

CHURCH REFORM.

Mr. Faithful, pursuant to notice rose to submit to the house a proposition in reference to the established church. His resolution divided itself into three heads, each involving a separate principle of great public importance. The first was that the church of England as by law established was not recommended by practical utility; the second, that its revenues have always been subject to legislative enactments; and thirdly, that the greater part, if not the whole of these revenues, ought to be appropriated to the relief of the nation. The resolution was not brought forward by him in any spirit of prejudice or hostility to the church of England. (hear.) It required no great acuteness to distinguish the church from the establishment; he revered the one—he detested the latter. Neither did he seek the overthrow of the establishment. Far from it, the adherents to that church might have their archbishops and their bishops, in their worldly humility and habits of usefulness, so like the apostles and first teachers of christianity, and their archdeacons and their deans, and their prebendaries, and their canons and their minor canons, and all the rest of their overworked and underpaid functionaries, as long as they liked; all he asked was, that to maintain those gentlemen violence may not be done to the conscience of any man, and that no man should be compelled to pay for the support of a clergyman of whose communion he was not a member. This was all he asked; he would not be content with less. It was to obtain it that he put forward the proposition that the established church was not recommended by its utility. He would ask any man who heard him—how did they any bishop or dean in the whole establishment to show where an established church was, either directly or indirectly, or authorised or sanctioned by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles? He would not quote the evidence of the Dissenters to show that the Gospel had invariably condemned all secular or civil alliance with religion, but would refer them to the evidence of their own clergy, to that of Paley, and Warburton, and Blackburn, and others. He would ask them to point out a single passage in the New Testament calculated to impress them with a conviction that an established church like that of England was an eligible institution—nay, was it not the very reverse? Was it not a melancholy fact, of which all history was a painful comment, that the union of church and state was baneful to both? When did the Christian religion become a state religion? Why, under that reign stained with every crime, Constantine whose reign was the date of its degradation and corruption. It was to reflect

that the great protectors and institutors of state religions, the Constantines and the Clovises, practically outraged every principle of true religion. And the sequel of this unholy alliance was worthy of its parents. Were they sincere Christians? What was Christianity? Did they conceive it to be something substantial and worth contending for? Did not all admit it to be a religion of good will and kind affections? Could any man deny that the only result of the established church was the opposite.—that it produced only ill-will and heart burnings, and deadly hatred and animosities? Did they want a proof, let them look to the condition of Ireland, with its established church. (Hear, hear.) Where was a compulsory maintenance for the clergy spoken of in the gospel? What act of the apostles sanctioned its adoption? Did not they live by the labour of their hands, and did they not deprecate compulsory and high remuneration as fatal to the true religion. Then let them consider how an established religion operated as a temptation to hypocrisy? Was hypocrisy, he would ask them, compatible with pure Christianity? If not, he would further ask them should an establishment be encouraged which engaged hypocrisy? Was it therefore too much for him to assert that the established church was not recommended by its practical utility? This sounded, he admitted, boldly; but it was no less true. Paley, and other "established church" writers, had shown that the church was only a snare for the consciences of its ministers, and that it shut out the upright and conscientious while it opened wide its doors to the subservient and the unscrupulous. But this was not the only, nor perhaps the worst fruit of an established church. It invariably converted the clergy, who ought to be the ministers of peace and good will to all men, into the most unrelenting of persecutors. Who crucified our Lord? The Jewish priesthood. The genius of the heathen world was tolerant, and yet heathen priests persecuted the early Christian martyrs. And in late times, there were the Catholic priesthood persecuting the Protestant, and the Protestant, too, in their turn, the Catholic. He might be told, perhaps, that the clergy were now influenced by more charitable feelings, that they partook of the more enlightened spirit of the times. He could not believe it. Where had they evinced the want of inclination to be intolerant and oppressive? Give them the power they enjoyed under old Queen Bess—that is, give them the means of persecuting—and who would answer for the result? Then, what said Warburton and Paley as to the effect of an established church like the present in generating habits of corruption and hypocrisy among the clergy? Was it not an unde-

niable fact that the fitness was the qualification sought for in bestowing a shoppe, which was bestowed as the ward of political sycophancy? Then, were the counterbalancing advantages the established church? Was it the means of pointing out the way to heaven? If not, what was its use? Did it incline the clergy to sympathise more with the poor and the oppressed, and therefore assist them against the oppressor and the powerful? Far from it. The clergy of the church of England were the inveterate abettors of every measure which tended to encroach upon the rights and liberties of the subject; and the invariable foes of every measure calculated to advance the interests of either. What was their conduct with reference to the reform bill? That was not the system monstrously venal and simoniacal? Was not the establishment a regular trading concern? Were not livings and "cures of souls" advertised for sale, and as open marketable commodities as any thing sold in open day? (hear.) What induced young men to enter the church? Was it not notorious that the call was not that of the Holy Ghost? Was it not notorious that they entered the church as the would the army and navy or any other professional means of a livelihood? Was this the precept or the example inculcated by Christ and the apostles? Remember the emphatic denunciations of Warburton and Hanley and Simpson against the "grantee" monopoly of the rich livings of the church. The consequences of these grantee doings would lead to a revolution which was at hand and which would purify religion from the doings. Then see how the certainty of reward tended to induce habits of indifference and remissness on the part of the clergyman, who feeling himself secured by the law of his tithes, let his flock take care of themselves. On this point it would be sufficient to quote the forcible observation of the author of the *Wealth of Nations*—"The proper performance of every service seems to require that its pay or recompense should be, as exactly as possible proportioned to the nature of the service. If any service is very much under paid, it is very apt to suffer by the meanness and incapacity of the greater part of those who are employed in it. If it is very much over paid, it is apt to suffer perhaps still more by their negligence and idleness. A man of a large revenue, whatever may be his profession, thinks he ought to live like other men of large revenues, and to spend a great part of his time in festivity in vanity, and dissipation. But in a clergyman this train of life not only consumes the time which ought to be employed in the duties of his function, but in the eyes of the common people destroys almost entirely that sanctity of character which also