled the world; for, if that were the case, the world and the church would be one. In the world the cross is erected, the standard of reconciliation is planted, the gospel is preached to *all*. The Son of *man* is come among lost *men*, to seek and to save that which was lost. The altar of burnt offering has been set up in the wide court of this fallen world. And here, by the way, there is room for some explanation of the word "world," the misapprehension of which causes so much perplexity and sorrow to the minds of many. The world, then, is not the church, the world is not saved, the world is not pardoned, and yet, in a scriptural sense, in defiance of every system of high or low doctrine that may threaten to contradict the statement, the world is the object of the love of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). It may serve to throw light on this important verse, if we can obtain a clear understanding of the different use and meaning of the word "world" in Scripture. In the Old Testament it is very seldom, perhaps never, used in a moral or spiritual, but rather in a physical sense, *i. e.* the earth inhabited by the children of Adam, or, more widely, the universe, including the whole compass of creation. In the New Testament, though the variety may be easily accounted for, the senses in which this word is employed are numerous. And while we entreat the reader's patience, if the digression should prove a long one, we would remark that the study of *some one single word* in Scripture will often include the examination of such a train of doctrines connected with it, as not only to repay the labour thus spent, but give a comprehensive view of the whole of the truth of the gospel.

The *world* then, in the New Testament, will be found to signify,—

1. The creation, or, in a more limited sense, that part of the visible creation with which we have most to do—the earth.

2. By a very natural figure of speech, the inhabitants of the earth.

3. With too much reason, the great majority of the inhabitants, *i. e.*, the wicked, as opposed to the people of God.

4. A great majority, in another sense, *i. e.*, the Gentiles, as opposed to the Jews.

5. The things of the earth which the men of the earth delight in, the systems they frame and support, the pleasures, possessions, &c., which can only last till the earth is burnt up, partakers of its guilt and condemnation, and necessarily to be involved in its destruction.

Lastly, we may pass over the case where the word would be more correctly rendered "age," whether in the Old or New Testament, as having little to do with the point in question.

The first of these senses is too simple to require any explanation.

In the second, God loved the world, though not with that peculiar, discriminating, and *effectual* love with which he loved the Church.

With regard to the third, we are to love, pity, pray for the parties, act in grace toward them, and yet, as to communion, avoid them.

In the fourth, wherein other men are contrasted with Jews, we may see in some degree in what sense redemption is universal.

In the fifth, "Love not the world nor the things of the world."

We shall understand yet more fully the nature of God's love to the world, if we contrast it with that which God did not so love. The assertion marks rather the sphere and character, than the extent of the love. God loves angels, but does not redeem them. God neither loves nor redeems lost spirits. "He took not on him the nature of angels." But to return to the subject of the gospel of peace.

Secondly, There is peace in the soul. In the former case, peace supposes the reconciliation of two parties, or at least the absence of enmity between them. Here it is the absence of anxiety, tumult, fear, in the mind of an

individual. In this sense of the word our Lord promises and bequeaths peace to the Church. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." In which last passage indeed the two senses are blessedly conjoined. For it is not mere reconciliation, or the absence of enmity, but the sweet consciousness that this reconciliation is effected. We can think of God and not be troubled, see God and live. What can disturb the mind in relation to God but consciousness of sin? When that is removed by the blood of Jesus, there must be peace. Is then, dear Reader, this peace your portion? If not, fly from any place where another gospel is preached, as you would fly from the plague. It is incumbent on you to hear and believe the Gospel; it is not incumbent upon you to attend where the Gospel is not preached.\* And this brings us to the consideration of another branch of the subject, for,

II. It was supposed, in the second place, that the truths just stated might be in a great measure assented to, and a person on that very account all the more painfully circumstanced. He might believe on the one hand that the truth was not faithfully preached or maintained where he attended: on the other, that the word of God required his presence there. The thought may present itself to the mind, Though the gospel is not

\* It may be well to anticipate a remark frequently made, though indeed it could hardly come from those who are *dissatisfied* on the present occasion, "I go to church for the prayers, and not for the sermon." Most heartily would we congratulate a person who had learnt to say, "My enjoyment on the Lord's day consists in the communion of saints, rather than in the listening to a sermon. There was a time when the great question on Sunday was, "Where shall I hear the best preacher?" Now it is rather, "How shall I meet the Lord's people in the Lord's way, and show forth the Lord's death till He come?" But it may be remarked, that there is a wide difference between the *not* hearing a *sound* preacher, and the listening to one who is *unsound*; and though prayer and praise, as we shall have occasion to repeat, are blessed privileges of the saints, quite apart from the peaching or hearing sermons, yet till a man *does* know the gospel, the very thing he needs is to have it faithfully preached to him.

preached, though I get no food for my soul, still the Church is the place whither the voice of God calls me. If this notion is of any weight, it is a serious one indeed, and demands our most attentive consideration. It is gravely alleged, that after God hath set forth Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, after we have been told that faith cometh by hearing ("and how shall they hear without a preacher?") still the word of God calls us to a place where the gospel is not preached. Where then is this law to be found in the word of God? Whence arises this stern necessity? If anywhere, the authority for this must be found in the New Testament. But the language of the New Testament is far different: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8, 9). And again, our Lord's own words respecting his sheep are decisive; "A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John x. 5).

The obligation, however, if it exists at all, will naturally fall under one or other of the following heads.

1. The building is the right place.
2. The minister is the right man.

If, then, the building is the right place, it can only be because God has made it so. Some very strong reason must be assigned before we can lawfully call any structure built with hands the House of God, or insist upon the duty of attending there as if it were. But in reality the question was discussed and settled long ago in our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . . . The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Never since the overthrow of the temple at Jerusalem has there existed a building to succeed to the title of the House of God. That title has now vanished,

with the glory, to heaven, and it is there and there only that we can find the reality, "the sanctuary, the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man." The temple indeed, with the glory within, typified two things, the Church, and the Lamb the light thereof. If there was once a place where God put his name, Christ is the image of God. If there was once a place to look to, it is now "looking unto Jesus." As to *consecration*, not a shadow of argument can be adduced from the New Testament in favour of any such ceremony to be performed over a church (so called) or a church-yard. We may ask by the way, whether the practice of Dissenters does not border upon this error, when they call any building made with hands "the house of God?"

Having thus despatched the first question—Am I tied to the place? we now approach another, the remaining case of the dilemma—Am I tied to the man? The writer trusts he is aware of the extreme delicacy of the ground he is now venturing upon, but he feels at the same time that the occasion is of too urgent a nature to allow of his keeping back the truth. On the one hand there is no room for idle and unmeaning compliment, for forbearance which rather gratifies man than gives glory to God; on the other, nothing can justify the slightest departure from Christian courtesy, and the unalterable rules of Christian love. And the writer would mark this principle all the more strongly, because if ever there were a case in which personal esteem, gratitude for the highest favours which one human being can be made the instrument of conveying to another, should be allowed to weigh against the love of the truth, that case would be found in the present instance. Still it is with God and not with man that we have to do. If a man has been idolized, though the most spiritual man in existence, still it is a righteous thing with God to shew that it *was* an earthen vessel that contained the treasure. Had it been the apostle Peter himself, we know how another apostle would have acted, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Nay, the stronger and the more numerous the individual's claims to our regard, the more

incumbent is it upon us to express that regard in a truly Christian way, not by fawning upon and flattering him, but by shewing that we have learnt from him the best of lessons,—a lesson which can operate against the errors of the teacher himself, to cease from man and stay upon our God. The doctrines professedly listened to with joy and gratitude in the year 1834 must have been either in themselves of little value, or have been very imperfectly received, if they can be swerved from or denied in 1841. That which was really built by the help of God cannot be so easily thrown down by the hand of man. It may be said, and indeed is frequently urged in defence of a now barren ministry, “It was there I got my good.” What then? Is this ever a reason why we should receive evil (spiritual evil) from the same quarter?

Happily indeed for ourselves, we are spared in one respect the invidious task of commenting upon personal deficiencies. The very magnitude of the evil supplies to a certain extent, a remedy for itself. For such is the characteristic modesty of *Puseyism*, that when the preacher ceases to commend the gospel, he ceases also to commend himself. He does not indeed say, (it were well if he did) “Not I, but Christ,” but on the contrary, “Not I, but my office.” We are thus spared a painful duty, and proceed, in conformity with the foregoing supposition, to examine the measure of respect due to the office of a minister of the Church of England. And in the prosecution of this enquiry, as the writer’s object is a practical one, he would proceed at once to consider the popular notions in favour of the Establishment, and the more obvious difficulties in the way of following conscience, when the truth seems to call us one way, and the authority of the Church of England another.

There is one passage of Scripture by many supposed to have a direct, and probably by many more an indirect reference to the subject, and on that account the more needful to be examined. “The scribes and pharisees sit in Moses’ seat, all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe that observe and do, but do not ye after their



works," &c. Matt. xxiii. 2, 3. This is either considered an argument from analogy, *imp'ying* our duty of subjection to the ecclesiastical powers, or even a direct statement of the duty itself. The second supposition, however, resolves itself into the first, for clearly Moses and the scribes and pharisees can only in a figurative or analogical sense signify the apostles and the clergy of the Establishment. But even the supposed analogy itself fails, the parallel would rather require priests in the seat of Aaron than scribes in the seat of Moses. A brief examination of the passage, however, will enable us to put on it a construction very different from the popular one. Be it observed then that scribes and pharisees were not priests, were not of God's appointment, and except in one important particular, were of no authority at all.\* Modern habits and advantages have made us forget the very peculiar place which the scribes occupied. They were (we may assert it without a very bold figure of speech) *the Bible* of the Jewish people. With that people of course there were no printed copies of the law or the prophets, no such facility as now exists for the private or domestic reading of the Word of God, so that "Mind what the scribes say," was equivalent in modern language to "Attend to the Scriptures:" "Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?" was in other words, "Why is it so written in the prophet Malachi?" Thus, so far from limiting the application of the precept, we believe it ought to be extended far more widely, so widely indeed as to nullify the common interpretation of it. For according to this view, it is not the ordained deacon or presbyter, nor the consecrated bishop or archbishop, but each and every instructor from the primate down to the Bryanite preacher that sits in Moses' seat, and thence declares with an authority from which there can be no appeal,

\* At all events it is difficult to find in Scripture that the scribes *as such* were anything more. Ezra was *inspired*, and the authority of an inspired scribe, like that of an inspired fisherman, would rest upon his inspiration, rather than upon his ordinary calling. Even if we suppose that David was immediately taught of God to appoint them, which is doubtful, it could amount to little more than appointment to the mechanical office of transcription.

the mind of God : *i. e.*—just so far as he faithfully repeats the truth contained in the Written Word. The primate on his metropolitan throne can do no more, the ranter in the conventicle does no less.

In the preceding exposition of our Lord's words, it would have been an error indeed, and worse than an error, to have represented them as of less value than they are. Our object is not to detract from their solemn weight and divine authority, but to guard against the misapplication of them. Thus, whatever is taken from the scribe is added to that which was the burden and the power of the scribe's testimony, the Word of God. And so we are all the more completely thrown upon the Scriptures, and, for our guidance in church matters, upon the Scriptures of the New Testament. There, in the apostolic writings, we find the true *successors of the apostles*, and hear them, as it were, speaking distinctly in language which nothing but infidelity can term obsolete, to the end of this dispensation. To talk of *other* successors to the apostles is, to deny the authority of the Word of God.

But if the scribe fails as a precedent, the case of the Jewish priesthood may still, in the judgment of many, seem parallel with that of an ordained ministry in the present day. The priest was not a mere writer or reader, nor a self-constituted officer, but one called of God, as was Aaron. These last words in particular are often quoted as especially applicable to the case before us. Once for all, we have not to do with precedents or parallels, but with the word of God.

There is one view of this question which we cannot afford to pass over, because an argument has been founded upon it of some apparent weight, but in reality of no value whatever. It is derived from the etymological meaning of the word "priest." It has been argued that as this is evidently a corruption of the Greek *πρεσβύτερος*, through the French *prestre* or *prêtre*, we cannot be wrong in applying the term to ecclesiastical rulers in the present day. But one of the most subtle forms of logical error is the argument from etymology : it would be well if we could not add, of doctrinal error also. As

well might we say that York Minster was a monastery, as infer from the *original* meaning of the word "priest" that it is now the proper title for an elder. The question is what the word actually means now, not what it meant once. If, however, the word "priest" is a fit designation for an elder in a Christian church, because of its derivation, if it does not mean the sacrificial officer, what are we to think of the almost innumerable instances in the Old Testament where the word occurs? To be consistent, let the word "elder" be erased universally, and "priest" substituted for it, and where the word "priest" *does* occur in the Bible, *ιερεύς*, for instance, let that too be erased, and another word, not derived from *πρεσβύτερος*, be put in its place.

If indeed it were a mere question of words or names, it would ill become a Christian to waste time in discussing it. But as priesthood forms the leading subject of a revelation from a holy God to sinners, it must be of importance clearly to understand the nature of it, and thus to learn who are and who are not priests; and, to compress within as narrow limits as possible the scripture account of this great ordinance, it will be well to examine it in the threefold character in which the word of God presents it to our view. There is

1. The priesthood of Aaron.
2. The priesthood of Christ.
3. The priesthood of believers.

A very little attention to the scripture history of this threefold ministry, will be sufficient to convince us that there is only *one* real priesthood, and at the same time remind us that as there is great danger involved in the confounding either of the other two with that of Christ, so there is even greater danger and sin in inventing another class of priests, which God never appointed at all.

The Aaronic priesthood was purely typical. It shewed what was wanted. The problem was to cleanse the conscience; and this, the law, in that it was weak through the flesh, could not do. It differed from the priesthood of Christ in the nature of the consecration, in the personal dignity of the priest, in the value of the offering,

in the place of ministry. When we speak of the priesthood of Aaron as inefficient, we mean of course that it could not do more than God intended it should do. But if God appointed a ceremonial cleansing for ceremonial pollution, the effect regularly followed, only it was neither spiritual nor lasting, and therefore of no great value. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,"—there *was* sanctification, but it was ceremonial: there *was* purification, but it was only of the flesh.

Next comes the truly effectual priesthood: the order, that of Melchizedek; the consecration, the word of the oath. The priest and the sacrifice in one—the Son; the place of ministry, heaven. That which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. And yet the connexion between Aaronic priesthood and the earth is not lightly severed. "If he were *on earth*, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." The earth, as a sphere of ministration, was already occupied by them that were after the law. The priesthood of the Son is effectual on behalf of the Church, not by limiting the range of the law upon the earth, but by taking up the Church into heaven. Hence all is heavenly. "Heaven opened" is one grand characteristic of the gospel of Christ. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Indeed to unfold the heavenly character of our Lord's priesthood, and the *present* heavenly privileges of the saints, would be to transcribe a large part of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And we would here remark, by the way, that if the reader desires peace and liberty, and especially liberty from the bondage of submission to an earthly priesthood, he will do well to study this blessed portion of Scripture with prayer.

We now come to a distinct, but important branch of the subject. Important, because the right understanding of this is needful to clear up much that has been advanced before. The question arises, What are those

offices in which a priest can be associated with his people? In what sense are Christians a subordinate priesthood? We cannot deny that Christians are priests, for the Scriptures affirm that they are. But then it is *the whole body* ordained to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9),—not sacrifices of atonement, but sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving (Heb. xiii. 15), and owing their whole value and acceptance to the one great sacrifice of the one great priest. This body includes every man, woman, and child that believes in Jesus, and thus, while it allows that in a scriptural but secondary sense there are many priests, it strikes at the root of the popish distinction of the Church into priesthood and laity. It was necessary to dwell the longer upon the question of priesthood, because of its importance. The misunderstanding of it raises a stumbling-block at the very threshold of true religion, and bars our access to God the Father. Reader, Catholic or Protestant, you want a priest, you must have a priest or be lost. That is to say, you must have a person to stand between God and your soul.

There are two opposite errors in one or other of which many are entangled, and it would seem that Satan cares very little into which of the two extremes he can drive the soul. The one is that we can approach the Father *without* a Mediator, the other that we *do* want a Mediator to the Son. With this last error the modern notions of priesthood are closely connected. Unintentionally, perhaps, but not the less certainly, and we may add, not the less mischievously, the minister of the gospel has been presented to the sinner as a false Christ. He has taken that place which should have been occupied by none but Jesus, that of the Way to God. Something of limitation has been added where the faithful ministry of the gospel would have been simply to point the sinner to Christ. We say this may have happened unintentionally, so that the fault may have been more on the side of the deceived than on that of the unconscious deceiver. But there is still room to remark, that long before a man would dare openly to personate the Lord (in the way in which some impostors

and fanatics have done), he may so exaggerate the value of ordinances, and so represent himself as necessary in the administration of them, as virtually to do the same thing.

So far then as the ministry of the word is concerned, we cannot be too jealous of its being confounded either in its name or its nature with priesthood. These ordinances must be carefully distinguished, if we would clearly understand, or duly appreciate, either one or the other. Priesthood apart, honour and reverence are certainly due to a faithful minister of the gospel: (Heb. xiii. 17) "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account," &c. But here we must notice the grand distinction, overlooked by so many to the hindrance and grief of their souls, between the Jewish priesthood and the Christian ministry of the New Testament. With the Jew it was the office and not the man, with the Christian it is the man and not the office. A Jew whom the law required to go and shew himself to the priest, &c. had no right to decline the service of such a minister because of any moral or spiritual disqualification. That minister might be the worst of men; he was, nevertheless, according to the law, the priest of God. This official sanctity, irrespective of any inward qualification whatever, vested by God himself in the Jewish priest, is claimed for the minister of the Church of England. A clergyman may and ought to be highly esteemed in love for his work's sake, never for that which the profligate or the infidel may claim as well. He may be literally and scripturally "Reverend," officially he cannot be so, unless we are prepared to allow the same honour to the worst of men, who happen by ordination to have entered on the same office. It is no part of the writer's design, much less his wish, to give pain to Christians of the Church of England. But he can safely say, that the Evangelical members of that Church are on his side, so far as to acknowledge in practice the principle he contends for. Do they not *recommend* the going to a distance from the regular minister in order to hear a faithful preacher? If the

Church of England system is right, how can a Christian rightly turn his back on his parish priest? Is the order of the Establishment on the one hand so divine, on the other so uncertain, that a layman is justified in leaving, not only the parish but the diocese near the boundary of which he happens to live (thus scorning the *Bishop* as well as the rector), and following his own inclination in the choice of a teacher, so long as the teacher has been regularly ordained? Surely the voluntary principle prevails within as well as without the pale of the Establishment. In both cases the (evangelical) congregation choose their preacher. In the Church the people go to the minister, among the Dissenters the minister goes to the people. To say that the system is right, and yet that hundreds of churches may lawfully be deserted by their respective parishioners, is hardly consistent. And yet this is what an Evangelical member of the Establishment *does* say, whenever he dissuades his neighbours from attendance at the parish Church.

III. The third case we supposed was, that a man might know the gospel himself, and yet doubt whether he ought to attend where it is not preached to others. Much that would naturally come in here has been anticipated in a former section. It is needless to go over the same ground again to prove that there is no *necessity* for attendance under such circumstances. But thus much may be added, that if it were possible to escape the evil ourselves, a case, however, which the word of God forbids us to suppose, it is no light sin before God to encourage others, servants, children, or even the remotest of those whom our influence can reach, to persevere in attending where their souls are kept in bondage and darkness. To such, at the very least, we may say, "You are not testifying for God;" and testimony after all, in one form or another, is the grand work of a Christian.

The writer has said very little about that which has attracted so much attention, the recently added decorations of the Church of England place of worship, and that for this reason, that they cannot be made the sub-

ject-matter of the grand question. He objects to them indeed, but it is rather as symptoms of greater and more decided evils than as distinct and independent evils in themselves. It might, after all, be difficult to shew that there was more warrant in Scripture for an Independent preacher's gown and bands than for the candlesticks on the Church of England communion-table. But even if they were less hurtful in their effects than they really are, and did not, as morbid excrescences, betoken a deeply-seated internal disease, they would be unsuitable to an assembly of truly Christian worshippers. "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" Why should the pride and worldliness, in a word, the *popery* of our hearts, find so much to feed upon?

IV. Perhaps some will say, I acknowledge the force of much that has been said; and more than that, I have acted upon it. I have forsaken the Church worship, though born and bred in the Establishment, and have betaken myself to the Dissenting Chapel, where the gospel is preached more fully and simply, and yet I am not satisfied. The reader will bear in mind that it was supposed at the commencement, there were persons dissatisfied with both places. If this supposition is correct, all parties must allow that one of two steps ought certainly to be taken. Either, reasons should be assigned why the person ought to be satisfied, or if such cannot be produced, some other satisfactory course of proceeding should be adopted. Let it be supposed, for the sake of illustration, that the truth is fully preached in the Dissenting Chapel. Ought the child of God to be contented? Many will answer in the affirmative. But where do we find in the word of God that preaching and hearing the gospel are everything? The claims of ecclesiastical usurpation may be so unreasonable that their falsehood may be demonstrated even to the mind of an unconverted man, but, unless the Spirit of God have shewn what is the real nature of the evil, a man may leave one bad system to plunge into a worse. The language of a saint, who feels at once his liberty and his obligations, will be, "I have left one form of worldliness, by the help of the Lord, I will keep myself from falling



into another. I did not protest against Popery or Puseyism that I might vindicate the cause of Political Dissent. The duty of a believer must be sought in the nature of his high and heavenly calling. A saint is *never* called to unsaintly work. Perhaps it will already have occurred to some readers, that many objections urged against the Church of England are also applicable to the Dissenting Chapel. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, liberty to dissent from the Dissenters, to secede from the Chapel as well as from the Church, unless it can be clearly proved that the word of God calls us to the Chapel, though not to the Church. Many, who are familiar with modern discussions on the subject know well that one of the most triumphant arguments used by Churchmen in favour of the Establishment, is the low state of religion among Dissenters, and the unscriptural character of their churches. It would be unfair to impute to a body of Dissenters evils which are merely accidental, and which might by accident occur anywhere else. But after every allowance has been made, which the utmost liberality or candour could require or even suggest, is it too much to say that worldliness, palpable, gross worldliness, is too generally apparent in the Independent churches? And does not this worldliness, after an impartial enquiry into what may be called the principles of the Dissenting Interest, appear to be rooted in the system, rather than a mere contingency in this or that particular Church? Is there not that *felt* subordination of the lesser bodies to the larger and more highly considered churches, that the minister oftentimes *dares not* preach the truth fully as he sees it, and rather than suffer the pain of self-reproach for inconsistency, too often shuts his eyes to the light which would either urge him forward or condemn him for standing still? Is there not that *allowed* influence of wealth, that where a man's connection with the chapel has been, in the first instance, purely secular, he has, by that very means, and by the influence of money, obtained for himself a "qualification to vote" in the spiritual affairs of the church?

May it not so happen that the disaffected party, offended at the truth and faithfulness of the preacher, can

retreat to the singing gallery or the organ loft, and there bid defiance to the censures of the pulpit? That they are driven thus far, may be to the credit of the minister; that they are driven no farther is not to the credit of the Church. It is by no means the writer's wish to bring forward all that might be said on this subject. But having supposed the case of a Christian whose conscience has led him out of the Establishment, and who nevertheless is not satisfied with the Independent chapel, he would endeavour, as far as possible, to meet the exigencies of such a state. With many indeed the greatest difficulty may yet remain behind. "You have told us," they may say, "what to leave undone, rather than what to do; whence to come out, but not whither to go. We cannot afford to stand still, and your remarks, to be practical, must carry us farther." In answer to this, it might be enough to say, that a believer is frequently called upon to stand still; and rather to exhibit the patience of the Spirit, than the hurry and restlessness of the flesh. "Cease to do evil," is the first command, obedience to which brings the soul into the most fitting posture for learning to do well. And if the answer were to be rendered to a man of the world, or to any one asking on worldly principles, "What are we to do?" the writer would at once disclaim the power of giving one. But if it is the honest inquiry of a child of God, seeking to do his Father's will, we would endeavour to reply to it on scriptural grounds. And this necessarily leads us to examine the nature of *public worship*, a phrase, be it observed, never used in the Scriptures\* of the New Testament. It will not be difficult to describe in few words the prevailing sentiments of professing Christians on this subject. They would be startled at the idea of abandoning public worship altogether, they might be startled yet more, if taken at their word, and invited, as some of the American Unitarians would perhaps invite them, to join as the public, without bigotry

\* If any should allege the original of the word *Liturgy* as an exception to this rule, we would just remark, that the use of that word in Scripture is far too indefinite to afford ground for such an argument.

or dogmatism, or distinction of creed, in the worship of the One Universal Father.

Between these two extremes the truth lies. And if we object to the term "public worship," it is not because the worship of Christians to be scriptural must be carried on with closed doors, for the contrary is evidently sanctioned in the New Testament, (1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24); but because it ought clearly to be the worship of Christians, and not the worship of the public. The conscience then of a Christian suggests most truly to him on the Lord's day morning that there is something more than secret or family prayer in which, according to Scripture, he is called upon to engage. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. x. 25).

There is the union of saints *as* saints in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. And it is because these requirements are not met, as he believes, in the constitution and practice of an Independent Church, that the writer ventures to say thus much. To the ungodly, he says nothing; to the godly, who are satisfied with their position, he says no more; to the saints, who are distressed and perplexed with having to go where the doctrines are unsound, the worship unscriptural, and spiritual communion more a name than a reality, he would say, "This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you;" "Ye are called to liberty;" "Be not ye the servants of men." Rather than go to a place where your own souls are not profited, and whither God's word does not plainly call you, stay at home, and the Lord be with you. So entirely is he bent upon one object, that he forbears to add much, that full conviction and the natural wish to communicate truth which he holds and values, would impel him to state. He would even suppose that the parties he is addressing, are waiting for a time till another church or another chapel, freed (as they might hope) from present difficulties, may arise. He would meet them on their own ground, and consult their present need. Let the saints unite for prayer in any number, and in any place. To speak of saints in Ryde, or any-

where else as *necessarily* involved in a state of spiritual destitution, is to deny the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. If this is a sin that a real Christian would not deliberately commit, it may be well nevertheless to consider whether any of us use language at all approaching to it. The contempt thus poured upon the Lord's ordinances and the Lord Himself it is not easy to estimate. Is the child of God to go *from* the church-meeting to find a refuge in his closet, as if his Father were to be found only in secret, and were not present in the assembly of the saints? If private prayer is nothing without the Spirit, why should congregational prayer without the Spirit be more? Indeed this very thought may be a comfort to the believer; "Either I go to enjoy the presence of the Lord, or I am not tied to that which is painful." We are not to be sons in the closet, and slaves in the church or chapel. Again and again we may say, One glance at the fatherly relation of God to the saint, will remove a thousand difficulties, and scatter to the winds the low and beggarly pretensions of formal worship. "They that worship *the Father* must worship him in spirit and in truth." Every one of these words is weighty. No truth where there is not spirituality, no spirituality without the spirit of adoption. When the Spirit of God's Son (Gal. iv. 6) draws you to the chapel, go; when to stay behind is to forsake the assembly of the saints, and to mutilate the body of Christ, go; till then it cannot be wrong, but most safe and scriptural, to stay away, realizing the true communion of saints, considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works, following righteousness, faith, charity, peace, *with* them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

"But we cannot meet without a minister." Rather let it be said, We cannot meet to any purpose without the blessing of God, and we dare not meet without His sanction. We have before allowed that great respect is due to a faithful minister of the Word of God, but surely this does not amount to saying that saints can never meet lawfully and profitably without such a person being present. This is not the place for entering at large on the subject of the respective functions of elder,

pastor, and teacher, and of the scriptural difference between them ; but, in few words, let it be *proved from Scripture* that Christians are wrong in meeting for worship without the presence of a minister ordained in or out of the Establishment, before they condemn themselves or others for claiming this blessed privilege.

The writer wishes it may be very clearly understood on what ground he objects to the Independent form of worship. He does not say, "The building is polluted," he does not say, "There is no truth there," but only that there is not within it such an assembly of Christians as to lay the conscience of a saint under any obligation to attend there. The Dissenters have said too much, and proved too much, they have *let out* too much, they have thrown the doors of religious liberty too widely open, to allow of their easily retaining those whom they would still keep in bondage. A Dissenter will hardly contend for the consecration of the building wherein he worships. If the chapel is a mere lecture-room, and there is sound instruction delivered by the lecturer, as far as it goes, it may be as lawful for a Christian to go and hear, as to go to hear a lecture anywhere else. Though, even then, a true Christian will consider the danger of sanctioning an assembly which may thus *appear* more scriptural than it really is. In addition to all this, it may be said, Whom do you represent to the world? It ought to be the body of Christ, instead of which it is too often, "We represent the Independent cause, or the Dissenting interest." If the Independent system is right, every possible effort should be made, every nerve should be strained, to make every saint an Independent. But can this be done scripturally? Can it (we may say to the true Christian) be done *conscientiously*? Again, if the union of Christians is desirable, can prayer for union be honest, when in our hearts there is this reservation? "Let God be glorified in any other way, only let not my system be disturbed. Demolish every other barrier, but spare the Independent cause." It was needful to state thus much, lest any reader should say, "Your objections to the Independent system are altogether groundless."

The principles recommended by the writer are not only,

as he trusts has in some degree been shown, scriptural in themselves, but such as free the mind from much disquiet and embarrassment. It is not so much that certain questions are answered in a different manner, as that we are not troubled with them at all. Instead of perplexing ourselves with the thought, Which is the best sect? it is better to give up sects altogether. Instead of contending for civil (i. e. *worldly*) rights on professedly religious grounds, if influence, secular advantage, power, &c. are claimed by others, let them take them. A saint may say, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself." His controversy with Babylon, and every Babylonish system, will be not *that there are not* God's children within them. but *that there are*. He has no wish to interfere with, nor even to improve those arrangements that are merely of the world.

In conclusion, the writer would make a few remarks on that which is far more agreeable,—the positive advantage and comfort of meeting simply in the name of the Lord. The privileges of the saints are not negative. A mere string of prohibitions—touch not, taste not, handle not—is utterly unworthy the state of sonship. And the very principle which we have advocated throughout has been, that when a sinner is converted and adopted into God's family, everything about him, his thoughts, words and actions should savour of the blessed spirit of adoption. And surely if this is true at all, it is true in regard to social worship. And now look at the practical effects of those errors which we have ventured to condemn. Not only is it a remarkable fact, that there is so much dissatisfaction, which, as was stated at the commencement, was the circumstance that drew forth this tract; but, we may ask, Is Ryde more or less worldly than it was seven years ago? Are dress and covetousness, and other forms of worldliness, discountenanced not only by the precept of teachers, but by the example of professors? Are saints attracted to Ryde from a distance, as to a field which the Lord has blessed; or, on the contrary, have not visitors been repelled more by the religious state of the place, than by the late alarm of fever? If these things are so, it is well worth Chris-

tians' while to consider *why* they are so ; and if they care, as real Christians *must* care, about the removal of the evil, to pray first that they may have light to see the way in which the Lord requires them to walk ; and, in the next place, that they may have courage and strength to follow, at whatever cost, and whithersoever the Lord may lead.

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\* \* It was only a few hours after this tract had been sent to the press that the writer heard of the event that has produced so much excitement in Ryde. While that event has diminished the local propriety of some of the remarks, it has stamped on others a fearful emphasis.

However the circumstances which more immediately led to this publication may have varied, the principles maintained in it, if true, are eternal. And while *Puseyism* is abroad in other parts of the country, there is still too much reason to protest against it. One or two additional remarks will suffice.

It will be evident, that no allusion whatever is made in the tract to the present proprietor of St. James's Chapel, whose arrival in Ryde, there is reason to believe, may be attended with much blessing. The event itself needs little comment. The cockatrice' egg of Puseyism has been hatched, and out of it has come the fiery flying serpent of Popery. And doubtless, this circumstance, bad as it is, has elicited much good feeling in Ryde. There is much genuine grief, many "unsuborned tears," sorrow of heart among true Christians for the fall of one whom they had once reason to love as their pastor and their friend. But this is not the only feeling in Ryde. *There are strong reasons for believing that several persons regret not the conversion of Mr. Sibthorp to Popery, so much as that he did not (without leaving Ryde,) step into that communion at once, on a level with which he had so long stood, and up to which he had so nearly brought them.* This is not said in order to encourage Papists, but to warn Protestants.







