

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE BILL NOW
BEFORE PARLIAMENT FOR
REGULATING THE MARRIAGES OF
DISSENTERS WHO THE DOCTRINE
OF THE TRINITY, PP. 5-72**

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Observations on the bill now before parliament for regulating the marriages of dissenters who the doctrine of the trinity, pp. 5-72 by Philip Le Geyt

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PHILIP LE GEYT

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5 A. 1827.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

BILL NOW BEFORE PARLIAMENT,

FOR REGULATING THE

Marriages of Dissenters,

WHO DENY THE

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

BY THE REV. PHILIP LE GEYT,
VICAR OF MARDEN, KENT;

*And Author of "Thoughts on the Co-operation of the Laity with the
Ministry in Support of religious Institutions," &c.*

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1827.
577.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. ROBERT PEEL,

M.P. FOR OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

SIR,

THE object of the following observations is, to invite all sincere Members of our Church Establishment to a serious consideration of the principle and tendency of the Bill now pending in Parliament, for making an alteration in the Marriage Law in favour of certain classes of Dissenters, who deny the holy Doctrine of the Trinity. The nature and importance of the subject will, I trust, induce you to pardon my presumption, in using the influence of your name for the furtherance of my wishes. Under an humble but full conviction, that the observations are in strict accordance with the true spirit of our National Church, and knowing

that they are written with all due consideration towards those who unhappily dissent from us, I entertain much hope that they will meet with the approbation of the Members of the Establishment.

To you, Sir, as the watchful and unwearied Champion of the Institutions of the country in Church and State, I take the liberty of dedicating them, though without permission; and craving for them your notice and protection, I have the honour to subscribe myself, with the greatest respect,

Your most obedient humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

OBSERVATIONS,

&c.

THE feelings of the English nation are, as they ought to be, universally in favour of liberty of conscience in matters of religion: and in offering the following observations to the public on the subject of the proposed alteration of the Marriage Law for the relief of certain Dissenters, "who deny the doctrine of the Trinity," I do conscientiously declare, that they are made in a sincere spirit of toleration towards all who differ from us, although they are confessedly prompted by deep anxiety for the support of the doctrines, interests, and welfare of the Church of which I am a minister. In cases only, where the interests of the state are immediately involved, would I render a participation in our Church Services an incumbent qualification, or a subscription to the Creed of the National Church necessary. And I am decidedly of opinion, that to force persons, "who deny the doctrine of the Tri-

nity," to enter our churches, for the purpose of solemnizing marriage, and thus to press upon them doctrines at which they scoff, is a species of mockery, as repugnant to true religion, as it is revolting to all who are parties to the transaction. I therefore most entirely admit the principle, that in points wherein the duties and ties of social life are concerned, and where for their attainment the law imposes any such necessity, an amendment should be made, and no man's conscience be violated. His religious creed is a matter of private concern between himself and his Maker. That such a spirit pervades the Legislature, that it is the spirit of every sincere and reflecting member of the Establishment, cannot be doubted. But liberty of conscience to the Dissenter must go hand in hand with security to the Church; neither should trench unnecessarily on the other; and this is the ground which Churchmen would wish to see attained, and with which Dissenters ought to be content. Those, therefore, who are desirous of the establishment and continuance of such equipoise, will learn with surprise and regret that a Bill now pending in Parliament, and containing various enactments manifestly inconsistent with the doctrines, and dangerous to the discipline of our national Church, has been favourably re-

ceived by the *Legislature*. Viewing the provisions of this Bill ; comparing its tendency with the numberless religious schisms of the day ; combining it with the attempts which Dissenters are continually making to disparage the Established Church ; and more especially connecting it with a certain petition in favour of the Bill, presented the last session to both houses of Parliament, by a sect styling themselves " Free-thinking Christians," (and to which I shall presently call the reader's attention), a more than ordinary apprehension, on the part of the Church, may be expected ; lest, through the medium of this Bill, a deep and lasting injury be inflicted on her ; lest, in the general opinion of the people, the holy offices of the Church be deteriorated, its ministers degraded, faith in its fundamental doctrines weakened in the minds of its members ; and thus the vital interests of the Church be violated and undermined.

That a regular system of attack has for years been meditated and acted upon, by various sects of Dissenters, against the established Church of this country is the theme of universal remark among Churchmen, as well as of much triumph among sectarists. This is so apparent, that no person in any way cognizant of what has passed and is now passing around us, unless he be wil-

fully blind, can be ignorant of it. A different impression may thereby have been made on different minds, according to the various degrees of their sensibility. Some may have thought the matter too weak to create any alarm; others, on the contrary, have viewed it as pregnant with the most serious consequences; and all, I believe, who are feelingly alive to the blessings of our Constitution in Church and State, foresee the danger, if the growing system of undermining and destroying the Church be suffered to arrive at maturity, when the powers of the evil will be fully developed, and not easily defeated. There are two formidable masked batteries erected, and now in full play against our Church Establishment. They carry inscribed on their banners "Toleration" and "Liberality." These are the false banners under which our enemies fight, and against which we must protect ourselves. Our enemies have chosen these colours, because they are the distinguishing features of our own Church. It is no uncommon feint in military warfare for the enemy to assume the adversary's colours; to adopt the character and appearance of those whom it is his object "to sink, burn, and destroy:" it deceives you; it lulls your suspicions; it dissipates alarm, and induces you to receive him with open arms, until your dis-