LECTURES ON PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY

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Lectures on Protestant Nonconformity by W. Turner

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W. TURNER

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ON

PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY.

By W. TURNER, Jun., M. A.

Prove all things;—hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. v. 20.

HALIFAX:
E. WALKER AND SON, AND W. BIRTWHISTLE.
R. HUNTER, LONDON.

1832.

PREFACE.

The following Lectures were originally delivered at the Monthly Meetings of Subscribers to a Fellowship Fund established in the Congregation with which the Author has the happiness to be connected. They were afterwards inserted in the Christian Reformer, and are now collected into a distinct form with some alterations and considerable additions. It appeared to him that publications of this nature, calculated from time to time to draw the attention of Dissenters, and particularly of Unitarian Dissenters to the grounds and reasons of their separation from the Church, are on many accounts desirable; to counteract the influence of worldly motives to conformity,—to diffuse a just sense of the value of the true principles of religious liberty,—to communicate some

information, and excite a curiosity for more, on the history and present state of the question between the advocates and the opponents of our Ecclesiastical Establishment. If this little work should be found to have any tendency to promote these objects, to confirm the wavering, to enlighten the ill-informed, to animate all parties with a due regard for their character and principles as Protestant Dissenters, to impress them with a conviction of the inconsistency and danger of outward conformity to a church whose doctrines discipline and worship they dissapprove, the Author's wishes on its behalf will be fully answered.

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LECTURE I.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

In a discourse delivered on the occasion of my first entrance on the pastoral office among you, when explaining my views of the public duties incumbent on the minister of a Dissenting congregation, the following remarks were introduced;—

"There is one peculiar character which may naturally be expected in some degree to distinguish the public discourses of our preachers. It becomes us not to overlook the relation in which we stand to the institutions and establishments of the state. Your minister will not forget that he is himself a PROTESTANT DISSENTER, and that he speaks to

those who partake with him in that honourable character. It is one on which, for many reasons, he will feel it to be his duty occasionally to enlarge. There is nothing to be gained by assembling in a meeting-house rather than in a church, but often much loss incurred,—great additional expense, diminished rank in society, and the suspicion or less favourable opinion of many with whom we should be glad to be permitted to live on terms of confidence and friendship. When called upon to make such sacrifices as these, it is important for us to be well satisfied that we are making them in a cause which is not unworthy of them. On this account, among others, it appears to be a part of the duty of a Dissenting minister to take care that his hearers are well informed on the grounds and reasons of their separation, and duly instructed in those great principles of religious liberty, of the right and duty of free inquiry in matters of faith, which are the basis of all rational and consistent dissent. I cannot but think that this subject has not been so much attended to among us as its importance deserves. If our youth are allowed to grow up without being furnished with any better reason for their religious profession than that their parents were dissenters, we cannot be much surprised if worldly interest in various forms, family connexions or the influence of fashion, speedily seduce them from a cause the merits of which they have not been enabled to appreciate. It is expedient too that we should know, not only what we ourselves are, and why we are so, but who