

LETTERS
TO A
YOUNG PRESBYTERIAN.



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BY

J. A. WADDELL, D. D.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
LETTER I.,	5
LETTER II.,	11
LETTER III.,	17
LETTER IV.,	23
LETTER V.,	29
LETTER VI.,	35
LETTER VII.,	41
LETTER VIII.,	47
LETTER IX.,	53
LETTER X.,	58
LETTER XI.,	64
LETTER XII.,	69
LETTER XIII.,	74
LETTER XIV.,	80
LETTER XV.,	86
LETTER XVI.,	92
LETTER XVII.,	98
LETTER XVIII.,	103
LETTER XIX.,	109
LETTER XX.,	115

LETTER

TO A

YOUNG PRESBYTERIAN.

LETTER I.

DEAR ———: I have long desired to do some special service to that class of Christians which you represent, and have concluded that the best way for me to accomplish it is to construct a series of letters to an individual in whom I feel a strong personal interest. For several reasons I judge you to be one to whom I may address my thoughts with freedom and confidence. Your piety, conscientiousness, love of truth, and habits of intelligent reading, encourage me to believe that you will appreciate my efforts, and appropriate the benefits they are designed to convey. The mutual affection subsisting between us will at least ensure these letters against a heartless neglect.

The general purpose of the undertaking is to *confirm* young Presbyterian readers in the Christian faith as we understand it. You know that

any one in our day who aims to be a true disciple of our Lord, must be a Christian after some particular type. It is impossible to float around as a Christian in general, with no association or connection with any denomination. Presbyterianism is Christianity in a certain form, and implies a judgment and preference for certain distinctions. To confirm the youth of the church in this type of Christianity, is a faithful and consistent effort, of which no conscientious preacher of the faith need be ashamed. We understand, of course, that certain limitations are necessary. We do not imagine that our judgment is infallible. We do not claim perfection for the Presbyterian system. But some planets are nearer than others to the sun, and some churches are more closely conformed to the Bible than others. Comparative proximity is our claim, and not an exclusive right to the entire firmament.

If we believe that Presbyterianism is comparatively the more scriptural system, the duty is obvious, to promote its growth with all our might. Such an effort may well give title to this initiatory letter. The subject is Confirmation, which we regard as an increase of stability in the faith of Jesus Christ, and not as a ceremony of the imposition of hands. Lutherans and Episcopalians, at the Reformation, refused

to discontinue this rite of the Roman Catholic Church. With the former, the pastor is the administrator. In the latter church, none but a diocesan bishop is entrusted with the ceremony. In both cases, however, it is assumed that Christ, the head of the church, requires such a ceremony, whilst the other great Protestant churches hold that the Scriptures give no warrant for such an observance.

Here, then, at the beginning, a Presbyterian principle requires attention, because, in omitting the rite of Confirmation, we are regarded by many as being less Christian in our practice than others. There are thousands of young people who are taught to find fault with Presbyterianism for not doing what they imagine to be one of the plainest duties in the Christian life. We stand at a great disadvantage with people who are not well versed in the Scriptures.

The fact is, that this rite has no foundation in the word of God. No one whose religion is learned at that source would ever dream of such a performance. The expression, "confirming the churches," appears in the New Testament, but the Lutheran pastor, or the Anglican bishop, is not expected to confirm a *church* when he performs the ceremony. He confirms a *class*, and not a church, and the

class consists of young persons who have been examined in church doctrine. Now, Presbyterians understand, by confirmation of churches, such preaching and exhortation as, when addressed to the body of believers in a particular place, shall be calculated to strengthen their faith. The word translated *confirm* is familiar to Greek scholars, and known to convey the idea of additional stability, and not that of an imposition of hands.

The Presbyterian principle to which I refer is this: That no positive ceremony is of divine authority in the church which is not distinctly required in the Scriptures. At the Reformation in England, this was the point of controversy that was most warmly contested between the court and the Puritans. The latter, who were generally Presbyterians, opposed the court in its claim of supremacy in the national church, especially as to its right to impose certain ceremonies upon the worshiper contrary to his conscience. The ceremonies were of popish origin in their judgment, and they appealed from the royal prerogative to the Bible.

One of these ceremonies to which objection was made, was that of manual confirmation. Presbyterians could not admit the claim of human authority, either in church or state, to

impose upon the worshiper any observance in religion which is not taught or clearly implied in the word of God. In England, the claim was to force conformity to the rite of Confirmation at the hands of a diocesan bishop, by virtue of authority residing in the church to decree rites and ceremonies. The Roman Catholic Church was the original claimant, and Protestantism in all other countries was a *protest* against it. But in England the aim of court and church was simply to transfer this prerogative from one hierarchy to another. They openly denied the right of the worshipers to the exercise of conscience in the matter. Hence the announcement by the Puritans of this great principle, that Christian people may enjoy a certain liberty limited by the Scriptures, but no human authority may impose upon them any rite or ceremony not authorized in the word of God.

The imposition of hands by a pastor, as a preferred method of admission of regenerate people to the full membership of a church, if unincumbered with any false doctrine, may be a harmless proceeding, for it may be a mere mode of prayer in behalf of the recipient. But Presbyterians cannot see any call for such a ceremony, in the absence of any intimation in Scripture in its favor. It is deemed most pru-

dent to ignore it altogether, that our protest may be emphasized against certain errors now attached to it. We are Protestants, and continue to protest against the Romish idea that "confirming the churches" refers to a ceremony, and that the hands of a diocesan bishop are a channel of the Holy Ghost. Our protest will be more fully explained in future letters. For the present, allow me to urge attention to the principle referred to. Deeply thankful shall I be if my feeble lines shall tend to *confirm* the faith of any of my young readers in the great spiritual doctrines of the gospel, as distinguished from all rites which human invention has devised to magnify the importance of the priestly office, and fasten a princely order over the church of God.

LETTER II.

DEAR ———: In my first letter I introduced the subject of “rites and ceremonies” as one of the main issues in the English Reformation. The court insisted upon retaining a number of Roman Catholic institutions, which the Puritans and most other Protestants opposed, on the ground that neither the clergy nor the government had authority from Christ to impose observances not authorized in the Scriptures, and also because some of these ceremonies were calculated to lead the people into serious error. Intelligent Christians of our day, and in this free land, are astonished to see so many young persons, in profound ignorance of the nature and object of the Reformation, subscribing to the tyrannical acts of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, by which they forced their subjects to retain the superstitious ceremonies of the papal church, nearly all of which the rest of the Protestant world had rejected.

As confirmation is my object, I desire to confirm those of your age in certain lessons of the historical past, ignorance of which is constantly increasing to a mortifying extent. We

sometimes see young Presbyterians, under the social influence of others as ignorant as themselves, fascinated by these papal ornaments, and virtually assenting to the preposterous idea that the Puritans were wrong, and the royal tyrants of England right. Say what they will, such persons are *taking back* the protest recorded by the fathers in an earlier age against spiritual despotism and priestly pretensions. By action, which speaks louder than words, they publicly condemn the Puritans, Presbyterians, and continental Reformers for contending so earnestly in behalf of the rights of conscience and the supremacy of the Scriptures. Consciously or not, they adopt for themselves and their posterity the pernicious doctrine that the church is authorized by Christ to invent and impose rites and ceremonies at discretion, even to the subversion of those which he and his apostles used and sanctioned.

No honest reader of the New Testament can fail to see that the Jewish temple and priesthood, with all the splendid and attractive institutions of the ceremonial law, gave place, after the ascension of Christ, to a system marked by simplicity, and adapted to popular use. It requires a strange perverseness, in a people blessed with an open Bible, to abandon the simplicity which the Holy Ghost himself sub-

stituted, on purpose, for the elaborate symbolism of the ancient ritual, and endeavor to return again to the showy usages of the priesthood and the temple. Romanism is a revolt against the studied simplicity of the gospel. It proclaims to the world that the simple organization under the lowly apostles, and the plain worship and service of the New Testament church, are unsatisfactory and insufficient. It aims to undo the revolution accomplished by the cross, and to establish a splendid hierarchy and a seductive worship rivaling that of the Jews. The English court and priesthood, in opposition to all other Protestants, insisted that the papacy was to a great extent right in this design, and condemned our fathers for too strict an adherence to the Scriptures.

I beg leave to maintain that the sons of the Reformers have no right to go back upon the New Testament. There is a principle at stake which a Christian ought not to ignore. And yet we see it trampled under foot by young people every day. For want of intelligence, and, as they imagine, in the exercise of American freedom, they lay aside all restraints and go back to the ideas of Henry VIII. They refuse to inform themselves, and, under influences very different from the Scriptures, they virtually subscribe to the belief that a strict

regard for Bible doctrine and apostolical usage was the error and folly of the Puritan Reformers!

Two pleas are employed in defence of this overthrow of the New Testament system. One is, that the church in her wisdom improved upon the original model just after the days of the apostles, and the improvements have come down by tradition. The other is, that expediency alone justifies the church in changing her forms from age to age. The idea that sufficient inspiration remained in force after the apostles to enable the priesthood of the first one or two centuries to revolutionize the Christian organism, and then bind future generations to an iron system, is worthy of a place among the grossest absurdities ever propounded. It is too puerile to be noticed. It claims our reverence for a system because it is *old*. It shuts its eyes to the fact that it was once an innovation, superseding the system of the apostles. If there was divine sanction for radical changes in the second century, the apostolical succession was fatally broken by its own premises. The papal theory, more rationally, claims inspiration and infallibility at every stage, and can innovate continually.

The appeal to expediency as an endowment of the church, enabling her to change and

diversify her methods, may be admitted as applicable to questions upon which the Bible throws no light. The church exercises such discretion every day. But a proper reverence for the apostolical institutions seems to require us to observe them with the highest possible respect. The question rises for an answer whenever we consider the organization of modern congregations, how it comes that our denomination alone can claim likeness to the apostolical churches? In no other denomination do we find churches placed under the episcopal oversight of a body of teaching and ruling elders, and served in secular matters by deacons. Observe, if you please, the large number of congregations in your city, and ask yourself why nearly all of them are managed in a way conspicuously different from those planted by Paul. It is evident that these various sects, guided blindly by tradition, or governed by a temporary expediency, have actually foisted upon our modern Christianity as great a diversity as possible. There is no end to the unscriptural offices and titles employed in their peculiar regulations. Each body seems determined to *differ*, and all more or less depart from the most ancient pattern found in the New Testament.

I close this letter with emphasis upon the

great principle which our young people ought to know and defend as a necessary safeguard of Christianity. The church of Christ suffers incalculably in its spiritual interests by the general proclivity of its members to consult their own pleasure in administering its affairs, and to treat the Bible as far less imperative than taste or utility. Neither Henry VIII., nor the reverend clergy, nor the people in congregation assembled, should be allowed to put aside the inspired Scriptures, and frame rules and methods of government and worship in conflict with those which the apostles clearly instituted.

LETTER III.

DEAR ———: Allow me, through you, to remind other young readers that the Presbyterian Church was one of the three original types which the Reformation presented. Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists are growths of a later date, from germs then considered insignificant. The original three were expressions of different degrees of intensity. The Calvinists aimed at a reformation more thorough than that of Luther; and the English court insisted upon still greater conformity to Rome. Lutheranism was adopted by the Germans and Scandinavians. Calvinism took root chiefly in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and Scotland. England remained alone with her national system determined by sovereign authority. But the English Puritans inclined to the strict opinions of the Calvinists, on the ground of their agreement with Scripture. Americans are thus brought, by historical considerations, to choose between Calvinism and the scheme of English monarchs shaping the Reformation according to their arbitrary will. Other considerations, of course, have operated

so as to form the other large denominations. But, not unfrequently, the ecclesiastical associations of the young are very much determined by the inclination of the mind to one or the other of the two types—Calvinism or Anglicanism.

The issue depends upon two powerful forces, personal influence and education. The advantage is largely on the side of the Anglicans, because we all speak and read the English language, which is full of Anglican terms and ideas. By virtue of the union between church and state, the aristocratic element, with its wealth and leisure, has given in English literature so much prominence to the English type of religion, that, in many minds, all other types are considered comparatively vulgar. This is an inherited infirmity which many have overcome. But many others grow up under its influence, even in the United States, and live and die with the impression that the English religion is necessarily the best, not because it is the most scriptural, but because it is old, ceremonious, and acceptable to polite society. The English people are insular, and notoriously arrogant towards foreigners. The spirit of the nation, and that of the church, have reacted upon each other for centuries, and too often the result is an attitude of superiority towards other nations and sects.

Now suppose two young persons of the same or different sexes to become intimate, one of whom has been reared somewhat in this way, and the other taught from infancy to derive religious impressions chiefly from the Bible, and to respect true piety in all churches. The preponderance of the Anglican personality will manifest itself with certainty. The influence in that direction is apt to be positive and constant. The resistance is generally feeble, because an unprejudiced mind respects very positive convictions, even when declining to adopt them. Too many young Protestants, prepared as victims for this sacrifice by being trained to charity without being warned against error, yield to the more positive urgency of others, and go back half-way to Rome without realizing what they do.

The only safeguard is in education in the principles of the Reformation, and such reading as shall protect the mind from English narrowness. Young Presbyterians ought to know in time that the Anglican type of religion is confined to a part only of the British people, and, in its relations to others, is distinctly insular and peculiar. An immense majority of Protestants serve God on other lines, and are in turn discredited by this minority, which is intensely British and exclusive.

Young readers who know these facts, and are posted in regard to the teaching of the Scriptures, may, if decidedly pious and conscientious, successfully stand their ground against the allurements to which they are exposed. But no others can. Our admission, which we cannot refuse, that salvation is the portion of all God's children, in the Anglican communion as well as our own, seems to many a sufficient justification of all the errors of that system. The idea of superficial thinkers is, that if several vessels are starting on a voyage, and the safety of some is questioned, it cannot be unwise to take passage upon one that is not suspected. Put your money in the bank in which other banks confide!

This would be fine reasoning, if the church were the Saviour. But, according to the Scriptures, the church is the party *saved*, and not the Saviour of mankind. Here is one of the Romish errors against which we must protest. "Baptism saves us," we know, but not external baptism, which is "a washing away of the filth of the flesh." Spiritual baptism saves by making us Christians, not churchmen, and enrolling us in the family of God. We make our voyage, therefore, in the arms of Christ, and not upon the deck of a vessel commissioned by Great Britain. (See 1 Peter iii. 21.) The superficial

mind is in need of instruction at this point; for the error, if not fatal, is dangerous, that imagines that communion with a church, however orthodox, is salvation. We should know, on the contrary, that the scriptural order is, salvation first, and enrolment afterwards.

But the force of this specious claim is ever at work in our American communities. Its victims are many. It breaks up our families. It unsettles our convictions. It saddens our hearts, through alienations which cannot be healed, but might be prevented. Prevention is the work of education in church history and the Scriptures, both of which sources of information are sadly ignored by the parties in question. There is little probability that any young person, who is careful to lay up a moderate degree of intelligence concerning the apostolic churches and the Reformation, will dare to urge upon a friend the exclusive pretensions of the Anglican system, or, on the other hand, wound the hearts of parents and kindred by inconsiderate desertion to the ranks of that body.

We like to see a little feeling on the subject, at least sufficient to indicate some decent knowledge of the past. I revere the memory of Archbishop Leighton as a man of saintly spirit. But his father was a Puritan, whose ears were bru-

tally cropped by bigoted persecutors. I find it hard to forget that the son was willing to receive an ecclesiastical preferment at the hands of the brutal party that had mutilated his own parent in the name of religion. Forgiveness is Christ-like at all times, but insensibility is not necessary, and the children of the Presbyterian sufferers of a former age, who quietly depart and join the ranks of the rival body that oppressed their forefathers, can only escape the imputation of a want of feeling by pleading ignorance of the blood that flows in their veins.

LETTER IV.

DEAR ———: My suggestion that some sensibility on the subject of persecution is creditable, must not be misunderstood. So good a man as Leighton would never have concealed his abhorrence for cruelty to his own father, had he not made "passive obedience" a part of his religion. Many other pious divines of his day took the same view. The feeling commended is not a vindictive spirit, but a loathing aversion for all those atrocities which were formerly visited by Christian rulers and their spiritual advisers upon the lowly saints of God. In our day no one believes in "passive obedience," and no well-informed gentleman or lady can remember the suffering of their ancestors for conscience' sake, and for the love of the Bible, without the sentiment to which I refer—a certain feeling of abhorrence at the names of the brutal men who perpetrated such deeds.

Remember this great fact, that although the Puritans in England, the Reformers in Scotland, and the Huguenots in France, when opportunity offered, sometimes retaliated for the severities inflicted upon them, neither the

English nor the Scotch Protestants, who endured so much persecution under the Tudors and the Stuarts, are chargeable with bloody persecution in return. It is impossible for churchmen to recriminate to any considerable extent for the butcheries of Claverhouse, or the judicial barbarities of Jeffries, for which not only the tyrants on the throne were responsible, but the "passive-obedience" divines of the Church of England.

But I beg you to suppress all prejudice towards cotemporaries who may abhor such cruelties as profoundly as ourselves. I can understand how a modern Christian may disapprove of the policy of English despots, and yet adhere to that type of religion which is associated with it. I suppose an honest man may be a good republican democrat in the United States, and yet cleave to the religion of his English fathers as a happy compromise between Protestantism and Romanism. Presbyterianism does not condemn Anglicanism *in toto*. It protests against its errors, without ceasing to respect it as a branch of the church of God. Anglicanism, on the other hand, does not so respect the Presbyterian system. All our young people ought to understand these relations of the two communions. My aim is to show that, of the two, the Presbyterian posi-

tion is, if not perfect, at least more scriptural, more charitable, more pleasing to God. The piety of individuals is not in question. I refer only to the systems. It is a duty, all around, to serve God in a communion that comes nearest to that type of Christianity which an honest inquiry can trace to the principles laid down for us all by the Spirit of God.

It is not uncommon for an unfair advantage to be taken of the greater charity of our position. It being admitted that the Presbyterian party is less pretentious and exclusive, the other party turns around and urges this fact as a plea in its own favor. The substance is: "Your principles do not forbid your acceptance of our system as reconcilable with the fundamentals of Christianity. Our principles compel us to reject your system. Now, therefore, as we are commanded to be one, you are the party to yield and surrender." We call this an unfair turn for an exclusive party to take. It is the device of oriental commerce, in which the Turkish tradesman puts an outrageous price upon his commodity, expecting to overcome the purchaser by the very extravagance of his terms. The Romanist can just as well demand surrender on the part of the high-church Briton, on the ground that he is still more arrogant and tenacious.

The assumption that the principle of the Anglican is fundamental, and that of the Presbyterian less sacred, must be sustained or abandoned. It is, in fact, a mere shadow. Our brethren of that faith, however high, do not regard it as a condition of salvation. The Romanists themselves, from whom they derived it, recoil at its enormity. It is simply the asking-price put by the Turk on his merchandise. But if it is not essential to salvation, it is difficult to see its fundamental character. If we could suppose the two principles about equally scriptural, their sacred importance would also be equal, and no one could attribute to either a marked superiority. The only difference conceivable would depend upon the force of asseveration employed.

That they are not equal will be shown hereafter. All I now contend for is, that the effort made by Anglicans to drive an advantageous bargain with ecclesiastical competitors, by pleading the greater importance of the theory of their system, breaks down when they confess that the Presbyterian or Methodist road to heaven is not impassable by reason of the absence of sacerdotal grace. It is well known that this theory represents the church of Jesus Christ as limited by the peculiar institution which its advocates so warmly idolize. There

is no church where the threefold clerical ladder inherited from Rome is not found. It seems, therefore, to follow that a vast majority of Christians in the Protestant sense are camped outside of the walls of the true church. The one shepherd finds his one flock divided very unequally, and a very insignificant number of his sheep are located as he desires. The sin of schism is imputed to the mass of the disciples by the remnant that is supposed to occupy the true fold. All this is so contrary to truth that common sense is shocked at the simple statement.

The Redeemer is the king of all his people. It is conceded that the *believers* in various denominations are his subjects. If we inquire concerning the extent of a temporal kingdom, nothing is more absurd than to point to a small territory containing a remnant of its people. The map of Germany is a designation of the space inhabited by the subjects of the emperor. No geographer would exclude three-fourths of the population. It is grossly absurd to limit the church to a narrow, insular organization, outside of which an overwhelming majority of the faithful are known to be. Consistency clearly requires those who maintain this exclusive theory, to go back to their old assumption, that the promises of God belong

to themselves alone. But the conscience of the Anglican church can no longer bear the strain of a haughty monopoly of salvation. Its enlightened and pious membership will not tolerate a faith as arbitrary and exclusive as that of Islam. The only remaining alternative is to abandon a position that is no longer tenable, and restore the fellowship that Christ requires of his sincere disciples.

LETTER V.

DEAR ———: I propose to settle principles before entering further upon particular institutions. I therefore recur to that great principle upon which all argument on these church questions depends. We must necessarily entertain the preliminary inquiry, how far the Bible should be our guide. Calvinism is tenacious of the doctrine that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This seems to be comprehensive. The Puritans of the English Reformation rightly judged that, in reconstructing the church on a Protestant basis, supreme regard should be paid to the instruction, directly or indirectly conveyed by the inspired word, and that rites and ceremonies should accord as far as possible with the precepts and examples which it contains. For example, the sign of the cross in baptism, and the kneeling posture in receiving the elements in the Lord's Supper, were both opposed by them, not only as unwar-

ranted by the Bible, but as tending to superstition. They contended that the former was an addition to the sacrament of baptism which no king or hierarchy had any right to impose, and that the latter was a presumptuous improvement upon the original mode of communion, improperly forced upon the conscience. The question in our day is this: Has the church any right to require all Christians to receive either sacrament in a form which Christ does not prescribe? The Anglican affirms, and the Presbyterian denies. It is plain that the authority here claimed justifies not only the sign of the cross, but other superstitious observances of the papists in baptism. And if communicants may be forced to kneel, contrary to the primitive institution, they may also be deprived of the cup.

There is no sense whatever in giving the Scriptures to the laymen of the church as the charter of their liberties, and in vesting the church with power to decree rites and ceremonies at will. It is usurpation, when such power is exercised over the conscience of the individual by changes or additions that depart from the purposed simplicity of scriptural institutions. The principle for which we contend is of inestimable importance. If we are not to follow as far as we can the guidance of

the Bible, there is no end to the innovations that authority or popular taste may introduce. The Church of Rome is a warning to all Christians. It has so subverted the simplicity of the apostles that the New Testament origin of its worship is completely obliterated.

The history of the Romish apostasy is a history of wilful and daring departures from the apostolical type of Christianity. All readers of the New Testament are of course aware of the fact that the one is a contrast to the other. It is therefore amazing that a Protestant church, like that of England, should have sanctioned the spirit of Rome by deliberately adopting so many of her inventions. The imitation was so glaring that Anglicanism is chargeable with some degree of that disregard for the Scriptures by which Rome is characterized. In arbitrarily decreeing uniformity of worship, and attempting to force certain unscriptural ceremonies upon tender consciences, she assumed unwarranted authority, and committed herself to that great error which has distracted Protestant Christendom ever since. She knows that the Lord's Supper was first administered to the disciples in a reclining, not a kneeling, posture, and yet she commands her communicants to receive it kneeling, as if her judgment were superior to that of Christ, and for the pur-

pose of retaining in her rubric a doctrinal error of the Romish Church.

The Christian church is suffering now most deplorably from the evils that result from this unfaithfulness to the word of God. As Pilate and Herod and the Jews were united against Jesus, so Romanism, Ritualism, and Rationalism are co-operating at the present hour against the influence of the written word, and discrediting its authority. Presbyterians and other faithful Protestants protest in vain. A considerable evangelical party in the English Church struggles against the powerful currents that run towards Rome or skepticism, with declining effect. At the bottom of all the trouble lies the original mistake of the English reformers in consenting to gratify their secular allies on the throne and at the court, and refusing the counsel of all other Protestants.

The result is, that the plain simplicity of the apostolical church is abandoned for a system of worship and government devised by men to conform it to her Anglican environment, and the pure gospel of the New Testament is parted, like the raiment of the dying Christ, between the ritualists and the critics.

It ought to be known to our young people that, in the ecclesiastical world, the Presbyterian Church, which some people would per-

suade them is too strict and too plain, occupies, with many other loyal Christians, the front line of defence against this assault of the allied forces upon the authority of the inspired word. Many saints in the Anglican Church appreciate our earnest contention for a principle unwisely sacrificed by their fathers. No man can deny the plain simplicity of the original churches. The question is, shall we forsake this example so clearly indicated by inspired pens, and countenance experiments and innovations without end, in order to meet the many demands of human nature? Shall we substitute an elaborate ornamentation for this characteristic of the gospel, and, using a rationalistic disregard for the teaching of the Scriptures as the basis of our experiments, follow the example of Rome, by dressing up Christianity in a costume which misleads one class into superstition, and suggests mockery to another? You will not understand me as condemning particular postures as wrong in themselves. Kneeling at communion, and facing the East, would be innocent acts, if not associated with error and superstition. What I mean is, that deviations from the scriptural modes, introduced as *improvements* by ecclesiastical usurpation, for a doctrinal purpose, are unjustifiable. The Lord's Supper was instituted at a passover table after

the manner of a meal. Kneeling at meals is without precedent. The change was made to indicate "the real presence." The Church of England retained the innovation, because it was unwilling to renounce the doctrinal views which it suggests. And this was done in disregard of the scruples of many of her members.

LETTER VI.

DEAR ———: Some of the Puritans, in the ardor of controversy, undoubtedly carried matters to extremes. But on the main question of respect for the institutions and methods of the apostles, as we learn them from the New Testament, I must defend them. The proper aim of an honest reformation is to return to the originals as far as possible. Is not this a plain and undeniable proposition? The Calvinists sought to restore the simple worship of the New Testament churches, in which no priesthood, no altar, no sacrifices for propitiation are seen. They were opposed to the sign of the cross, easterly position, ceremonial confirmation, and kneeling in the eucharist, as vehicles of that superstitious tendency which had carried away the Church of Rome so far from the gospel type. The justice of their opposition depends upon the inquiry whether the churches founded by the apostles were founded on a permanent or provisional basis. Presbyterianism affirms the former, Anglicanism the latter.

In our own day the spirit of *improvement*

upon the usages of apostolical times is very active in the church generally. Certain parties are exacting and domineering in behalf of changes they propose, and will not listen with respect when it is suggested that Christ or Paul did this or said that. We are reminded that they lived in comparatively unenlightened times, and their customs and opinions were adapted to an environment that has long passed away. Paul inculcated "shamefacedness and sobriety" on Christian women, and wrote, under inspiration, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The spirit of this age actually laughs this reference to scorn, and, sustained by the applause of the multitude, puts woman forward in worldly professions, and exalts her to a place of teacher and ruler in the church.

A right to reverse the precepts and precedents of the Holy Scriptures was maintained by the corrupted church in the dark ages, then sanctioned by the ruling powers in the Church of England, and is now claimed in the name of liberty by large sections of various denominations. On this vital question, Presbyterians are confronted by Romanism, Ritualism, and Liberalism—by papists, churchmen, and hosts of others in different sects—all contending, on different grounds, against the authority of the

sacred text. And yet there are few private Christians who begin to realize the gravity of the issue, or feel a proper interest in our defence of the Bible.

The modes in which religious services were conducted in apostolic times may not all be obligatory, but departures from them cannot be vindicated which sacrifice any of their intended significance. For example, if our Baptist brethren are right in supposing that a burial is the design of the rite of baptism, there can be no excuse for using any substitute for immersion. Their strongest argument is drawn from Paul's language, so construed, in his epistles to the Romans and Colossians. If, on the other hand, the "pouring out" of the Spirit from above is to be represented in the sacrament, the introduction of immersion, to signify another idea, was a change that cannot be excused. The same is true in reference to all the significant observances of which we read in the Book of Acts. Peter rebuked Cornelius for paying him homage as if divine, and John received an angel's rebuke for a similar honor to him in the Book of Revelation. Such facts determine important doctrine, if we are careful to heed them. They condemn most clearly the worship of saints, which Rome inculcates. The pious dead in heaven are still human creatures,

removed from sight and communication with us. What space intervenes between us and them we know not. Rome teaches her subjects to pay them divine honor, ask them for divine grace, as if the Scriptures contained no such prohibitions. If the Bible may be set aside at will, as her oracles and many Protestants hold, the worship of Peter and Mary can be easily defended by formal argument. Recurring to these facts, I feel warranted in imputing to Mary, and Peter, and the angels of God, the remonstrance made to John in the vision: "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

Such is the testimony of the Bible against idolatry; and yet Rome, with loud professions on her lips of respect for the word of God, treats its solemn warnings with open contempt, and puts into the mouths of her worshipers prayer and praise of such a character that they express and imply an ascription to Mary and others of the dead of the highest divine attributes. Even more, they represent God the Son as stern and unrelenting, and direct the worshiper to appeal to Mary as the more compassionate of the two.

This impiety, inculcated by the Church of

Rome, belongs to her assumed right to mould Christianity according to her will. But Anglicanism deliberately forced upon its subjects a number of the innovations of this apostate hierarchy, as improvements upon the primitive simplicity of the church. We ought, whilst protesting, to protest against the ceremonies that continue to express in Protestant churches distaste for the style of worship which the primitive saints maintained. For the fact that neither the Acts nor the Epistles indicate an elaborate and ornamental routine in the worship of that day, is strong evidence that such a service as the English prayer-book prescribes was unknown to the original church.

It is a fair inference from this absence of allusions to æsthetic appliances in the primitive worship, that the apostles intentionally refrained from any return to the attractive devices of the temple worship of the Jews. The whole symbolical system introduced by Moses was abolished by the gospel. Two sacramental rites were provided, of the simplest character possible. No ornamental device adheres to either of them to impress the outward senses. The gospel in its simple forms appeals to the thoughts and affections of the worshiper, and does not seek to minister to

devotion by the use of the *fine arts*, which are necessarily unavailable for humanity in its ordinary conditions. The church is expected to follow her Lord, not in gorgeous robes, or princely state, but in a lowly form corresponding to his *humiliation*.

LETTER VII.

DEAR ———: There was obvious reason for the preference displayed by the Tudors, and the Stuarts, and their abettors in the church, for a ceremonious and stately worship. Pageantry is a matter of immense importance in a government of which subordination and servility are the main pillars. The reformed religion could not be allowed to introduce republican plainness where it might interfere with the proper gradation of society. The simple style implied in the New Testament was not suited to people of rank, much less to royal worshipers. James I. put the sentiment of the court in his times in expressive words, when he said that Presbyterianism was a religion “not fit for a gentleman.” As gentlemen were defined by his class at that day, it certainly was not. It could not find in its divine charter any warrant for an elaborate ceremonial in its worship, and understood that the gospel was expected to “make the last first and the first last.” If caste and class were to continue, the principle of classification would be entirely new.

The English dynasties, before the Revolution of 1688, hedged themselves about with pomp and circumstance. Elizabeth exacted the most humiliating servility. Of course court influence, being allowed to shape the external form of the church, and not restrained by reverence for the Scriptures, sought to adapt it to the gradation of society. Artificial arrangements were necessary, and many rules of observance and etiquette were the consequence. Ceremoniousness in the church was the natural adjunct of the subordination required in an absolute monarchy. A religion fit for a king must be hedged with heraldry, and suggest servility. The Romish hierarchy, substituting the king for the pope, must be retained to a considerable extent in England, in order to impart to distinctions of rank the sanction of religion.

The spirit of the gospel counted for very little in the eyes of parties who were so deeply interested in maintaining their own ascendancy. Deeming the threefold order of the clergy, upon which Rome insisted, essential to royalty and the peerage, they contended for it with undying tenacity. From that day to this the same three orders have been treated as an original principle in the church of Christ, necessary to its valid organization, and, no matter what may

be the spirit or the letter of the Scriptures, other parties plead them in vain. A stubborn aristocracy does not yield to such feeble arguments as Bible texts. Such authorities as Luke xxii. 25, 26, fall like rain upon a rock: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

These words were spiritual, of course, and may not be pushed to an extreme. But it is impossible to reconcile the Romish or the Anglican hierarchy with them. This system of subordination, in rank as well as office, is directly in conflict with the spirit of Christ, who exemplified it by rendering menial service to his disciples. I say nothing at present about the letter of the word. The spirit of the gospel is condescension. It forbids the very thing which a typical Englishman usually worships. Official distinctions may be necessary in the church, but *rank* is absolutely condemned. Those who imposed it with all its symbols upon the English church did so with the Bible before them, and their eyes open. Such a departure from its spirit and letter points us back to what has already been affirmed, that the

word of God was shamefully ignored at the Reformation in England, in spite of the protests of the Puritans. It was in support of despotism and aristocracy that the right of rulers to ordain rites and ceremonies, and otherwise change the external form of Christianity, was urged with so much vehemence. The precepts of Christ did not weigh a feather in the scales against the lust of power and display.

The corner-stone of this grave error was the false assumption that the presbyter of the New Testament, usually translated "elder," was properly represented by the word *priest*. That this is not true is evident to scholars everywhere. Canon Farrar, a very eminent member of the English priesthood, has recently rebuked the Ritualists for pressing the use of the word "priest," which he forcibly shows is never applied to Christian ministers in the New Testament. The same familiar fact has been urged for centuries, but the hierarchy of the Anglican church clings to that word as they would to a sacrament, and far more warmly than they do to the articles of their faith. They so highly value it that they would suffer their church to be rent in twain rather than surrender it.

They cling to the unscriptural term in preference to the scriptural word presbyter, for a

purpose, well knowing that it is a Romish imposture associated with the so-called sacrifice of the mass. It is a daring liberty with the word of God, to insist upon applying to the disciples of Christ, contrary to his and their own example, a title they studiously avoided using. For, if the functions had been the same, no title would have been more natural and appropriate. Its absence is equal to a voluminous argument against it. But all arguments fail when addressed to unwilling minds. The retention of this term to designate the order of Christian ministers corresponding to presbyters, although clearly contrary to the Scriptures, is favorable to their theory of the gradation of the ministry, and would furnish more plausibility for their unauthorized ceremonies. There were grades in the Mosaic priesthood who had charge of temple and altar, and the term comports in many points with the notion of a revival of it in the Christian church.

But our argument is not theoretical in the least. We object on the ground that the Bible gives no countenance to the use of the word "priest" to designate Christian ministers as distinct from laymen. All Christians are to be "kings and priests unto God," in a sense otherwise explained. A threefold clergy, of bishops,

priests, and deacons, is about as foreign to the New Testament church as dukes, earls, and barons would be as constituents in the government of the United States. I propose to make this exposure more obvious as I proceed.

LETTER VIII.

DEAR ———: I think you will agree with me that an unbiased reader of the New Testament would never infer from what it has to say about deacons that they were provided by our Lord as the lowest of three distinct orders of clergy. The inflexible law of the Anglican church requires that a minister of the gospel shall never be made a priest, that is, a presbyter, without being first ordained as a deacon. And the deacon is held to be essentially a probationer for the priesthood, to assist the incumbent in the sacraments, and serve him in the distribution of alms. I care little for unnecessary criticism of this provision, so far as concerns the functions of the diaconal office. These are not very different from those assigned to it by the Presbyterian Church. But I wish from the start to point out the great error of the Anglican system in claiming from the Bible a threefold ministry with the diaconate as the lowest rank.

It seems to be the fate of its authors and chief supporters to entangle themselves inextricably in lengthy and inconsistent argumenta-

tion on the subject. It is amazing that the able and accomplished organizers of the same system in the United States have, in their preface to the ordination service, commenced with these words: "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's church — bishops, priests, and deacons." How a diligent reading of Holy Scripture could afford any historical information concerning the orders in the church, *after* the canon of Scripture was closed, is beyond all our powers of comprehension. An Irish bull is not supposable, and we are forced to interpret it as a claim that the New Testament *foreshadows* the Anglican system. But this concedes that, historically speaking, the New Testament is against it.

My object is to show that a diligent reading of Holy Scripture leads, as straight as a line can be drawn, to the conclusion that, in the apostolic age, if not afterwards, no such gradation in the ministry was established. The ordination of deacons in the Jerusalem church was expressly for the purpose of enabling the apostles to give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And it is to be noted, that the word ministry is the same as dea-

conship in the original. The seven were to be deacons in "serving tables," whilst the apostles were deacons in preaching. It was a division of labor, and no mention is made of any priestly function, but a distinct intimation is given that "serving tables" interfered with the duty of preaching the word.

From this clear statement of the supposed origin of the office, I judge that the diaconate was founded, not to assist a higher order in sacramental or teaching duties, but to render service in the distribution of alms. As a religious office, it is a stepping-stone to more spiritual functions, and very naturally Philip was afterwards found serving his Lord as a preacher. But we have no evidence that Stephen did so. His address appears to me, not as a Christian sermon, but as the personal vindication of a martyr. The duties of deacons, as such, were evidently unconnected with an altar or a pulpit, and of such a character that others were enabled with less distraction to pray with and instruct the disciples. The office is an order for service to the church, but not an order in the ministry of the word. But this office existed in the church, not after the times of the apostles merely, but under their administration. Holy Scripture, instead of representing the deacon as a probationer for the

ministry of the word, exhibits him historically as a servant, to do what would embarrass the preaching of that word. If the ministry of the word is intended by the threefold arrangement of the Anglican system, the Scripture, apart from "ancient authors," is clearly against the deacon as one of its orders.

But it is still more evident that the deacon, as "assistant to the priesthood," has no scriptural standing, if we have shown conclusively that there is no priest in the Christian church distinct from the body of believers. If an order of that kind does not exist, there cannot be an assistant. This fact appears incontrovertibly true, if we consider the requisite qualifications for the presbyter as laid down by Paul. See Epistle to Titus i. 5-9 inclusive. There is no intimation in the whole passage of any sacrificial rite, but simply the duties of a ruler in the church, and such a character as becomes him who undertakes them. If presbyter meant priest, as these Anglicans contend, we not only have to explain the change of name, but the inexplicable omission of all reference to sacrifice or priestly intercession. There is, therefore, not a shred of scriptural proof discernible to sustain the notion of a triple gradation of a priesthood, or a threefold ministry of the word. The deacons must be counted out, except as

dispensers of the alms of the church, which is a business foreign to and incompatible with the ministry of the word, and equally incompatible with the supposed priesthood of the apostles.

Now, I must beg the young people of our church through you to bear in mind that I am contending against the claim of *scriptural* proof for a ministry in three grades, including the deacon; and I ask of each reader, however diligent, if he can count the deacon in on any ground whatever. And above all, I ask if a system of church order, coming in *after* the time of the apostles, would by any sort of logic be demonstrated by an appeal to the Scriptures, which were written *during* that time. How in reason's name, could the American form of government be represented as in operation *after* the Revolution, in books written before that great war began? A prophetic episcopate might be so maintained, but the *historical*—never! You are aware that it is continually urged as the basis of union, that the scriptural and historic episcopate shall be adopted by all denominations. We find, however, that the Scriptures are only claimed as proof that the said system existed in fact after they were completely written. It would hardly accord with our ideas of a rational process in

law to undertake the conviction of a prisoner accused of murder on the evidence of an eye-witness who was in his grave when the crime was committed. It is as clear as noon-day that "ancient authors," and not the Bible, are the true source of this Romish system.

LETTER IX.

DEAR ———: The number *three* is an object of superstitious veneration with Englishmen generally. The insular mind cannot conceive of a reputable government without king, lords, and commons, or a church without bishops, priests, and deacons. But the reasons for this faith are in both cases traditional. Both systems have been handed down from antiquity, and are therefore sacred in the eyes of the average Anglican. But when we point him to the most ancient of all books, and the most sacred of all authorities bearing upon the subject of the church, he falls into confusion, and loses his reckoning. The mystical number three cannot stand the glare of biblical light. The deacon, as an assistant of priests or bishops in their clerical functions, disappears when the darkness of tradition gives way before the light of the New Testament.

The same fate attends upon the *bishop*, as a rank *above* presbyters. In Anglican eyes, a bishop is a clerical grandee, with a province of priests and parishes under his sway. A considerable volume might be compiled of ecclesi-

astical words and phrases peculiar to England, and unknown to the Scriptures. But when the historical claim, for such an office as an English bishop holds, is candidly investigated, it is found that inspired history directly condemns it, as it does the Anglican diaconate. This not only appears from the concession of the Episcopal Church in the United States, that the three orders take their date after the death of the apostles, but from the explicit acknowledgment of many eminent Anglican authorities. It is, indeed, impossible to deny that, in the New Testament, the word bishop is used interchangeably with presbyter. Few writers of character have ever questioned the significant fact. The English theory is, that a change of titles occurred after the time of the apostles. But my inquiry refers to the apostolic age. We think the Scriptures ought to precede the traditions which followed them. If the uninspired writers of subsequent ages are left out of view, and the Bible has its proper credit, the candid reader will find that not only the deacon disappears as the lowest of three clerical orders, but the bishop, as a diocesan, will vanish with equal velocity.

So far as the historical authority of the New Testament prevails, its written testimony reads that the presbyter was a bishop. In the Angli-

can system, the priest is never a bishop unless consecrated to a new and superior rank. How such an episcopate can be *historical*, when the most reliable and oldest historical authority on the subject in explicit terms contradicts it, is incomprehensible. And yet this is the form in which all denominations are now invited to adopt it.

All educated ecclesiastics in the Anglican church are perfectly aware of the facts. They know with absolute positiveness that the word *episcopos*, which is translated "bishop," signifies in the New Testament generally the same office as presbyter. But with the mass of the lay membership, including the humble and devout in very large proportion, the opposite impression is prevalent. I suppose nine out of ten, when reading the New Testament, and perceiving the frequency of the word bishop, conclude habitually that the title is applied, as in the Church of England, to a dignitary who exercises jurisdiction over a body of priests and a number of parishes. Practically, the belief of these good people is, that the Scriptures are in their favor, and that the Presbyterians are the parties who irreverently ignore the holy word of God! We need not resent this rather harmless notion of multitudes of Christians. Antecedents of controlling influ-

ence have conspired to create the erroneous impression.

But we cannot easily excuse the more conscious parties who know what they do, and do it with the intention to sustain, under color of the Scriptures, a system of church government which comes wholly from tradition.

It is a favorite notion with these ingenious polemics that, although the threefold gradation is not visible in the *letter* of the New Testament, its germ is wrapped up in the folds, as seed in a pod. This is a substitution of the fancy of the reader for the clear enunciation of an author. It cannot be true of the historical parts of the book, since the function of history is to reveal and not to conceal its facts. The suggestion insults the unbiased mind. It is in direct conflict with the plain language to which it refers. Two cannot be the germ of three. When Paul addressed the bishops and deacons in the church at Philippi, he recognized, not two orders of clerics, but two classes of officers having diverse functions. And this incidental fact can no more be a germ of *three* classes of such officers in the church of a future age than the association of Paul and Barnabas was a germ of the Council of Trent.

All such efforts to hunt up one's foregone conclusions in a book of divine revelation, as the

pathologist searches for the germs of disease, appear to the lovers of truth for its own sake a strange liberty to take with "the oracles of God." But we are thus reminded again of the old conflict between Churchman and Puritan, in which the latter protested against the alleged right of rulers to use their authority when no express prohibition could be found in the Bible. A free construction of this claim is the prolific mother of inventions in the church, and may justify a thousand abuses. If strict construction is necessary in administering human law, much more should we be cautious in handling the written instructions of the word of God. If that word were duly respected, the Anglican system would not remain for an hour. The "three orders" would be promptly abandoned. This will be abundantly demonstrated hereafter, by an appeal to the sacred text, with the hope that the reader will agree with us that the closer we follow the precepts and precedents of the New Testament the safer we shall be.

LETTER X.

DEAR ———: The word bishop, to which the churchmen attach so much importance, is a mere imitation in English of the Greek word for overseer—*episcopos*. The Saxon mouth shortened it at both ends, and converted it into “bishop.” We must remember that the true translation is preserved in Acts xx. 28 of the Authorized Version. The New Version changes it into bishop, to make it conform everywhere to the same rule. So now, the true translation—*overseer*—is found only in the margin of the New and one text of the Old Version. But “bishop” is no translation, but an awkward imitation of the Greek, like baptize. In both cases a great deal of trouble might have been avoided if these Greek words had been actually translated. The failure to do so has entailed upon the modern church two forms of exclusive churchmanship that cannot be reconciled, and contribute nothing but pretension and bitterness to our discussions.

Paul was addressing “the elders of the church” at Ephesus, whom he had summoned

to meet him at Miletus. The Greek term for "elder" is, here and elsewhere, *presbuteros*. The Anglicans insist upon using the word priest instead of elder. According to them, Paul was speaking to the "priests" of Ephesus. But he gives them the title of overseers, or bishops in the verse referred to: "The Holy Ghost hath made you (the presbyters or priests) bishops (that is, overseers) over the Christian disciples at Ephesus." (See Acts xx. 28.) Such is his precise language. It leaves no room for question by any one who respects the inspired word. The persons addressed were bishops over a small congregation of converts. Not a shadow can rest upon the fact. A man must be desperately anxious to establish a theory of his own preference if he sets to work to break the force of this fact, which is worth a thousand theories.

We are told in this same Book of Acts that Paul and Barnabas, on revisiting the little groups of their converts, "ordained elders (or priests, as the Anglican persists in calling them) in every church." Clearly, then, this was an ordination of bishops—priests and bishops being the same by English authority! When afterwards Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus, he instructed him to "ordain elders," bishops, of course, in every city. This was doubtless the

same as "every church," as the congregations must have been small. The same thing appears in the address to the Philippian church. It contained a body of bishops and one of deacons. No mention is made of elders or priests, and we are forced to conclude that the elders were the bishops. These bishops, or elders, or priests, call them what we will, were a body of officers over one congregation. To deny it would justify a denial of the whole Bible. The Anglican theorists cannot deny it, and their habit is to yield the point, so far as language goes, and to argue at length that the *apostles* were the diocesans, and that the title of bishop was afterwards *transferred* to their successors. So, then, the bulk of Anglican readers of the New Testament are all wrong in supposing the Presbyterians have neglected the Scriptures in not providing diocesan bishops to govern their church.

I will have something to say about successors to the apostles in the sequel. At present your fixed attention is invited to the constitution of the little churches founded by Paul. Undeniably they were each under the pastoral care of a body of men scripturally-called elders and bishops. They had the sacraments, but of course no apostle was present in the church of Corinth when the eucharist was profaned.

(See 1 Cor. xi. 21.) The address to the bishops of Ephesus shows clearly that they were pastors of the flock. It is, therefore, beyond dispute that these were not vacant churches. They were equipped for service, with a body of ruling elders or bishops in charge, which no Anglican parish in either hemisphere is known to have.

This departure from the constitution of the apostolical churches is not only chargeable upon the Anglican system, but upon others in our Protestant ranks. Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist Churches are organized in a variety of ways, but none of them under the care of a body of bishops, like the churches of Greece, Asia Minor, and Crete in the days of Paul. Presbyterians all over the world, and some Lutherans, have such a government, and can say that they are after the apostolic model. Why is this difference seen? I answer, because we have been strict constructionists, and have aimed to follow the example set by the inspired founders of Christianity. Others were content at the Reformation in England to allow uninspired men to regulate matters at discretion. The Anglicans fell back upon tradition, and Congregationalists and Methodists have subsequently followed human suggestions of expediency, and adopted opposite forms of govern-

ment. Methodism concentrates power in the conference, and puts a local congregation under a single pastor, or a travelling preacher. The Congregationalists and Baptists concentrate power in the hands of the people of a local church, and have no body of ruling and teaching elders recognized as bishops. I refer to these facts to impress upon my young readers the peculiar zeal of Presbyterians for *scriptural authority* in the matter of organization. It is not claimed that this system is enjoined, but that it is primitive and apostolical, and is the safest one to follow. And we humbly think the multitude of divisions among Protestants is due to indifference among English Christians to the examples on record.

But I especially point to the incontrovertible fact of Scripture, that bishop means *overseer*, not over a diocese, but over a congregation, and not by one man, but by several associated together. No matter what some of the fathers, who wrote *after* the age of the apostles, may say about bishops, the highest authority of the Bible ought to be respected by a sincere Christian. The young Presbyterian ought to be well posted on this one point, for the reason that zealous Anglicans are very apt to argue their own superiority on the ground of antiquity. Their system is, in fact, the deliberate

construction of courtiers and churchmen under the Tudors and the Stuarts. Denying this, they plead an antiquity up to the second century; but *we* go still further back, and claim to copy the system of the apostles themselves.

LETTER XI.

DEAR ———: The theory of the Anglican churchmen, that the apostles were diocesan bishops, and that after their death their successors were not called apostles, but took the title which they themselves had given to the order immediately below them, viz., that of bishop—that theory is as amusing a study as history presents. The Church of Rome has had among its champions some of the greatest of men, and yet these able advocates have not been ashamed to defend the most puerile fictions in her behalf. They would undertake to demonstrate that our Lord, in instituting the Supper, held his body in his hands; or that two prayers, offered at opposite points on the globe simultaneously to the Virgin Mary, would at once reach her ears in heaven—no matter how far away! There is no proposition too self-contradictory for such ecclesiastical athletes. But, although the Church of England formally renounced popery, it retained a number of popish ideas, and inherited some degree of the Romish facility for incredible conceits. It is well known that the divine right of kings to

their crowns was taught by many of her ablest writers not many generations back. The sophistry of Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, on this subject, at the Revolution of 1688, furnished an occasion for the matchless satire of Lord Macaulay. A number of the bishops of that day puzzled their own brains almost beyond endurance in the effort to reconcile their allegiance to two different dynasties.

But the problem of conflicting allegiance has long since given way to another, which now exercises the ecclesiastical intellect of England. This problem is to establish the divine right of the Anglican bishops to an inheritance of the prerogatives of the first apostles by successive consecration. They do not claim all the apostolic gifts, but only those which are permanent in the order, as administrators of the different dioceses. But they do claim that the apostles were the diocesan bishops of the primitive church, and that this office has descended to them by successive ordinations without a break. I wish to engage the attention of the reader to an inquiry into this theory, which seems to many of us quite equal in absurdity to the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the divine right of a Nero.

In the first place, as connected with the preceding letter, it is pertinent to ask how it came

to pass that the immediate "successors of the apostles" were designated by a title then belonging to the subordinate order of presbyters (or priests). One would suppose that if Titus ordained a corps of bishops in each of the cities of Crete, the subsequent ordination of one man as bishop over the island would have created a confusion of tongues akin to that of Babel. Only imagine the scene that such a change would make in the United States army, if the title of general were suddenly suppressed, and that of lieutenant were applied to the officer commanding a brigade! Such would have been the effect if the governing functions of Paul had been, after his death, transferred to a Cretan bishop, without indicating his succession to the apostolate by a corresponding title. Strange, indeed, if titles were so very scarce, that they were forced to use one already appropriated to a lower order. A lieutenant put in command of several regiments, and still designated as *lieutenant*, would disorganize an army! It is often said that there is nothing in a name. But there is a great deal in the use we make of it. A rose would be quite as sweet under another name, but if it were applied to some other flower, the confusion would be obvious and embarrassing. Such a change would be a calamity, in church or state.

Conscious of this difficulty, the prelatial polemic suggests that the title was *gradually* withdrawn from the "priests" and conferred upon the successors of the apostles. But this only aggravates the trouble. They claim that the apostles had successors to their office as rulers of dioceses. That office must have received a new name when that of apostle was dropped. No such successor is known in history as an apostle. Some other title must have at once taken its place, or the office went on without a name. The successor was the —— of Ephesus, or the —— of Antioch! The notion of a gradual change is plainly no relief from the difficulty involved in the theory, but increases the trouble. An officer newly commissioned to command a brigade would not be appointed without designating his grade. The successors of the apostles must have been consecrated to an office with a name attached, and if it was not *bishop* at once, it must have been something else. What was it? They say it was after a time borrowed from a subordinate grade, the bishop of a parish, and the latter by degrees surrendered his title and assumed that of "priest." But, in the meantime, the office of "successor to the apostle" was absolutely *nameless*. A living Anglican bishop, under this theory, is the present terminus of an unbroken line ex-

tending back to the apostles. Of course, some one occupied the other end, and was ordained by the apostles. Of course, some words of consecration were used, such as, "By the laying on of my hands, and by divine authority, I now ordain thee as the *blank* of Ephesus, or the *blank* of Corinth!"

It is far more reasonable to imagine the word *bishop* to have been used, and we are thrown back into the confusion of bishops of provinces and bishops of parishes at the same time, as if companies and brigades were now officered by lieutenants in our regular army. What a mess it would make! We know the change came in gradually, but cannot reconcile it with the immediate succession. The whole trouble is due to the unfounded conceit of these churchmen, that the apostles established an order in the church superior to those bishops who were presbyters. Drop that idea, and it becomes credible that a corrupted church should, in time, advance one of these primitive bishops to superintend the others, and fix upon him the title of bishop, retaining the designation of presbyter for the inferior clergy.

LETTER XII.

DEAR ———: It is not my object to create prejudice against the Church of England. I am dealing freely with it, but merely to impress upon the reader that it has gone further astray from the simplicity of primitive Christianity than our own communion, without implying that the latter is above criticism. The millennium alone will see a perfect church. The English Church is Protestant and evangelical in its fundamental principles, as found in its articles of religion and much of its literature. One who abandons Presbyterianism and goes over to Anglicanism does not apostatize from Christianity, but gives up a more scriptural system for one that is less so. The error is easily condoned, if committed ignorantly. It is a graver offence when committed with open eyes. I am about to show that the Anglican bishops are no successors of the apostles, except in a sense applicable to the humblest parish priest. I hold that all ordained Christian ministers are successors in respect to their commission. But there are overwhelming reasons for declaring that diocesan episcopacy

had no existence under the apostles, and could not have been transmitted to others. This proposition will be handled by and by. I now ask you to consider the contrast actually visible between these bishops and the members of the apostolic college. The latter were, to the last, examples of that humility and plainness of life which the Master had enjoined. They were not "lords over God's heritage," but models of lowliness that made them acceptable associates of the artisans and peasantry of their time. How is it with their alleged successors? There are men of fervent piety and profound personal humility among them, undoubtedly. But the Anglican system makes them *ex officio* peers of the realm. There is no duke in England, royalty excepted, who is not outranked by the Archbishop of Canterbury. They all sit in the House of Lords. "Your lordship" is the address accorded to each. They reside in palaces, they receive pompous respect in public, and some of them enjoy great revenues.

In these externals I am sure that the English prelates are in nowise successors of the apostles. The spirit of Christ may be retained in their personal character, but the system itself is manifestly contrary to the office of apostle as constituted by him. No greater contrast to Paul making tents, or Peter sojourning with a

tanner, can be found than that which is constantly presented by cardinals at Rome, and church dignitaries in London. Of course an exact resemblance could not reasonably be expected. But it would be a becoming respect to the spirit of the gospel if this ecclesiastical knighthood were dismounted, and the working clergy of the church better supplied with food and raiment.

The apostolic office was a *service*, and not an investment with rank. The Lord himself was a servant of servants. When the pope became a king, a high crime was committed against the essential spirit of Christianity. When the English clergy accepted worldly homage, and joined the worldly aristocracy of the kingdom, a wound was inflicted upon our religion which ages of humiliation cannot heal. Pride and ambition are seen in other sects, and greatly injure the usefulness of the ministry. But the English hierarchy surpasses all others in the Protestant world for worldly pomp and magnificence. It is indisputable, on the other hand, that our Lord intended his ministers in all ages to be exemplars of his religion in their manner of life. But it is hard for a peer of England, surrounded with wealth and pageantry, to practice the condescension of the gospel.

It is equally hard for a people who are edu-

cated to regard one class of ministers as above another in *rank* to avoid the impression that rank everywhere makes. In all parts of the world such bishops are invested in the popular mind with a social importance which is denied to the subordinate classes. A snobbish homage is paid them, whether they seek it or not. Even in our republican country, the secular press and the staring crowd are ready to accord to a Romish magnate, or an Anglican bishop, such a recognition as no plain minister of the gospel is apt to receive. It is a natural infirmity too deeply seated to be always suppressed by the democratic principle. Assumption, however false, generally secures its object at the hands of the thoughtless and ignorant masses. The world certainly believes in rank, pomp, and ceremony. The spiritually-minded alone perceive how foreign they are to the religion of Christ.

Now, in all these respects, it is obvious that the hierarchies of prelatical churches are strange "successors" of apostles who were forbidden to indulge in power and parade. The aspiration of most of them would seem to be for a showy contrast to the twelve fishermen or lowly Jesus who founded the primitive church. If, as has been suggested by one of these "successors," the immediate inheritors

of the apostolic rank relinquished the apostolic title out of pure humility, we have the modern prelate, strangely oblivious of that lowly sentiment, claiming the *substance* of the office, whilst relinquishing its shadow, the title of apostle. It is our suggestion that, under the circumstances, the secular world might take the liberty to ignore the blushes of these spiritual peers, and press upon them, however unwilling, the ancient name of the office. "His grace, the Apostle of Springfield," would fitly designate the gentleman who was so shocked at the consecration of Phillips Brooks.

I may be very dull in my perceptions, but cannot see exactly the ground of all this modesty in regard to the *name* of an office which is fought for, so far as its rank and authority are concerned, with a daring unsurpassed. One would think that a dignity and power that have withstood the storms of more than eighteen hundred years, might now warrant the assumption of the primitive title by men who have so long enjoyed them in *possession*.

LETTER XIII.

DEAR ———: The Anglican claim, that the apostles held an office of the diocesan order, was not set up by the first English Reformers. It was an after-thought of others to sustain their pretension against the scriptural arguments of the Puritans. You, as a diligent reader of the Bible, know well that it is not intimated in the New Testament. Had it been true, the Acts and Epistles would have shown it clearly. One quotation from the Psalms in the Acts (chap. 1) uses the word *bishoprick* in the Old Version, in reference to Judas: "His bishoprick let another take." In the New Version it is rendered "office." In Greek it is *episcopen*, which means oversight. In the same chapter, the office is called, in both versions, a "ministry," or deaconship, the Greek word being *diaconia*. Upon this little thread the after-thought hangs. It is argued that Judas was a bishop of the Anglican type.

This plea amounts to nothing with intelligent people whose minds are free to judge. You know, I doubt not, that Presbyterians have

bishops in far greater numbers than the English church. With us bishops and elders are the same. We are Episcopalians on a large scale, and every congregation is a bishoprick. We attach very little importance to the official title, holding with Paul that any one of the various designations he employs may be applied to the office; as pastor, or shepherd, presbyter, or elder, overseer, or bishop, will answer the purpose. We do not object to the use of the last-named title as unscriptural, because its scriptural meaning is the real foundation of *our* doctrine of the spiritual ministry. It is plain that the bishoprick of Judas, if it signified any specific office, meant that office which *episcopos* represents in the New Testament, and that is admitted to be the eldership.

But the ordination of "a successor" to Judas, as given in the same chapter, ought to determine what such a succession means. A "successor of the apostles" ought to be what Matthias was when so ordained. But on examination of the passage we find that he was appointed to be *one of twelve witnesses of the life of Jesus Christ from the baptism of John to the day of his ascension*. There was no diocese in the case, but a peculiar and provisional office called "apostleship," to which, from its very nature, there could be no future succes-

sion. On the death of John, "the twelve" disappeared. The principal function of an apostle was to be a living eye-witness of Christ in the flesh; and such a function could not possibly be transmitted.

You will agree with me, I feel sure, that "the twelve," as such, have now no successors. Only such apostles as Paul or Barnabas can be claimed as prototypes of the modern prelate with any decency. But even Paul seems to rely upon the fact that he had seen Jesus after his ascension. No explanation is given us of his apostleship, except his exclamations, "Am I not an apostle?" "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" In Galatians i. he is particular to affirm that his commission was extraordinary, and not through human hands. But the title is also applied to Barnabas, who claimed nothing of the kind. Who commissioned *him* is not revealed. If any modern prelate imagines himself to be a successor to the apostolate, that of Barnabas alone is available for him, and his pedigree must be traceable to that single questionable case. I call it questionable, because Barnabas was certainly not one of the "twelve," and we have no evidence that he "had seen the Lord." Possibly he was called an apostle simply on account of his work as an evangelist, in association with

Paul. But I affirm nothing, for the reason that I know nothing. A succession founded on his history would be worthless.

The chief function of any officer constitutes his office. That of "the twelve," and of Paul, was direct testimony to the fundamental facts in the history of Christ. The commission was, Go into all the world and proclaim these facts from your personal knowledge, and baptize the converts. If any modern prelate can show these proofs, he can properly claim to be a "successor." But this is impossible. They now claim to inherit only the authority to govern, to ordain, and to confirm; and these prerogatives, they maintain, belonged to the apostles as such, and were committed by them to an order superior to presbyters. The only persons known from Scripture to have been clothed with powers below the apostle, yet regarded as above the presbyters of their time by these prelatical logicians, were Timothy and Titus. They were in no proper sense apostles, and being subject to Paul's authority, were certainly not his equals. If superior to the bishops appointed over the churches, the three-fold hierarchy would be plausible. But it is clear that they were not successors to the apostles, from whom they did not inherit the chief function of that office. The Anglican

bishop, if a regular "successor," must be a successor of such order as was held by Timothy and Titus. The question is, were they the prototypes of the highest three orders?

That Timothy and Titus carried into effect certain commands of Paul, there can be no doubt. But the thing we wish to know is the nature of these commands. If they were such as the presbyter-bishops were not permitted to perform, we will admit that these two agents of the apostle held an office necessarily permanent in the church. But this supposed superior order of clergy appears to the reader of the New Testament a mere figment of the imagination. In the first place, there was no name for it. They were not apostles, and by hypothesis they were not presbyter-bishops. And, besides, we discover no evidence of their authority to add to their own order. The duties assigned to them were apparently temporary. To our eyes they were commissioners, who went away under instructions, and returned to make their reports. If they were ever inducted into permanent sees, we hear nothing of it. The impression the narrative makes is that they were *deputies*, charged with certain urgent transactions committed to them by Paul. But these things were to organize and ordain, and we have still to learn

by whom these functions must be performed afterwards—by a nameless order of which they were the representatives, or by the bishops, who were identical with the elders.

LETTER XIV.

DEAR ———: There is no evidence in the New Testament of a distinct order of ministers intermediate between the apostles and scriptural bishops. The only ordination that the utmost presumption can refer to as possibly a consecration to such an office was that of Timothy by Paul, if an ordination is indicated by the text of 2 Timothy i. 6: "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee by the putting on of my hands." The imposition of hands did not always confer office. Often it was used in the bestowal of the Holy Ghost. Sometimes, also, in a special appointment, as when Paul and Barnabas were set apart as missionaries. We are not informed what the "putting on of hands" in this text conveyed. But it may be identical with that of 1 Timothy i. 14: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy; with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The latter seems to be a plain case of ordination by a court of presbyters, of whom Paul may have been one.

But still we remain ignorant of any such

order as a nameless, intermediate one. The strange fact forces itself on us, that if prelacy existed at the time, no allusion to it can be found in the New Testament, which abounds in precept and example concerning those bishops who were, beyond dispute, the pastors of the local congregations. It is not credible that Paul would have given such particular directions as to the qualifications necessary for bishops and deacons for one congregation, as are found in 1 Timothy iii. and also in Titus i., and yet left not a line in reference to a superior order, of such importance as diocesan bishops, to rule many ministers and churches. This supposed order is purely imaginary, for the overwhelming reasons we have presented, that it is overlooked by Paul, not even verbally distinguished, and not guarded by the cautions suggested in reference to the pastoral and diaconal offices. I would not dwell so long upon this negative proof but for the necessity of "line upon line," in order to fortify the youthful mind against the persistency of those who contend for a hierarchy. Who can possibly explain the silence of the New Testament concerning the *character* of men appointed to the supreme authority in the church, whilst great stress is laid upon the character of presbyter-bishops and deacons?

The right answer for a well-posted Presbyterian to make, when challenged to account for the government of our church "without bishops," is to deny the allegation. We have bishops in abundance, more commonly called pastors. Let him ask in return for some good reason in Scripture for calling an incumbent a "rector," and a pastor a "priest."

I am especially earnest in this inquiry, not because the prelatical office is a fundamental error, but because its advocates would never have invented it under the guidance of a reverent use of the New Testament. All through this discussion I bear in mind the purpose entertained at the beginning, to demonstrate the greater fidelity of Presbyterianism to the word of God written. This is illustrated very forcibly by this study of orders. We find the very words of Scripture in favor of a *government* in the church by presbyters, who are also called bishops, and a *service* in the church by deacons, who were appointed expressly to attend to the bodily wants of the membership. So far everything is plain sailing. But when it is urged that the supreme government was confided to an order *superior* to presbyters, we discover no trace of such an order in the New Testament, and invariably find its advocates impatient to hunt up some uninspired writer of

a subsequent age. This anxiety for proof from *tradition* is strong confirmation of our claim that Presbyterianism is the more scriptural system.

But, in order to deepen this conviction, I go much further. I appeal to the same plain letter of the word to show that, if we avert our minds from the extraordinary and incommunicable gifts of the true apostles, there is no clerical gradation in the New Testament. The oftener the book is read, the deeper is the impression that preaching the gospel was the highest function contemplated in the Christian ministry. The prelatical theory is all wrong on this subject. It exalts the priestly function above that of preaching the word, and regards rule and administration as superior in their nature to the proclamation of Christ. It is contradicted by the letter and spirit of the Scriptures. The great commission was, "Go and preach." Paul expressly declares "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." He, moreover, protests, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And unquestionably it was his greatest boast that he was permitted to wave this standard before mankind, and offer them salvation. He administered sacraments, and issued orders, and applied dis-

cipline in the church, we know; but those duties are not the themes of his enthusiasm. It was preaching that inflamed him with consuming zeal.

The epistles of Paul overflow with laudation of the preached word. He describes himself as one "ordained as a preacher and an apostle" (1 Timothy ii. 7; 2 Timothy i. 11), and, in the latter text, adds "teacher" to his spiritual calling. It would weary you to cite the whole array of proof texts to show that preaching was in his estimation the highest function of a Christian minister, and the principal means of salvation. Hear him exclaim, as in Romans x. 14: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Mark the contrast between him and the modern prelatival dignitary who boasts of his succession to the apostles! In the estimation of the latter, generally, the most important thing in a parish is a priest to minister at an altar, conduct a ceremonious worship by a service-book, administer the sacraments, observe the feasts noted in the almanac, and, as sole rector, govern the flock committed to his hands, and preach and teach from a little structure near the altar. But these last-named duties are represented as insignificant in comparison with his priestly performances in his sacred vestments, and when he "mag-

nifies his office," it is the administration of rites that he regards as his supreme work, and the preaching of the cross is an incident in the prescribed routine of one "in holy orders."

LETTER XV.

DEAR ———: My last letter contrasted the rector, or “priest,” as he is called, with a successor of the apostle to the Gentiles, in his chief calling as a preacher. I wish now to examine the Anglican theory, that one in that exalted office of preacher of the cross may not be scripturally entrusted with the inferior duties of so-called confirmation and ordination. They contend, with a zeal worthy of the highest consecration, that no presbyter-bishop, although ordained to preach and administer the most solemn rites of Christianity, is allowed by the New Testament to receive a convert into full fellowship by laying his hands upon him in prayer and invoking the Holy Ghost. This assumption is absolutely without foundation, but it is made by the Anglican church a primary principle of the system. Observe what it implies: the holy mysteries of baptism and the eucharist may be administered by a parish priest, but this rite of confirmation is the prerogative of a higher order, and is reserved to a nameless functionary, who is authorized by the Scriptures to lay hands “after the example of the holy apostles.” All this

implies a decision of the inspired word that the pastor of a church may not lay his hands in prayer for the Holy Ghost upon converts, without usurping a prerogative of his *superior*.

But where is the evidence of such a superior order? The act of laying on of hands was not confined to the apostles. Paul and Barnabas had the hands of "certain prophets and teachers" laid upon them at Antioch. The trouble is that the Anglican church understands, or presumes, that the apostolic authority to *confer the Holy Ghost* in his extraordinary effusion, somehow descended to their supposed successors. Simon Magus was baptized by Philip, but the apostles alone could call down the Holy Ghost. (See Acts viii.) The Anglican mind vaguely concludes that this apostolic act is continued in the church, and being an exclusive function of the apostles can only be repeated now by successors of the apostles. The conclusion is a mere dream. The bestowal of the Holy Ghost through apostolic hands is no more enjoyed in the Christian church now than the resurrection of the dead! All believers receive the Spirit as the giver of spiritual life, without ceremony. But the pentecostal effusion of apostolic times, conferring miraculous gifts, has never been witnessed since that period.

What possible connection this extraordinary prerogative of the inspired apostles could have with the admission of youth to the communion, is beyond comprehension. There is no evidence whatever that Timothy or Titus ever ventured to repeat the awful act. Timothy is charged (1 Timothy v. 22) to "lay hands suddenly on no man," but there is no hint that the charge refers to a pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost. In order to establish their claim, our prelatical friends must show that the said rite is perpetuated in their hands alone, which is impossible; and further, that the admission of "regenerate" applicants to the communion, with the laying on of the hands of an ordained preacher, and prayer for the continued indwelling of the Spirit of God, would violate scriptural order.

But, moreover, as we have shown before, there is no evidence that in the organization of new churches the apostles prescribed any such ceremony as "confirmation." The constitution of churches was the work of evangelists, and the materials were converts to the faith. It is preposterous to maintain that these churches could not receive new members without the presence of apostolic hands. It is not credible that the resident authorities in them could not augment their numbers until vis-

ited by a distant official having apostolic hands.

The absurdity of this visionary scheme of church orders is frequently illustrated now in missionary fields. Large empires, like China and Japan, are the dioceses of an Anglican bishop for each. Sometimes they are vacant for a long time, and no one can be "confirmed" until the vacancy is filled. Many months elapse, and still the imaginary grace, which none but apostolic hands can secure, is withheld until the great successor arrives! When we ask for proof that the incumbent of the parish, who may baptize, and administer the communion, is scripturally forbidden to admit the candidates to full fellowship, the only explanation furnished is this *theory* which has been gratuitously assumed.

The same assumption occurs in reference to ordination. It is arbitrarily taken for granted that "holy orders" cannot be conferred without apostolic hands. There must, therefore, be an order of successors to the apostles superior to the presbyter-bishops! But no evidence can be got to show that Paul, or Titus, or any one else, ordained others by virtue of authority superior to presbyters. If Timothy laid his hands upon "faithful men," as instructed to do, we are not informed that he was a "successor"

of the apostles, or that he was superior in rank to the bishops that he ordained.

The fact is that Timothy was ordained "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Paul himself was a presbyter, as Peter declares himself to be, in 1 Peter i. 1, and presbyterial hands are the appointed symbols in ordination. Preaching the gospel was the highest power they could bestow, and the invention of an order above those bishops having the oversight of the churches, is a fiction suggested by subsequent usage. We are in search of a *scriptural* warrant for the nameless order, and wonder and wonder why no one in the New Testament ever thought of writing in terms about so important a feature of the church. The book is destitute throughout of the slightest allusion to an order of ministers, embracing Timothy and Titus, which was to be a permanent office, alone authorized to invoke the Holy Ghost on applicants for communion and ordination with imposition of hands. The suggestion is irrational, as well as gratuitous, because it turns the truth upside down, and admitting the presbyters to the highest functions, restricts them from exercising the lower. But, above all, it seems to me incredible that this superior order had to go without any designation until John died, and then, all at once, assumed a

place in history under the name of the order next below it! An American bishop, who believes the absurdity, suggests that it is an example of humility! The attempt to *rule* as apostles, under the lowly name of bishops, appears to others suggestive of ambition rather than lowliness of spirit.

LETTER XVI.

DEAR ———: I think you will agree with me that it has been demonstrated that the apostles organized the first churches among the Gentiles with *bishops* in each congregation to rule and teach, and deacons to serve tables; and that these presbyters, called bishops, were the only persons bearing that name in the apostolic age. If so, you will admit that, so far, the Presbyterian system is more scriptural than that which the Tudors and Stuarts adopted. I will now inquire in the same way how they compare in their styles of worship. You, perhaps, know that young people frequently indulge in unfavorable criticisms on what they consider a want of taste in our simple modes of worship. They maintain that religious services must be ornamental, stately, and in a fixed routine, and that the fine arts should be applied with the best resources of wealth to render the worship not only acceptable to God, but also attractive to man.

The Puritans and Presbyterians have always contended, on the other hand, that the worship indicated under the gospel was after the simple

usages of the Jewish synagogue, and not derived from the temple service that had been abolished. Anglican churchmen have generally resorted to argument on the subject, urging propriety and expediency in opposition to the scriptural reasons of others. They cannot deny the facts, but, as usual, endeavor to overrule them with force of logic, and confidently appeal to the superior style of those forms to be observed in their own services. It is plain that, by so doing, they sanction the principle so persistently held at Rome, that the church is authorized to devise rites and ceremonies at discretion, guided only by expediency, and without regard to the designed simplicity pursued by the apostles. This principle is now open to discussion. I purposely avoid details. The Ritualists are right, *if the principle is right*, and all contention against particular schemes invented by them is labor thrown away. What we claim is, that the usages of the apostolic churches are a proof, so far as they go, of their rejection of symbolical worship as a system, and their adoption of methods characterized by intentional simplicity. Only two symbolical rites were appointed by the Lord, and neither of these admitted of any elegance of art. Water poured out for ablution, bread and wine received through the lips as food and drink—these are not artistic exhi-

bitions, but plain expressions of homely truths to be understood and remembered. The absolute silence of the New Testament in regard to other forms shows plainly to the candid reader that a worship characterized by artistic ceremony was not in the minds of the inspired writers. No sane man can believe that an elaborate system like that of the Anglican prayer-book was in existence under the apostles, or provided for by any of them. The impression of a habitual reading of the New Testament is unavoidable, and directly opposite to that of a system artificially contrived to secure regularity, uniformity, beauty, and impressiveness. If the suggestions of the temple worship of the Jews were to be the guide of the first organizers of the church, one of the most inexplicable facts of Holy Scripture would be the absence of any allusion to it in all the New Testament. The word "priest" is studiously avoided in reference to preachers of the gospel. Temples, altars, vestments, sacrifices for sin, symbolical festivals, and priestly processions, are all ignored as either prohibited or insignificant, and the emphasis of the whole book is laid designedly upon matters of doctrine and personal duty.

These are undeniable verities. The Anglican churchmen know this as well as we. The

trouble is that they found a ceremonial system already in operation in Romish worship, and desired to retain it in part, independently of the written word. This desire led them to argue that the New Testament furnishes very little light upon the subject, and that the mode of worship under the apostolic regime was only *provisional*, leaving the whole matter to the discretion and progressive experience of the church. This view is obviously fraught with the utmost danger and confusion. Of course the church must be clothed with power to enforce the edicts, and its members would be compelled to choose between secession and submission. The germs of sectarian division were widely sown by the spread of these doctrines, and the diversity of Protestant Christendom is easily traced to the arbitrary exercise of ecclesiastical power.

On the other hand, Presbyterians adhere with a more faithful conservatism to the belief that the precedents of the New Testament were not recorded by inspiration for a mere temporary purpose, but for the guidance of other generations. We cannot accept a theory that converts into so much useless rubbish many parts of a volume dictated by the Spirit of God. This view of the oracles uttered by him, being admitted, leads at once to the most dangerous

consequences. If large portions of the record may be neglected as out of date, it is beyond human intelligence to discriminate between the temporary and the permanent contents of the book, and its divine authority is at once destroyed. An immense gulf lies between the reverent students of the Bible as the word of God and that large class of churchmen who thus ignore the precedents of the New Testament, and attach undue importance to the wisdom of the church.

Let me remind you that the rationalism of the present age is championed, to a great extent, by Anglican churchmen. The Bible, as God's inspired book, has many warm defenders in that communion; but you can easily understand that this theory, which regards the usages indicated in the New Testament as out of date, is closely allied with that rationalizing spirit that would rule out large portions of the written Scriptures. The principal champions of the Higher Criticism, which now discredits so much of the sacred records, are to be found in the Church of England, and no one need feel surprised that undue liberties are taken with the contents of the holy Bible by men who have been accustomed from childhood to shut their eyes at the evidence it contains that the apostles, in organizing churches, abandoned the usages of

the Jewish temple, and followed the more simple worship of the synagogue. On this point Presbyterianism remains a steadfast defender of the Bible against Anglican objections to its simple style of worship.

LETTER XVII.

DEAR ———: The loose habit of dealing with revelation which has always marked the history of the Anglican system, has not only made it unlike the primitive church in order and worship, but has led to deplorable consequences in regard to doctrinal tenets. The articles of religion adopted by the English Reformers were in close conformity to the creeds of the other Reformed churches. The secular authorities did not interfere in their construction as arbitrarily as they did in reference to government and worship. Puritans and Presbyterians saw little to condemn in the written creed of the Church of England, called "the thirty-nine articles." But it is admitted on all hands that this summary of doctrine has become a dead letter with a large number of the clergy. They differ among themselves from the highest Calvinism to the lowest Arminianism. But the most lamentable reflection is, that this state of things has been reached by the same disregard for the word of God that has characterized the body in other respects.

The explicitness of the New Testament in regard to fundamental truth is far greater than it is on points of order and worship. It is more difficult to evade by the ingenuity of interpretation. But this has been the persistent effort of many English theologians for centuries past. Not only is the Calvinism of their own articles rejected, but some of the worst heresies that were denounced by the earlier Reformers are revived and cordially espoused by conspicuous churchmen. I cannot follow up the charge into details, but the evangelical wing of that church complains of the fact as earnestly as we do. It is undeniable, and needs no proof. One would think that the repeated warnings of the Spirit of God against defections from the faith, as reiterated in express terms of Scripture, would command a lowly and trembling obedience. But, alas! there are not wanting thousands of Anglican Christians who seem to attach little or no importance to the great spiritual truths that Christ and his apostles took so much pains to inculcate. And this unsoundness is not confined to laymen, but is the teaching of a great many ministers, who use the pulpit and pew to propagate a wild rationalism, or a superstitious Romanism.

A church that holds and rejects the faith of the gospel, that pleads for orthodoxy in one

place, and fosters heresy in another, that cleaves to the principles of the Reformation in one party, and shamefully betrays them through the misdirected zeal of several other parties—such a church is, of course, not justly entitled to *exclusive* supremacy in the kingdom of God. It was the glory of the Jews, according to Paul, that “to them were committed the oracles of God.” An exclusive church is charged with a similar trust. But much as we love and respect the Anglican body, we cannot admit that it is more faithful to the Bible than other Protestant societies.

It is impossible to be more specific within moderate limits. I can only say that the Broad Church party evidently embraces such diverse elements as unitarianism, universalism, pelagianism, and general skepticism; and the High Church party includes a dangerous number of superstitious Ritualists, and concealed Romanists. The church, as established, seems powerless to secure unity in spiritual doctrines, and is now doing all at once what Paul did at different times—preaching at one point the very faith it is destroying at another.

An intelligent young Presbyterian, who fears God, and follows his conscience, will not be easily persuaded to prefer so complex and helpless a communion to his own. The ques-

tion with him is, not which is perfect, but which adheres most faithfully to the word of God. The comparison is clearly unfavorable to the Anglican establishment, partly because it is allied, like so many others, with the government, and partly by reason of its attitude towards the Holy Scriptures. From the beginning it repudiated the strictly biblical position of the Puritans, and insisted upon retaining many usages of the Roman Catholic Church which were foreign to the spirit and letter of the New Testament. Whenever this independence of the word of God is maintained by any body of Christians, its faith necessarily suffers. Such a church may not be guilty of apostasy, but it is fairly chargeable with unfaithfulness. Its candlestick may not be removed, but its light is sadly obscured, because, in the language of John to one of the "seven churches," it may be justly rebuked for holding doctrines that are hated by the Spirit of God. "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them (the Nicolaitans) with the sword of my mouth." Anglicanism is intolerant of departures from its order and ceremonies, but is notoriously tolerant of departures from the faith of Christ. Other churches have their faults, and the Presbyterian has many sins to answer for. But, generally speaking,

this church has been, in all its history in Great Britain and America, especially zealous for the Bible, "the religion of Protestants."

But the chief contention with us is not a rubric, or a series of canons, or even the parochial episcopacy which we know to be scriptural, but the scriptural doctrines of the gospel. We aim at a careful discrimination between the essential and the non-essential. We propose orthodoxy of faith as the object of supreme regard, and relegate to the rear a punctilious churchmanship. When a Christian man amongst us becomes aggrieved at some of our errors in practice, and concludes to look out for a new church connection, we have no right to complain if he can assure himself, Bible in hand, that Anglicanism is more scriptural than the system he abandons. He may yet serve God acceptably in the fold of "three orders." I simply aim to guard my junior brethren against self-delusion in a matter so solemn and important. Honest investigation is the honorable way to exchange party for party, and sect for sect. I want all restless Presbyterians to examine first, and venture upon no change without study and prayer. And let them be firmly resolved to serve God for life in a Christian association which they conscientiously regard as the most faithful to the word of God.

LETTER XVIII.

DEAR ———: High-churchism has reached a crisis in its development, and its representatives evidently feel that something must be done to relieve the awkwardness of their midway position between Protestantism and Romanism. The British and American public will not countenance a surrender to the latter, and the peculiar dogma of three orders transmitted from the apostles will not suffer *them* to fully adopt the former. It now appears that they realize the obvious fact, that a persistent attitude of exclusiveness towards other Protestants is a bar to Christian unity, and a constant cause of sectarian divisions. So anxious have they become to effect a change, that, both in the United States and England, they have agreed to proffer to the other sects of the Reformation certain terms of union, in which the Anglican spirit is exhibited with frankness and apparent liberality.

The heads of this proposition are reduced to four points of agreement, the Scriptures, the earliest creeds, the sacraments, and the historic

episcopate. All the Protestant denominations, generally, are invited to concur in these four great fundamentals as preliminary to union. The Anglican brethren are credited with a sincere and earnest desire for closer relations with other Christians, and all of these points might be acceptable to most of those to whom they are addressed if they could adopt them in the same sense. But there is a unanimous impression on all our minds that these terms admit of very different interpretations, and really present no basis for cordial union.

In the first place, if the Holy Scriptures were to be received in good faith as the supreme authority, there would be no reason for any but the first of these heads. The creeds, the sacraments, and the episcopate must all be learned from the Bible. They are not worthy of acceptance and observance, except as far as they are in accordance with the word of God. We are not informed whether the Scriptures are to be considered as *supreme*, or merely coordinate with the church and the natural understanding. The Anglican church is hopelessly discordant on that very question. Sectarian divisions generally spring from the different views entertained concerning the value of the sacred text. Some consider a large portion very questionable. and others, holding to its

plenary inspiration, still fail to agree in consequence of different constructions. But the terms proposed by our Anglican friends suggest no remedy whatever.

Moreover, the early creeds cover only a small part of the doctrinal teaching of the Scriptures, and their adoption would be superfluous, if the Bible itself could be made a basis of agreement. The denominations must concur without a distinct and separate creed, or must have one far more complete than those which the offer suggests.

Again, as the sacraments are scriptural institutions, and the Bible may be received in all its integrity as a basis of union, I can see no occasion for a separate head under that name. The two symbolical rites are in the Bible, and may be adopted implicitly without a numerical specification. The separate form of proposition seems to indicate an *independent* origin and authority for the creeds and sacraments, to which Protestants cannot intelligently subscribe. If I rightly understand the quadrilateral scheme for union, the acceptance of the Scriptures as the inspired and infallible word of God would include both creeds and sacraments, for the common forms of which we would be compelled to consult that supreme authority. Without a concordant view of what

the Bible teaches, it would be impossible to unite upon either.

But when we come to the last head, "the historic episcopate," it seems to me evident that the qualifying term was chosen as preferable to that which a strong zeal for the authority of the Bible would have suggested. The word "historical" seems to indicate still more than the separate categories for creeds and sacraments, an independent basis for the episcopate. The usual course of discussion on this subject among Anglican divines is, to concede that the scriptural episcopacy was parochial and Presbyterian. The claim of a superior episcopate is, for the most part, founded upon "historical" *data* later in date than the New Testament. The word "historical," therefore, as forming one bastion of the quadrilateral, was doubtless used "wittingly," as Jacob used his hands when he blessed Joseph's sons. Had the word "scriptural" been selected, all objection on our part would have been avoided, except that which I have already urged in reference to the second and third points. But on this fourth point I find most serious objection to an episcopate for which no "scriptural" warrant can be produced. I bring no uncharitable charge. The authors of the quadrilateral were too intelligent not to choose their language with a pur-

pose, and that purpose was manifestly to resort to "outside history" as the basis of their claim to an episcopate authorized by divine authority and transmitted by the apostles, but undeniably different from that indicated in the Scriptures. If they had claimed a "scriptural episcopate," it was the easiest thing in the world to say so.

The case is beyond dispute. The four heads of the basis of union offered by the Anglican bishops consist of the Scriptures, the scriptural creeds and sacraments, and the *non*-scriptural episcopate. Had the fourth of these heads been propounded in different terms, a great barrier to union would have disappeared. But the successors of the apostles, apparently so ready for compromise on most of the divisive questions, remain as firm as Gibraltar in behalf of the "historic," as distinguished from the "scriptural," episcopate. It would be very discreditable if the rising generation of Presbyterians should be ignorant of the posture of the church which, more conspicuously than any other, advocates organic union. We are ardent friends of a true spiritual unity among Christians. But the *real* ought to precede the formal, and all our Lord's disciples ought to concur upon the first head of the quadrilateral as a preliminary step towards the establishment of better relations. Why not agree upon the

Bible, so far as it can be understood, as our infallible guide in doctrine, order, and worship? If history is invoked, we have it in the Gospels and the Acts, and that inspired history, in the plainest language possible, testifies in behalf of an episcopate, presbyterial and parochial, which all but *one* of the Reformed churches have accepted, in principle, if not in practice.

LETTER XIX.

DEAR ———: The chief ground on which the Anglican body holds itself aloof from our common Protestantism is now well known. It is an ecclesiastical theory, embracing an unscriptural conception of the pastoral office, calling it a priesthood, and an equally unscriptural conception of the episcopacy, as an order above the priest. No possible pretence can be offered of a precedent for the scheme in the New Testament. The sun does not shine more clearly on a bright day than the fact that the scriptural pastor of a flock was not a priest but a bishop. Knowing this, the Anglican churchman holds his theory of priestly and diocesan orders "from the time of the apostles," as the divinely-appointed hierarchy of the Christian church. And sometimes he holds it with a devotion more tenacious than that which he cherishes for the Bible. The church which he serves tamely tolerates in its bosom the teachers of many false dogmas, but suffers no deviation from its unscriptural postulates on the subject of the priesthood and Anglican episcopacy. Heretical departures from the faith of Christ

are rarely condemned by authority, but no relaxation is allowed in the matter of consecration to a hierarchical ministry.

Here is a zeal, almost frantic in intensity, for a system established by human ingenuity, without warrant in God's inspired word, whereas the zeal of others for the very language of the Spirit of God is derided and despised. The claim is that the "three orders" have existed for ages, and from the days of the apostles continuously, and they would have us believe that this is equivalent to Scripture. But this is the very ground of our complaint. It seems to me a monstrous error to assume that a revolution, suddenly accomplished in the Christian church after the death of the apostles, reversing the system they had inaugurated, was equally divine with that which preceded it. It looks like disrespect to the oracles of God to regard the polity recognized by them as a temporary fabric, designed to be immediately pulled down, and substituted by a better system of human dictation. Such is the necessary corollary of the proposition, that a threefold, priestly hierarchy sprang into existence at once on the ruins of the Presbyterianism prevailing under the apostles. A more absurd conceit has rarely been entertained by rational men. The gradual development of the three orders out of primi-

tive Presbyterianism is conceivable. But that immediately on the death of John the presbyter was called a *priest*, and the bishop, who was a presbyter, all at once became the spiritual ruler of a province, with kingly jurisdiction and divine authority, is a tax on our credulity which it cannot bear. What would the inspired New Testament be worth, if common history could so easily upset its acknowledged facts?

There is not one word of unquestionable truth in the allegation that there have been three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons in the Christian church ever since the days of the apostles. On the contrary, a sane man, free from prepossessions, will know with assurance that the change was gradually introduced by a series of innovations dictated by uninspired counsels. A large wing of the Anglican church adopts this view. The "historic episcopate" is a *growth*, and not an institution of the Lord, and is no more worthy of being regarded as a fundamental article of divine authority than any other product of *evolution*. The authors of the new scheme of organic union propound it as equal in dignity and importance with the Bible and the sacraments. I am inclined to the opinion that, in the eyes of many, it is the chief corner-stone of the church.

It is more inflexibly urged than any dogma that comes direct from the words of Christ.

I hold it to be indefensible in any body of Christians to offer terms of union inflexibly embracing an article for which they do not pretend to find any clear scriptural warrant, and in its very nature belonging to the external form of Christianity. Here we have before us a body of Protestant Christians, forming a small minority of the whole, which assumes a position altogether different from that of the majority, on grounds outside of the Scriptures, and repudiated by that majority, and this peculiar minority positively refuses to recognize the validity of the commission on which the majority proceeds, holding all its representatives as *intruders* into the ministry of Christ. Centuries elapse, and still a Mohammedan insulation is maintained, and the unity of the Christian church bleeds from its severed veins, in consequence of the unyielding grasp with which the Anglican church clings to its illogical and unscriptural illusion. The only parallel is that of Islam, whose cruel tenacity to a fanatical faith is the nightmare of the world!

In every part of the United States the supporters of this concentrated sectarianism are found more or less consciously serving its purpose. With many, it is a mere acquiescence.

As individuals they recognize Jesus Christ in his saints of any name. They do not of choice estrange themselves from the fellowship he has enjoined. There are multitudes of Christ-like worshipers at Anglican altars. This hand is reluctant to wound one of their hearts. But their system is, nevertheless, a fortress built upon a principle which requires the overthrow of all others. It is a war of extermination, the demand being an acceptance by all the other denominations of Protestants of the external form of the Anglican church. In all our communities where the system has a foothold, this demand is reiterated in the published terms of the bishops, union with all evangelical Protestants who will become Episcopalians! Many churchmen may disapprove of the offer, but it is the act of the denomination. And there are many in other folds who are very charitable, or very indifferent, and withal so uninformed and unreflecting, that they may be ready to succumb. This is an especial exposure of Presbyterians whose associations may be intimate with the people of "the church." It may seem a small matter to give up. But they do not know, perhaps, that a practical acquiescence is a shameful *retreat* from Protestantism half-way to the Roman Catholic superstition! The acceptance of the Anglican system of church

government is an acceptance of the very principle that generated the papacy. That principle was independence of the written oracles of God. The first step was to *ignore* the types of Christian institutions in the New Testament, and enter the boundless field of invention.

LETTER XX.

DEAR ———: These letters will certainly be credited to Presbyterian bigotry. The wolf is ever ready in the fable to attribute the turbidness of the stream of which he drinks to the lamb who is below him. The poor lamb knows his own innocence, and the bad spirit of the wolf may excite in him some *prejudice* against his accuser; but the lamb can hardly be held responsible for the foulness of the water above. Bigotry is not a Presbyterian offence. We have our prejudices, no doubt, and often these are too bitter for the Christian heart. But bigotry is a rare sentiment in our ranks, and some of our members so earnestly disapprove of it that they pass over into the Anglican communion to give emphasis to their abhorrence! They are so much dissatisfied with the fierceness of the lamb that they have concluded to consort henceforth with that charitable wolf up-stream. I use the fable merely to point the moral. The Anglicans are not wolves, and the Presbyterians are not lambs, but it is indubitable truth that the sectarian spirit is ten times

more intense in the former body than in the latter.

I contend further, that the tenacity of the Anglicans for their faith in "three orders" is a perennial fountain of alienation and bitterness. Let us imagine a squadron of American war vessels guarding one of our cities against a common enemy. One vessel is kept apart by its officers, who refuse to recognize the commissions of the others. The other officers are not admitted as such on its decks. The flags they have at their mast-heads are treated as spurious, and never saluted. A certain courtesy is extended to these officers as citizens and gentlemen, but they are informed that it is not official. In the meantime the authorities at Washington recognize no difference, and correspond equally with all. What wonder would there be if the officers of the vessels so persistently snubbed were somewhat dissatisfied with the situation! It would not be unreasonable if they became prejudiced towards the party that caused the disturbance. One thing, however, must necessarily ensue: the service would be a great loser, the patriotic cause would be dishonored, and its substantial interests sacrificed.

Presbyterians who give encouragement to Anglicanism cannot have credit for much devotion to the cause of Christ. That cause is in-

separable from a catholic spirit, which means a *cordial fellowship* with all who love the Lord. This is a first principle with us as a church. We extend a fraternal hand to all Christian bodies that are loyal to the Son of God, our Lord. One who renounces Presbyterianism and embraces Anglicanism, on a principle, renounces a catholic communion, and adopts one whose catholicity is far less conspicuous. A man does not, indeed, necessarily endorse the harsher features of the system, but his influence is put into the scale in favor of the exclusive and unscriptural claims on which it rests. According to his weight, he becomes responsible for the public attitude of his denomination.

I hold that indifference to the differences of churches is more disreputable than it is in politics. It is every man's duty as a patriot to sustain the best party. Neutrality, or tergiversation, is a discreditable thing generally. The suspicion of self-interest attaches itself to the latter, and that of a dull intellect and insensible nature to the former. But in the matter of religion it is still worse. The choice of our church relations is an act of conscience, and a Christian conscience ought to be guided by the infallible word of God. If a denomination proclaims itself to be the church of Jesus Christ,

and that all others are outside, no member of another body can enter its fold without promoting that claim. If it is true according to Christ, he does his sacred duty. If it is not true, he may be guilty of a sinful error against the Lord and his people.

My protest in these letters is not against scriptural convictions. If any Presbyterian renounces his principles and adopts the Anglican system as more in accordance with the New Testament, I can respect his conduct as worthy of a conscientious Christian. But, in nine out of ten cases, no such excuse is offered. Social influences, and considerations of expediency, are almost always the cause of such defections. The Bible is not consulted. The act is performed as if it were a trivial matter, of little or no concern to others. The impression on the mind is that one church is about as good as another, and the party, with heedless inconsistency, proceeds to identify himself for life with a church whose corner-stone is the opposite principle of *exclusiveness*. Such an act is, of course, a clear case of self-stultification. It is not rare with men otherwise intelligent. But the painful reflection is its profound heartlessness towards the Holy Bible. The error of the age is a disregard of the authority of inspiration. Many Christians are blind and

deaf to the greatest of all battles now progressing between an element in all churches called Protestant which disparages and despises the written word of God, and another element more or less earnest in defending its integrity. In this satanic conflict, a *few* Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Congregationalists may be found ranged on the side of the assailants. The bulk of the hostile force in the English-speaking world consists of the Unitarians, the Universalists, and a large party in the Anglican communion. What is called Higher Criticism is the favorite role of many English clergymen, and the Broad Church party embraces many of the most conspicuous rationalists of our time. But this party is largely reinforced by the High Churchmen and Ritualists, who practically follow on the same line when they appeal to oriental and antiquarian usage in behalf of their peculiar institutions, and refuse to subject their notions to the test of inspired Scripture. The battle is progressing all along the line. Multitudes do not know any more about it than they do of the insurrections in South America. They are in great danger of turning up in the Day of Judgment on the wrong side of the greatest question ever sprung upon Christendom, the question of the supreme authority of the inspired and infallible word of God.