

A Churchman's Politics in Disturbed Times, by Frederick
William Faber. (1840).

A

CHURCHMAN'S POLITICS

IN

DISTURBED TIMES:

A SERMON.

BY THE REV.

FREDERICK W. FABER, M.A.
FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Wisdom and knowledge shall
be the stability of thy
times.—ISAIAH. iii. 15.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. G. F. & J. RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,
AT WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1840.

Price Sixpence.

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EVERY nation under the sun contains within itself two societies, and two only—the world, as Holy Scripture calls it, and the Church: and two faiths, and two only—the faith of Baal, and the faith of Christ. It is difficult to bring this home to ourselves in these times; and yet, in the bringing it home to ourselves in little things, almost the whole of practical religion consists. It is difficult, educated as most of us have been, to discover these two societies; to trace the faint outlines which bound them; to feel with keen sense of touch the invisible fence? which divide the one off from the other; to detect the points where the one finally melts away and fades into the other; or to estimate the disorder and misrule which have arisen from the ties and mutual subjections of these societies to each other, in things where such ties and subjections ought not to be. The worshippers of Baal and of Christ are in one throng, travelling along the same road, and too much minding the same things. The world and the Church are entangled together; and religious living, difficult at all seasons, is now ten times more difficult from the entanglement. One advantage, however, springs out of this otherwise unhappy state of things. They, who are really and honestly striving after heaven, are forced to carry out their religion into things, and seasons, and places, where otherwise perhaps it would not have come. It strikes at the root of the notion that religion is a separate thing of itself, instead of being, as it is, simply the attitude into which a good man throws himself to do every thing, the natural shape which all his actions take, as naturally as the cloud takes shapes from the wind, which is a type of the Spirit. Thus the very confused state of the

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world brings it about that in these days a man's politics and literature are not, if he be a thinking man, mere views or theories, constructed without fear or responsibility, and upon the shortest notice, views or theories, which he can hold or not hold, and yet be all the while as good or as bad a man as ever. They are parts of his practical religion: if he moves, they move; if they move, he moves; the whole man moves together. There are still men left here and there, in some places, whose politics and literature, are views, theories, and mere intellectual systems, But the time is most happily gone by when such men can be influential. The state of things, whether out in the open and active world, or among the retired and deeply practical thinkers of mankind, has got beyond them. They are left upon the shore, and the stream can return no more to such unrealities yet awhile. Disease has spread too widely among us, and is already too near the very fountains of our health and stability, for our imaginations to be successfully acted on by the coloured remedies of such men as these.

Neither on the other hand—and this too we owe to our present difficulties—can good and earnest men betake themselves, each in his little way and proper place, to the work of healing, by endeavouring to bring back the colour and the blood into systems or states of things, which, though beautiful in death, or skilfully embalmed, have yet been long since borne out to burial. They may borrow from chivalry, or the romantic days of English honour and loyalty, their stern enthusiasm, deep stedfastness, and calmest fidelity; these may serve them well for their present toil; but their way of working and the things for which they work, cannot and must not be the same. In a word, neither the churches nor the empires of the middle ages are to be rebuilt, however lovely many things about them were, nor the forms of that warlike Christianity to be wished back again in place of the better forms of a more primitive pattern. They were forms which primitive truths put on, and

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in which they then saved the world: forms which were real for awhile. And the present state of things must surely teach the ardent and the hopeful disciples of old times, that it is the primitive truths for which they have to strive, and not to do battle for the chivalrous, middle-age accessories of them, however gorgeous or picturesque.

Now of course it is a great thing in a country which, for whatever reason, is supposed to be free—that is, to be slave to none but its own passion, selfishness, or strange proneness to self-praise—that politics should be a matter of practical religion. It is a great thing among a people whose constitution is such as to allow, for the sake of other advantages, of excitement, party fierceness, perilous freedom of tongue, and divers malignant and unchristian feelings, that all, but especially the poor and unlearned, should have something above and beyond their opinions to guide, to inform, and to steady them, in the exercise of their political duties.

Let us dwell then on this matter more at length. We must have long seen the growing bewilderment of all simple men, in the attempt to arrange, if we may thus speak, their Christianity so as to meet the continual cases of conscience, arising out of the now manifold duties belonging to that station of life in which it has pleased God's Providence to place them: duties to the world and to the Church, which are now beginning even in common life to interfere with and intersect one another. In political questions it cannot have escaped us at this day, in the midst of political disturbances, not arising here and there only from present pressure of hardship, but striking root all over, and winning to themselves a kind of unity, through theories and principles utterly opposed to the Bible,—when we are made to feel that there is some meaning in our prayer, “from all sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion, good Lord deliver us”—it cannot have escaped us how necessary it is for all of us, poor and rich, ignorant and learned, and

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the poor rather than the rich, the ignorant rather than the learned, to set clearly before ourselves the few plain rules of Holy Scripture about political rights and duties. Neither let any one say this is not a meet subject to be spoken of in church. It is the meetest of all subjects to be spoken of in church now—for it is great part of our practical religion, and in England it is so seldom that it is spoken of with quietness, that it is well it should be spoken of in church, where God is, and, as before Him, with gentleness and awe, not with insignificant boastings about rights, not with childish vauntings about English greatness, but with deep, severe, broken-hearted self-abasement.

We are living in a proud and very exclusively intellectual age. We make knowledge and intellect the test and standard of all excellence. We are so much accustomed to it, that we propose no better remedy for the sufferings and troubles of the poor but more knowledge, more intelligence, more secular education; and the rich do not mean to mock the poor when they propose it, and the poor have not discovered yet that it is after all a mockery; a cruel falsehood at which they will one day be fearfully indignant, indignant even to sin and tumult. Let us begin, however, by bearing this in mind, that Scripture no where recognizes any rights as belonging to any man, except those which we have in right of our baptism, which made us members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. It is well to recollect this. Scripture says no where that any man has any right to anything but his life. This does away with many difficulties: for example, we know that many of the early Christians were slaves, even under Christian emperors, up to Justinian's day, and yet, that in the long run, Christianity went far to abolish slavery. Now Scripture condemns man-stealing, but it is so far from recognizing any right of slaves to be free, that it gives them rules for their behaviour, and enjoins obedience to the unthankful and cruel, giving sanctity to that obedience by

coupling it with the obedience of the Incarnate Son Himself. Christianity does many things for men in the long run which it would be actual sin for them to attempt or dream of for themselves. In whatever rank or state of life Christ calls us, in that it tells us to abide. It seems to fear change, and nothing but change. "As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk; and so ordain I in all Churches."¹ The Gospel indeed is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds; but it does so either by God's arm or through men's sins: on its disciples it enjoins quietness and obedience. The obedience of saints never pulls down strong holds visibly or with noise. Scripture makes no exception to their obedience. It contemplates hard cases of bad kings or graceless masters, and straightway enjoins the same conscientious submission to them also, where prior duty to God is not concerned. It no where recognizes any right to disobey—any right, in the most profane language of some, to rise in insurrection. Men have no rights as men, so far as the Bible confers them: what rights they have they have as Christians, and those are not of any of the four earthly kingdoms, but of that new monarchy which Daniel saw of old,² for whose perfect stablishing we have so long been impatiently waiting, and whose foundation-stones are even now settling down on earth from heaven. The world builds up earthly strongholds, world-wisdoms, literatures, governments: Christianity pulls them down again. It treads every thing under foot as it goes. It has done so all along. We think much of wise men, learned men, clever men: nay, we make gods of them, and images of their wisdom. Scripture on the other hand never mentions them except as likely to oppose the Gospel; and then it speaks of them in quiet words of slight and scorn. It recognizes all sorts of distinctions, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, of

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 17.

² Dan. vii.

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wealth and blood, and the like. It no where recognizes any distinction between clever men and men less gifted. It gives many and minute rules for the guidance of our bodies and souls, our passions and appetites, and affections. It gives none for the guidance of our intellect. It speaks of many sorts of talents, wealth, time, and knowledge of the truth: it no where specifies that to which we have almost exclusively assigned the name of *talent*. It is quite mysteriously silent about intellectual gifts, and the strange gulfs they make between man and man, country and country, nay, even between church and church. It seldom alludes to wisdom, except to tell us that the foolishness of God is wiser than it: nay, it scarcely seems in any place to allude to the existence of intellect at all, as a distinct part of our being. Surely, there is deep meaning in this silence, a silence almost inexplicable to our modern habits of thought.

Now let us bear these things in mind: and more than this. Most of us, in times of national rejoicing or other public excitements, have doubtless formed part of the great crowds usual on such occasions. We may have seen the way in which others have been affected by them, and experienced their wonderful influence upon ourselves; how they transport people beyond themselves, make them insensible to time, to pain, to weariness, to inconvenience of many sorts. It is a kind of drunkenness. The senses report to us untruly of what is done before our eyes or said within our hearing. Without any attempt to deceive or even any conscious exaggeration, it is almost impossible from any number of witnesses to ascertain correctly what has been done or said in a crowd. Thought has been almost extinguished. The crowd has acted as one man, a man beside himself, swayed and set in wild motion by evil impulses not from himself, and beyond his control. Now let us bear in mind that these large masses and multitudes of men—which are like persons possessed, and whose limbs

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move one way when they would have them move another—are made up of single, solitary souls: each to be saved separately and by itself; each to be condemned separately and by itself; each with its own particular weight of sin, its own repentances, its own opportunities of grace, its own circle of sorrows, cares, fears, joys, affections, its own Christian distinctness; each having to stand by itself at the judgment-seat of Christ, lonely, unexcited, uncheered by shouts, unsheltered by a crowd; as answerable for all the sins committed when it ran with a multitude to do evil, as a drunken man is answerable for murder. This is the Christian view of large meetings of men. Let us think of this and beware.

We are thrown upon unsteady times, times made unsteady by feverish choosing, and trying and rejecting all manner of experiments after stability, full of blind movement, of change, of uncertainty, of discontentment. Yet, if we may say so reverently in His house to whom the future belongeth, full, yea pregnant with great hopes to be won through great strifes. Rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant, are all unsettled. They do not join well together. They fancy there is some difference or other between them about which they must quarrel. They do not feel, as to be safe they must feel, one bond of union, one tie of brotherly kindness remaining amongst them, keeping them united and making them happy. Pride of wealth is greater than pride of blood, and less to be endured: and pride of knowledge throws a still more heartless barrier between itself and the hewers of wood and drawers of water, who are yet members of Christ, and are spirits precious to Him Who made them. Amongst the poor there is a base pride that feels almost offence against such as give them alms, and an envy of those who, scarcely above them in political rights, are unequally removed in wealth and outward happiness: and withal a yearning for community of heart and kindliness of demeanour, which the cold, stiff,

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systematic arrangements of modern charity are little likely to supply. On the other hand, among the rich there surely is a very wrong lightness of speech, a light manner of behaving, a careless and rude neglect of form, an indifferent and slighting treatment of inferiors in little things, which can spring only from a miserable coldness or a wicked levity of heart, and which, if traditions are true, was not the old English character. Now, what is the remedy for all this? It is not to be found in political wisdom, in political rights, in political tumult, in noise, and disturbance, and great sin. This cannot better our condition; this cannot increase our happiness; this cannot be the stability of our times. It is not to be found in wealth, in prosperity, in great advancements, in comforts, in luxuries, in the greatness of our nation. This cannot be the stability of our times.

The remedy can alone be found in some strong chain, not of earthly forging, which shall bind the rich and poor, the noble and the cottager, the scholar and the simple one, into one whole firm body, each leaning on each, each supporting each, each loving each; and that bond neither is nor can be other than “the one Body, and the one Spirit, the one hope, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in us all.”³ It is only in the Church of God on earth that a people can be at one together, as in a city that is at unity with itself. Thus, then, men who deeply and sincerely labour for the good of their country, and for the happiness of the poor, must strive mainly after one thing—to make the Church of Christ felt every where throughout the land, to bring it home to all, to dig deep among the people, and lay the foundations of it there. The Church is not to be reduced, as some would fain make out, to a cold, inactive abstraction, to a generally diffused system of religion, to a school of

³ Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

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theology, to a purifying literature. It is an active, living, positive institution, with external ordinances and authoritative ritual, and a succession of teachers, and proper mysteries of its own. It is visible, and visibly represents the Saviour. It is a person, and has offices like a person, the same offices its Master had on earth—to teach, to feed, to judge, to punish, to heal, to save: and all these it has, because it is not by itself, but is His body, Who is both God and Man. So long as the world lasts, there must be rich and poor; so long as the moon endureth, there must be high and low. These are God's ways, His rules and orders, and mysterious ministry of the world. But, if these earthly ranks and distinctions seem a bar to our all feeling together, and for each other, then in the Church of Christ, and within hearing of the everlasting Gospel, there are no differences, no bars, no hindrances to love. All are Christ's, because Christ died for all. All have a high and most surpassing dignity as sons of God, and heirs of heaven. All have a wonderful secret life hidden with Christ in God. There are the same rich sacraments for all.

Thus, then, while we feel that we are truly living in most worldly and unsteady times, we have a holy place where we may take sweet refuge from our own unsteadiness; a place of prayer, and praise, and sacraments, and Gospel sounds. The world, indeed, is waxing stronger every day. Its pride rises with its riches; and with its pride, its lust, and wantonness, and tyranny. But, though the whole wide earth, and its thick, populous multitudes, bore down ever so furiously, they cannot snap one of the slightest links of that holy chain which binds all Christian hearts together. Hearts so bound are safe. Hearts not so bound are already well nigh lost and perished. The nation not so bound together hath almost ceased to be a nation now.

Fifty years ago, the great mass of people in country towns and villages were but very little and indirectly

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influenced by the government of the country. Men came into power, and went out of it, whose names they scarcely knew, or had no interest in. Government, politics, and the like, were things far off from them: words they had little knowledge of. Great changes took place, which changed not the condition of the poor; great improvements were made, which were no improvements to the poor; great glory was gained, which shed no sunshine round the poor man's hearth; great happiness was earned, which made the poor no happier. In one respect, then, they were blessed in this their quiet lot,—they had less to distract them from the saving of their souls. Yet was it not a good lot, but altogether most undesirable, most unfortunate in every way. It is not to be regretted now. To dream of recalling it were not only the vainest of all dreams, but a sort of treason to our best hopes and struggles. It was an unhealthy slumber, from which the nation rose unrefreshed. It was a dead, low, stagnant time, poorly animated now and then with a miserable infidel activity. It was the hard winter of all high principles in Church and State; a season of corrupt statesmen, of soft-living churchmen, and of an impure people. The land was not even lying fallow for the sake of after crops; but its moisture and nourishment were eaten out by tares and trailing weeds, and poisonous herbs. Many a generation must be sown, and come to ear, and be gathered into the barns, before the fields can bring forth as, by God's blessing, they brought forth of yore. It were treason to wish such a state back again.

But now we have different evils to meet. All things are altered; all things turned the other way. There is scarcely a poor man in the land who does not know the names and somewhat of the characters of men in power, who does not either like or dislike them, who does not call them strange, worldly-sounding names he does not know the meaning of, who does not feel for sorrow or for joy the changes, the constant changes of the country, as though

they had been changes in the beating of his own living heart. Yet still our eyes see no further than they did. Most men see no further than themselves. So that with all this new knowledge, which has been given us, we have got no new happiness; rather have lost somewhat of our old happiness, by losing all our quietness, which, though not happiness, is most near of kin unto it. Whatever else they may be—and it is useless giving them hard names unless we strive to amend them by amending ourselves—ours are not happy times. They have driven us from those abodes of quiet hearts, “where self-disturbance hath no place.” They have made us all to toss upon unquiet thoughts, and to be restless. Every body wishes for a change; no two persons wish for the same change; and yet all changes cannot be made: and who is to be heard first? We all feel, except some few, perhaps, who have become gross-hearted from wealth and easy self-indulgence, that we are in a very imperfect and undesirable condition; and that it certainly will not be a lasting one, whether that which follows be better or worse, which God only knoweth. Men feel, especially if they are poor and humble in life, that they are not happy; they feel that they are not satisfied; they feel that they are capable of being far higher, and nobler, and happier than they are, in some other state of things. So it seems it is only the present state of things which keeps them back from their natural rights of being free, and happy, and noble. Therefore they must destroy all they have now, throw it over the deep sea, and begin afresh, and see what they can gain.

Thus there have been hundreds of plans for beginning afresh, hundreds of human happinesses to make us happy. They have been tried not in England only, but the world over. They have been Christian, half-Christian, un-Christian. There is nothing which has not been tried. Some have been quite independent of God; some less bold, but not a whit less profane, have borrowed from His holy Word

what they liked best, have praised it, patronised it, set about improving it, and relieving it of its once useful but worn-out notions, alien to modern states and churches. But the end of all has been the same,—a brief excitement, and more unhappiness than ever. All they have done has been to lead us further away from the one only remedy, the one only wisdom, the one only stability of our times.

At this day rumours, and gatherings, and tumults, have brought the question nearer home, and made it yet more practical. Many projects, of more or less sagacity and forethought, have been put out by anxious, thinking men.

All seem to have agreed that our state is deeply diseased; and that it would be imposture only that would venture to predict immediate recovery, or prescribe speedy remedies. Local changes, and the power of government, and the existing laws, can alone keep down the present stragglings, and meet the clamours as they rise. But after all that has been said, the processes which are to heal us in the long run, the remedies in which are bound up hope, deliverance, and safety for the future, gather themselves, in the ablest scheme which has been proposed, into two—emigration and *secular* education. The great results in a political way of these measures, carried out on a very vast scale, would probably be far short of what is expected of them. But that is not the question here. To us Churchmen it is quite clear they are most insufficient. The ground on which we stand, and the truths by which we live, force this conviction upon us. Most of our present evil comes of want of unity, of our not having centres of unity, lawful, tried, strong, pure, ready at our hands. The evil has begun to work out in irregular unions, irregular seekings after unity, irregular and very unchristian ways of making great collections of souls feel and act as one soul. We, as Churchmen, of course believe the Church to be a centre of unity, orderly, and appointed of heaven. We, as Churchmen, say, that the history of many centuries plainly

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shows that nothing on earth beside the Church can be a centre of unity, truly and lastingly, whether it be government, or literature, or what else soever. None of these things have ever made even a show of being centres of unity, except in proportion as they had anchored themselves alongside, and come in contact with the Church. Virtue sometimes went out of her into them: but sooner or later they let it escape. They were not framed for retaining it, or being its home. As Churchmen, then, without disparaging either of them as wise or politic measures, we should probably think of emigration and education in some such way as this,—that to do good they must be carried out not on secular, but on Church principles, and that even thus they are, and must be, quite inadequate to our present straits.

To propose emigration as a remedy, implies a belief that a too abounding population is in great measure the cause of our distress, which is not a deep, and surely is an irreligious view of the case. It is much more the unequal distribution of the population, than the pressure of its arithmetical weight, which is the inevitable misfortune. The congregating of multitudes upon particular districts, to an extent which puts them almost beyond the reach of religious civilization, causes temporary and, in some sense, fictitious distresses according to the variations of trade, and keeps up in many ways a state of thirsty excitement, which makes it difficult for ordinary fears or hopes to assail them or bring them under. But what if we do keep throwing off swarm after swarm upon the continents of the New World? Are we, as heretofore, to our everlasting shame, and, doubtless, one day to our own deserved ingloriousness and discomfort, to colonize as heathen, and not as Christians? Are we to people fair portions of God's earth, as we have done, almost without the Gospel, and so leave our children's children to become under other suns little better than wealthy, powerful, pagans? Are we to make

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emigration a compulsory measure, which seems necessary in order to unburden the country, more in one place and less in another, so as to distribute the benefit of such a measure, as we want? Will mere local pressure drive people to emigrate voluntarily where it would be wanted? Would not compulsory emigration be dangerous politically, and, as sundering ties of an intensely sacred nature, be irreligious also? And supposing all these difficulties got over, which it is difficult to suppose, for emigration on a vast scale must include some of the wealthy and the great, must have leaders, and priests, and teachers; and will the wealthy and the great in these selfish times make sacrifices and go? And, if they will not go, can you without manifest sin compel them?—But, supposing all these difficulties got over, one very serious consideration still remains. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the excitement, the fever, the discontent, the unsettlement which would prevail for a long while among those left behind. Like the families of Egypt, there would scarcely be a house where there would not be a loss and a vacancy. Sorrow for the absence of friends, and numerous relations, the keen pangs of a separation for this life, continually fresh sadness imparted by the news of necessary trial, disease and disappointment among the emigrants, would mingle turbulently with the golden pictures and dreams realized, and loud calls to come and join, which would on the other hand assail them. The whole face of the land would be rudely and unseasonably ploughed up. Granting however that, notwithstanding all this, emigration is well and necessary, and would at the last bring great relief, yet it must, as population grows, be continually renewed, and such renewals of it would obviously in a few generations uproot the present national character, and create a different one, and we should run great risk therein. And so, balancing one thing against another, we may fear that all would be lost, and the tree die before it brought forth its good fruit; and any how we may

scarcely venture to look upon it as a great, sure, or safe remedy for our present evils, in the way and to the degree it has been put forward.

Education, indeed, goes nearer to touching our evils than emigration. But not if secular education only be intended. Reading and writing, and diffused knowledge, will not affect the disease, except in the way of aggravation. All religious bodies, it is said, confess the need of education, but all quarrel as to the religious form which it shall take. Meanwhile then, so they say, while the contest about this matter is going on, do not let us be losing time, let us be teaching the people to read, let them not any how go without secular education, while the Church and the Dissenters are quarrelling about religious education. If religion were merely literary, if it were only a separate element of education, an accomplishment, like music, or sketching, there might be some truth in this, however oddly it is stated. But it is not so. The Church claims the right to educate her members, and to educate them by her own doctrines, and out of her own creeds, and through the means of her own priests. The Church claims the right to prevent her members from receiving any other sort of education than this. But not to press that here:—what, after all, would a very considerable spread of secular education effect for us? If its effects were to be good, at least three generations must elapse before it begins to tell at all upon the people. And even then what more should we have gained, but a new illustration of the few, lowly, words of St Paul, “Knowledge puffeth up?”⁴ We cannot all be made rich, we cannot all be made wise, we cannot all be made happy. In our minds, much more than in our bodies, it is impossible we can all be in equal strong health. There must be differences and divisions, ranks and bars. Misery will make them where wealth does not: weakness will make

⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 8.

them where wisdom does not. Let us suppose for a moment the intellectual powers of the lower orders, and the mass of the people generally, to be called out as much as may be. All at once a new set of distinctions are made among them. New fences are run here and there in every direction; fences far more galling than the old ones, for rank and power conferred by talent is of all rank and power least readily acquiesced in. A new sort of inequality begins to appear in that part of society. There is as much or more unevenness than before, only the shape of it is altered and shifted. Persons brought up together, inhabitants of the same neighbourhood, of equal industry, and generally (as would be likely from human nature) of greater soberness and purity, would suddenly find what to them would seem a very wide separation made between themselves and their old equals, in many ways; and all because they were less clever and acute. Well, supposing this were thought advisable, and really a better state of things than the present, (and if a man thinks of it for half an hour he will see to what a great extent, and in what curious ways it would bring in a new state of things,) it must be remembered further, that all the moulds and shapes of our present society and government would by no means hold the fresh order of things; that it would be unsafe to alter these moulds and shapes till the new state of things were ready; that yet if the new state of things did not find new moulds and shapes ready before itself, it would inevitably do us a mischief, and that violently; that the consent of many privileged classes and bodies must be had to alter the present moulds and shapes; that to force such consent would be iniquitous, and moreover would have to be done through bloodshedding; that in the end the whole habits of thought of a populous nation must be found to have altered themselves; and that there is no instance on record of a nation foregoing the character its history has once worn into it, not even when almost all its old blood has been

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spilled upon its own fair fields in the madness of civil strife. Now one or more of these considerations will be thought to carry some weight along with it; and what safeguard, what counteracting force has secular education got to offer us, to make it worth our while to run any one or more of these risks? But what if there is a wisdom, which tells us happiness, and knowledge, and greatness, are not our only ends on earth; that we have higher, nobler, ends, and aims, and hopes, than these; that by leading us from following after happiness and greatness, does in reality make us happy by giving us contentedness, and makes us great by lifting us above this world's littleness, and surpasses all earthly knowledge by opening to us the world of spirit, and imparting to us somewhat of the intelligence of angels? Surely this wisdom is what we want, a wisdom above the wisdoms of all wise men, a wisdom which may be the stability of our times. The poor man can be made no higher and no happier by powers and rights. His unhappiness is nearer home and deeper in his heart than that politics should lift it off. They cannot make him rich; they cannot make him great; and yet they tell him wealth and greatness are happiness: and is not all this mockery? The poor man can be made no wiser by earthly wisdom. What better is he if he knows the number of the stars, and the pathway of the moon, and the customs of the sun? What better is he if he knows why the sea keeps months and tides, and the winds blow this way rather than that, and the comet comes after his appointed journey of years? What better is he if he knows where corn-fields have been red with blood, and green trees scorched with battle, for the vanities of kings or the unruliness of peoples? Still may the vainest of world-wisdoms open out philosophy, history, and science, for his unhappiness, which is the cause of his turbulence, is nearer home and deeper in his heart, than that world-wisdom should lift it off: and yet they tell him world-wisdom is happiness; and is not this, too, mockery?

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But tell him, on the other side, that his ploughing, and his toiling, and his trading, cannot keep his soul from being immortal; tell him he is the son of God; that heaven is waiting for him; that angels are ministering to him, yea, and evil spirits troubling themselves to fight against him: tell him the eye, the unsleeping eye of heaven, is open upon his cottage on the moor-edge, by the mouth of the mine, or in the dull, close, sunless town, as widely and as wakefully as on the great queen upon her golden throne: tell him this in early life, let it grow with his growth, and increase with his increase; let it bring him to the common church, the common prayers, the common Altar, and hold him by the hand as he faints softly and wearily away into the common grave: and how little then will earthly ranks, and bars, and distinctions, and unhappinesses, disturb or ruffle the peace of his soul! Do not let him awake to all this after a youth of impurity, or a manhood of pride; in the hurry of repentance, when his soul's eye, long used to darkness, cannot bear the light; but let it sink gradually into him by early church education, as the white snow melts into the field and makes the corn spring greenly. There might indeed be some result, some cure, some assuaging of our fret and fever, if a fair part of the population were thus filled with great Christian thoughts, and their hearts lifted heavenward by faith, and hope, and love. It might bring quietness, sober-mindedness, contentedness, submission to the will of God, readiness to do the good which comes to our hands to do, carelessness for the future, knowing it to be in the hand of God, sorrow for the past, knowing it to be our accuser before the judgment seat of Christ, and, for temporal reward, if it were then of any account among us, it might bring to this particular nation, the empire of the West. Then would there be far less noise and clamour, evil will, strife, sedition, political hatreds. Of course man's deeply corrupt nature would always hinder much of this; yet a good measure of such blessing would be the natural fruit of education if

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done in a church way, and so with a church blessing, if it were part and parcel of a gathering round a spiritual authority, of riveting again our ties of allegiance to the throne let down among us, whereon He only sitteth Who is man of the substance of His mother, and Very God before all worlds.

This, then, is the remedy up to which we have been working our way all along; an acknowledgment of a spiritual power, a hearty adherence to a centre of unity which is appointed and gifted of heaven and in spite of our sins continued among us still, a submission to Church authority, in the full, complete, and most practical sense of those words. The form and attitude which political uneasiness has of late begun to take, and the manner in which it has expressed itself, has been in a strong, blind, lawless seeking after unity, a turbulent yearning after oneness of feeling and oneness of action.⁵ This desire has

⁵ By way of a single specimen of the manner in which this feeling is working now, we may take a casual notice out of a newspaper (Newcastle Journal, February 29, 1840.) —“A society, having for its object, by family gatherings in all parts of the world, by publication of facts and arguments, &c., to collect the Christian world into one body, and remove the jarring of sects, has just issued its first prospectus.” To a certain degree temperance societies evidence the same, and freemasonry, so far as it is any thing more than a club: and when it is any thing more, it is profane and against the Gospel. See, for instance, Preston’s Lodge, Oliver’s edition, 1829, p. 6, where it is said to be confined to no particular countries, nor, p. 7, to any particular religion, but to “tame the spirit of fulminating priests:” where the editor seems to consider that it may embrace, so “wise” is it, “*Christians 240 millions, Mahometans 120 millions, Brahminists 115, Lamaites 58, Confucians 5, Jews 8, Feichees 124, Buddhists 170, Nanknists 4, Zoroastrians three-quarters of a million.*” See also the prayer at p. 32, the charge at p. 57, where the name of Christ is not mentioned, p. 56, on the building of Solomon’s Temple, the ceremonies at p. 87, (compare with which Robespierre’s public worship of the First Cause at Paris, p. 92, the prayer at the burial service, claiming to enjoy in heaven the “just reward of a virtuous life,” the name of Christ left out all through—the editor, a *clergyman*, thinks this service can scarcely be performed

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been embodied very strikingly in all that has been happening these few years past. It is, at least to the degree in which it has lately prevailed, a new feature in popular disturbances, and one claiming infinitely more respect than is usually accorded to popular grievances, and not to be crushed down, even if that were possible, by the mere weight of martial law. Further,—in the new and more recent forms which religious fanaticism has taken, as for instance in Irvingism, or among the Plymouth brethren, somewhat of a new feature, new at least in modern times though well known of old, has displayed itself: one main doctrine has been that the true Church is one, and that they, and they only, constitute that one Church, and that it has been revealed to them that for unfaithfulness the Church of England, hitherto the true Church, has had her candlestick removed into their congregations. Now here again we may discover the same feeling at work: a felt want of a centre of unity, and an intense desire to find or to create one. The shape then both of political and religious movement among

consistently)—p. 110, where a “cheerful compliance with the established religion of the country in which they live, is earnestly recommended” to Masons: “the tenets of the institution interfere with no particular faith, but are alike reconcilable to all.” See also the collection of odes ending the book, many of which are too objectionable, on religious grounds, to quote here. Free-masonry was condemned by the Roman Church in 1738 or 39; and implicitly by the English Church in the 18th article, which contains an anathema, and is nevertheless contradicted in letter as well as in spirit by several passages in masonic books. As to Holy Scripture, it may be well to make one quotation; in the charge at initiation into the first degree, occur these words, “As a Mason you are to study the sacred law; to consider it as the unerring standard of truth and justice, &c.:

on which the *clerical* editor remarks:—“In England, the Bible; but in countries where that book is unknown, *whatever is understood to contain the will or law of God.*” These references may be useful to some, who might be attracted, as light minds naturally are, by the secrecy and mystery of this pythagorean (Preston, p. 105) institution, without knowing or imagining that it involved irreverence and sin.

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the people indicates the sort of remedy needed, and almost points to it. Some have already discerned the kind of remedy to be applied, but have been somewhat at a loss where to find it; and have imagined that we must create some new centre of unity for ourselves, all that lie round us being either rusted or unreal. Neither is such a view as this at all surprising. From a number of causes, which have been a very long time in operation, Christianity has been degraded into a system of truths, a collection of dogmas, a literary purification, a store-house of high motives, a code of pure laws, a philosophical influence: these are the sort of ideas men have of the Gospel. Its theology and morals have been separated from each other, which is a great evil: and both have been detached from that living person, that heavenly bride, the Church, to whom they had been joined, and apart from whom they had but a half life, with variable, inharmonious power and motion. True, indeed, it is that Christian teaching, detached from its divinely appointed Teacher upon earth, is a system such as earth never yet saw or has conceived; and, considering how long it has been for all practical purposes detached from the person of the Church, it is little less than marvellous it should have retained its heat and blood so long. But it has been growing weaker in its virtue, while our disease has been yearly becoming more desperate; and now systems and schools, even of Christian teaching, cannot bring it under. They have not life enough, or reality enough in them, to be centres of unity; for they contain within themselves, as their own proper inheritance, the seeds of infinite division. To Christian doctrines, apart from the one living Church, there was not given any power of working moral miracles, of casting devils out of nations, or raising to life again peoples, whose hearts have died within them like a stone, because of wealth, and luxury, and low principles, and abandoned literatures, and civilized unbeliefs. No wonder then that they, who knew not of the Church, should be

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unable to see in Christianity, considered as a system of theology, any thing beyond an old centre of unity, which was become outworn, and had ceased to be authentic.

But the Church Catholic, a living person, penetrated in every limb with an awful and heavenly life, powerful, strong, indestructible, unchanging, yet infinitely pliable; intelligent, transcending in gifts, in teaching, in unity, in glory; mighty, to draw to herself dread, reverence, and love; capacious to receive into herself all fears, hopes, joys, charities, and souls of men; living in two worlds, communicating with both by mysteries, lifting the lower into the higher, and bringing down spirit and light from the one into the matter and gloom of the other: the Church Catholic, perfect in every nation, yet including all nations, wise and giving wisdom, free and giving freedom, large-hearted and making men's hearts large, poor and making abundantly wealthy,—this, rightly understood and submissively obeyed, is a centre of unity which cannot fail, a medicine when men's hopes of recovery are past. We may borrow, and alter, and apply to her what a foreign writer with beautiful untruth has said of literature. Look at worldly men, how they struggle after happiness and satisfaction: their wishes, their toil, their gold, are ever hunting restlessly, and after what? After that which the Churchman has received already with his new nature; the right enjoyment of two worlds, here and hereafter: the feeling of himself in others; the union of many things which this world can never make to go together.

Church authority, as a centre of unity, has some peculiar claims to be heard and reflected on at present. It seems probable that the time is not far distant when society, in no small portion of Europe, will have to be refused and run into quite other moulds from those which keep and define it now. Perhaps it is necessary it should be so; and well it should be so: any way it seems inevitable. Now, when things begin to break up and to be loosened from the

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old fastenings, and set in quick and perilous motion, one fixed and steady principle, such as obedience to Church authority, will be of an importance not to be calculated. It will be a warrant of safety at the last. It will be a power of moral attraction sufficient to keep things from wandering too far from their proper places while the change is going on. It will give soberness to disturbed times, and intelligence to confused times, and be a help to all ranks and classes in perplexity. It will carry a state over rough places; and infallibly hinder it from breaking into pieces, even in the most deep-seated commotions. It will not interfere in any way with political arrangements, forms of government, framing of laws, or distributions of power, except so far as they may be wicked arrangements; and then, it would be well for the happiness of the people, as well as their spiritual well-being, that there should be a moral check. Further than this there could be no check. The Church is bound to no forms but her own. She believes no other to be divine. She is a disciple of no school of political thought. She is seen in none, leagues with none, interferes with none. Churchmen, who do so in her name, have not her warrant for it. They make her uncatholic for the time and in the place where they do plead her authority for such things.

This is of course not the place to enter at length upon the subject of the Church being considered as a centre of unity, how it is her proper office to be so, how she has been gifted for that office, how she discharges it, under what conditions, with what sort of limitations, with what expansions, with what peculiarities and adaptations. This is an extensive field, and cannot be traversed now. Meanwhile, at the risk of provoking ridicule and appearing to trifle in a grave matter, I will mention a few little ways in which a recognition of Church authority would tell upon the people now; and little ways rather than large ones, both because they are more practical, and illustrate the matter

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more plainly, and also show us that in order to this recognition we have little or nothing to import, or to create, but much to revive, much to take into our hands which is lying disused by our sides. I need not do more than allude to them: any one by a little steady thinking may see how they would soothe and soften the condition of the lower orders, and, which is of far higher moment, throw themselves upon the side and strengthen the hands of the better and well-ordered part of those classes. If then, as a general rule, the labour of the field and the wheels of the factory were still on the few Saints' days and holydays, which we keep, very trifling pecuniary loss or idle time would be the result; but a character of cheerfulness, a feeling of equality in religious thoughts and privileges with their masters, would be diffused among the people, as well as an example of self-denial set by them to their workmen as taking the loss upon themselves and not suffering it to weigh upon their servants. If, again, baptisms always took place on Sundays or holydays, and in the public service, and at every poor child's baptism the rich did not sit in their pews as if it did not concern them and were a weariness, but rose, and knelt, and joined in the service with readiness and fervency; experience in certain places has shown that a good feeling has been generated among the poor far beyond what seemed likely from such a trifle; and of course a more right feeling would be produced among the rich, who in such cases are far more deficient in it than the poor. Again, it were well the whole indecent system of pews were done away, and the shameful distinctions allowed in Church between the rich and the poor were abolished, being contrary to the express words of St. James (ii. 2, 3, 4). And it is not a little striking that in several places of late the people have come in bodies to occupy the Churches and Cathedrals, and assert their equal right to them. This shows that even this trifle has created a soreness, and therefore to a thinking person has ceased to be a trifle. Again,

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supposing the political arrangements regarding the poor could be made to connect themselves with the parish Church and the parish Altar, and be put under Church officers, and reference be made to character, and to sober and communicant paupers, much ill-feeling, harshness, cruelty, and discontent would be done away; and the fearful sin avoided, which is no otherwise avoidable, of making poverty a crime, of not reverencing old age, and of separating the poor from full communion with their fellow-members and the Body of Christ. Then again, if bishops' powers over the clergy and the rich laity of their dioceses were made larger and more summary, much relief might be in many ways given to the people at large. Priests, who neglected their cures, or gave up their time to unseemly pleasures, or did not take sufficient heed to the poor, or broke their oaths in not following in all things the ritual of the Church, might be reached at once by the poorest and humblest members of Christ's Body. Again, the punishment of excommunication might be brought back into use, which would take away many scandals, and stop all that dissent, which is founded upon displeasure at the lax discipline of the Church. The rich also, whose sins, and impurities, and unseemly indulgences do not so generally come within reach of the penal laws of the land as those of the poor, might be struck by excommunication and made public examples of, and disgraced, and removed as unworthy of the company of the steady poor; and the sense of justice would be strengthened, which is now weak, from the shameless and sheltered way in which the wealthy sin. Again, there are many rural festivals observed up and down the land in which the higher orders take little or no part, and which are consequently degraded among the poor into times of riot and drunkenness, and the sober poor not able to have any enjoyment of them at all. These might be made Church festivals. The customary processions might be encouraged, and attended by the higher orders. There might

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be a celebration of the Holy Communion, a collection among the rich for the poor, and a cessation from work. These things will of course seem to many very trifling; and just in proportion as they have not been among the poor. But it must be remembered that these least things have been selected purposely; and that even these put together and acting over a wide space—a single diocese suppose—would very much alter the inward tone as well as outward face of English society. Surely it is a strangely bold untruth to say, that the modern English Church is the poor man's Church; that is just what it is not, just what it must become forthwith. Thus, so long as the rich and well-born were what they ought not to be, but what their gold and title give them means to be, the Church would throw herself upon the side of the poor, would defend, and shelter, and dignify them. They would look up to her with affection. They would cling to her, and stand by her. And thus, in case of any revolution, from her deep seat and hold among the poor, she would be able to defend and shelter the rich, and prevent noise, tumult, and bloodshed. There would be less anxiety, and fever, and hidden working of diseased feelings among all classes. The Church would satisfy them with the plenteousness of her house, and give them drink of her pleasures as out of the river. Thus, should it ever please God to restore outward communion to the Church Catholic, and Christendom to be made what it once was before, or better than it was, England, for all her perilous commerce and thirst for gold, might not be backward among the nations. "The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift: like as the rich also among the people shall make their supplication before Thee."⁶

Great also would be the change wrought in our politicians and public men by this recognition of Church authority. They would be as much characterized by

⁶ Ps. xlv. 13.

humility then as they are by pride, and coldness, and intense self-admiration now. They would be more afraid to treat their fellow-countrymen as huge masses to make experiments on, with crude theories or general views imported from abroad, than they are now. They would remember, and practically act upon, what Bishop Taylor says of the strict righteousness the Christian covenant exacts of us all.⁷ This great rule that Christ gives us, does also, and that principally too, concern Churches and commonwealths, as well as every single Christian. Christian parliaments must exceed the religion and government of the Sanhedrim. Your laws must be more holy, the condition of the subjects made more tolerable, the laws of Christ must be strictly enforced; you must not suffer your great Master to be dishonoured, nor His religion dismembered by sects, or disgraced by impiety: you must give no impunity to vicious persons, and you must take care that no great example be greatly corrupted; you must make better provisions for your poor than they did, and take more care even of the external advantages of Christ's religion and His ministers, than they did of the priests and Levites; that is, in all things you must be more zealous to promote the kingdom of Christ, than they were for the ministries of Moses. They would remember, what they have too much forgotten, that they have to battle with the world and not with the Church, as they have done. The Church has to overthrow the world for her Master, and it were more politic and crafty to be on her side. For hers is the only successful battle. Men lay wise plans and schemes; they work mighty changes, fight battles, overrun kingdoms, discover continents, plant colonies, and invent deep laws: and the world with profane complacency calls them the "saviours and regenerators of nations." Yet are they but a name, a shadow, a dream, a sound. Heaven takes no count

⁷ Works, vi. 244.

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of them: only notes their sins like other men's. Saints make prayers upon their beds; and angels see that a nation's punishment is stayed otherwise than as people think, and weep and wonder that blind men will call the staying of punishment their nation's greatness.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter? It is simply this. There have been many forms of government in the world, many institutions, many inventions, to make a nation at unity with itself. They were but ropes of sand. They had power to keep nations together so long as men believed them something more than sand. Men's faith gives them power. But, when that faith is gone, false faith as it was, they drop off like cords of vanity, as "the seven green withs" of the strong man Samson. Yet, could we once believe the Church of God to be what indeed she is, the setter up of the Cross and the place where it is set up, then would religion be no longer one of many wisdoms claiming man's heart, belief, and practice, but the fountain into which and out of which all wisdoms ebbed and flowed; then would politics and literature be run into new shapes and melted down into fresh moulds; shapes and moulds they have not seen for many centuries; then would the bars and fences which divide us from one another be broken down, the fretting and beating against which is the cause of all political soreness and disease in nations; then would our faith make powers visible, which now work invisibly or not at all. For faith brings miracles to light hourly in every heart wherein she dwells. Her office is to lay bare miracles. How have all the forms of the earth been shattered asunder in men's attempt to make them hold what they will not hold: forms of lifeless literature,—they have passed and are now, one and all, pale ghosts that amuse the few and make not the many afraid; they have passed off because they belonged to the learned and not to the simple also, to the colleges of the wise and not to the pauper sons of God;—forms of broken governments,—they are thrown aside as

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being what, one and all they are, systems worn out, machines superseded; and why? Because they were for the rich and not for the poor also, for the high-born and the soft-living, and not for those who stooped and toiled in God's earth and sea. There is but one Vessel that will hold the quick new wine of things heavenly, a Vessel hardened in a furnace such as never was for other cause heated upon earth. It is the Church of Christ. They, who would put a nation's life into another vessel, are a vanity, a mockery, yea, the poorest and emptiest by-word that ever was spoken in the hearing of the world. They have false vessels that make a show of holding. By these many will be deceived. Others there are who cannot be deceived, they in heaven; and on earth, by God's grace, some few.