

**THE PRESENT A
RELIGIOUS CRISIS.
CHURCH REFORM**

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The present a religious crisis. Church reform by Edward Duncombe

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EDWARD DUNCOMBE

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"Those things which artful men conceal"
"Are here engrav'd with pen of steel"
"By Conscience, that impartial scribe;"
"Whose honest palm disdains a bribe."

CONVOCATION—Against the revival of.

PLURALITIES AND SINECURES—Reply to the Bishop of London's Defence of.

MARRIAGE—In favour of equality of all Sects in respect of.

REGISTRATION—A branch of civil Government, impertinent to a Christian Ministry.

CHURCH RATES—Against the Commutation, and in favour of the Abolition of: with an Appeal to the Rev. H. J. Ross, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and author of a Sermon, "*Christians the Light of the World*;" and other matter connected with Church Rates.

THE UNIVERSITIES—In favour of the admission of Dissenters to.

THE-HOUSE OF LORDS—Against the removal of the Bishops from.—Pro's and Con's from the new Poor Law Bill.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD DUNCOMBE, M. A.

(Of Brasenose College, Oxford.)

RECTOR OF NEWTON-KYME, YORKSHIRE.

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FRIENDS OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP,

BY THEIR OBEДИENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



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ADDRESS TO CHRISTIANS.

"Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, &c."—*James*, i. 25, 26.

"So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."—*James*, ii. 12.

IMMEDIATELY upon the dismissal of the late ministry, and before the final appointment of their successors, an appeal to the PROTESTANTS of these kingdoms appeared in several of the public newspapers. Never having seen or heard any disclaimer of this "*Letter*," on the part of Lord Kenyon whose signature it bore, I might consider myself justified in at once concluding that his lordship is the author of it: but as there are many to whose judgement it seems to have emanated from the spirit of exultation and triumph, rather than from any pure desire to promote more general pacification and unity—as it appears to myself an act tending rather to endanger than to secure the success of that party whose interests it was doubtlessly intended to serve, I hesitate to leave my own vindication too positively to his lordship: I prefer to say, IF Lord Kenyon is the individual who wrote that Letter, because he felt conscientiously persuaded in his own mind that the present is A RELIGIOUS CRISIS, I may THEN fearlessly consent to regard "THE CRISIS" in the same light: no High-Church lash can reach to chastise me for so doing without first lapping round his lordship: and from reformers I have nothing to fear, as their universal maxim is to extract the honey of counsel,

and to leave to other refiners the comb. Fellow-Christians, I ask your attention to the following pages, at a moment not of excitement, but when it is probable that the calm will succeed the storm,—when it is hoped that, by Divine disposing, if not as a natural effect of an evident cause, the public mind diseased, wearied, and intoxicated as it has been by political surfeiting, consequent upon a general election, may now welcome a little simple food, and evince a disposition to “*let its moderation be known unto men.*” With this hope and to this end, I offer you the following Address in defence and furtherance of reform on Christian principles. The Letter, alluded to, was addressed to PROTESTANTS; I address mine to CHRISTIANS; I point out the distinction to suggest the reason. A person may be a PROTESTANT, and yet fall far short of being altogether “*a Christian.*” For “*the works of the flesh are manifest * * * hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders.*” * Now a man may pass among us as a Protestant, whose vision is still obscured by carnal mindedness, who is dead while he liveth, whose spirit is dyed in these sources of blood. But “*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,*

* “*Murders.*”

Offend whom it may, I am not careful to have to answer them for saying, that I regard the use of the sword, in collecting tithes, so long as justice is denied to the people of Ireland, and the Established Protestant Church unreformed, as contrary to Christianity. Whoever is ashamed to confess the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and truth, is not worthy of the name of Christian minister.—A starving and unemployed people,—neglected poor, and non-resident landlords,—Catholic fury, and Protestant infatuation.—All can see, who can wonder when national indignation follows such ungodly misrule? Let JUSTICE be done: Catholics will recognize her features, and their obligations as well as we Protestants: so long as it is withheld, be the prime minister whom he may, so long shall I for one exclaim, not only “*when will Ephraim cease to envy Judah,* but also *when will Judah cease to vex Ephraim?*”

“long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Does Protestantism necessarily produce this fruit? Does our government exhibit and bring forth this fruit in Ireland? I leave the proof of this to Lord Kenyon, or any who are enterprising enough to attempt it; “*he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly.*” If we are verily and indeed Christians, “*if we live in the Spirit let us walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*” It shall be my endeavour to maintain this spirit while I seek to serve “*the strong meat of the word,*” the meat of Christian Principles to all who will become my guests. I offer it to the public ungarished and undisguised; and if by chance its appearance or taste may not exactly please the palate of epicurean critics, I will at least take care that it shall be in the power of no one to object to its want of plainness: still less to condemn it as measured out in partiality to any man or set of men in particular. Upon all matters and measures involving religious principles, it behoves us to “*speak out,*” to be “*no respecters of persons:*” and as no man can serve two masters, as “*the servant of the Lord shall prosper,*” let us shew ourselves *not so much Protestants, as Christians,* “*seeking first the kingdom of God,*” confident in the promise that “*all other things shall follow after.*” There are ecclesiastical and religious as well as secular and civil politics: to the former I confine my pen, and I publish my opinions, not because I think them better than any which others can form, but because, “*as there is a way which seemeth right to a man but the end thereof is death,*” we may all help each other to weed out that which is wild, to propagate in its stead that which is sweet: because in the hands of those who desire only

improvement, even the failures of the weak are capable of ministering strength to the fallible. Let us begin with the consideration of subjects, on which few observations suffice.

First, as to THE REVIVAL OF CONVOCATION. It has ever hitherto been a matter of considerable doubt to me whether this revival would be to the advantage and edification even of the clergy themselves; I have always suspected that those who advocate it are only seeking to erect a stage for the exhibition of their own mountebank opinions and religion, to the great disgust and annoyance of all sensible spectators. But it may be asked of me "Who made thee a judge in this matter?" I confess my arrogance and incompetency. I refer my reader to far better authority. Let any one read "*Certain Letters,*" by L. S. E. which the Bishop of London has selected for recommendation to his Clergy, out of all modern publications—Let him then pursue his studies by perusing "*Speeches, &c. delivered at the Meeting of the Clergy held at Liversedge, on the 15th of August, 1834, &c. Rivingtons:*" he will then perhaps be better qualified than I am to judge of the observation which I copy from a most forcible article in the "*British Critic,*" (No. xxxiii. page 221.) on "*Extremes in Religion.*"—"As to restoring the Convocation, the strongest argument against any such attempt, is the possible intrusion of such men as Mr. Gathercole; and the tumult and uproar of which they would make it the stage."

Let us proceed to PLURALITIES, NON-RESIDENCE, and SINECURES. On these subjects I have not now to make known my objection to friends, or I may add to enemies, who honour me with their antipathies as a Church Reformer.

I therefore say no more here against their existence, than what may serve to show a fallacy in the

Bishop of London's opinion; a fallacy which being found in "A Charge to his Clergy, July, 1834," (since published,) I may justly say amounts to *an error of doctrine*. The Bishop says, "*Pluralities are a legacy which we inherited from the papal dominion.*" (page 21) what, I ask, has this to do with their continuance? Is John at liberty to rob Paul, because Peter set him the example? I defy the Bishop of London to defend by Scripture the position he has now taken up regarding pluralities. His lordship goes on to say, "*their continuance was necessary,*" &c. What? has not his lordship (page 19) proclaimed them "*wrong in principle?*" Have they not for centuries been deprecated as "*evils?*" What then enjoineth St. Paul, "*ABHOR that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.*" If they are *evil*, if they are "*wrong in principle,*" and I rejoice to have AT LAST Dr. Blomfield's assent to this truth, then to defend their continuance in the past is to make EXPEDIENCY the first rule, and THE LEADING PRINCIPLE—it is to say, "I am tempted of God"—it is to say, *that we may do evil that good may come*. Is this Scripture doctrine? Dr. Blomfield is not surely enlisted under the banners of predestination to sin; I write boldly as on a point of doctrine I ought to write—I serve but one Master, even Christ the Lord; "*though it must needs be that offences come, yet woe unto him by whom they come.*" Pluralities may be "*enticing,*" men, laity, and bishops, may vote them profitable: but "*the rich man fadeth away in his ways:*" *as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.* "*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But EVERY MAN IS TEMPTED WHEN HE IS DRAWN AWAY OF HIS OWN LUST, AND ENTICED.*" (James, ch. i.) That which is "*evil,*" that