

THE
MERCERSBURG REVIEW.

NOVEMBER, 1851.

VOL. III.—NO. VI.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

Second Article.

THE general Puritan theory of Early Christianity may be reduced to the following propositions:

1st. That it started in the beginning under the same form substantially, both in doctrine and practice, which is now known and honored as Evangelical Protestantism without prelacy. The doctrine was orthodox, as distinguished from all heresies that are at war with the doctrines of the Trinity, human depravity, and the atonement. The principle of the Bible and private judgment lay at the bottom of the whole system. The worship was much in the modern style of Scotland or New England. So was it also with the government or polity of the churches. All was vastly rational and spiritual. Even Presbyterianism, according to the Congregationalists, was not yet born. The Baptists carry the nudity farther still. But all agree, that the church notions of later times were unknown. There was no papacy, no episcopacy, no priesthood, no liturgy, no thought of a supernatural virtue in baptism, no dream of anything like the mystery of the real presence in the awful sacrament of the altar. The primitive piety was quite of another order from all this. It was

neither hierarchical nor mystical, but ran in the channel rather of popular freedom, democratic right, and common sense.

2nd. That this happy state of things, established under the authority of the Apostles and in their time universally prevalent in the churches, was unfortunately of only very short duration. How long it lasted is by no means clear. After the destruction of Jerusalem, we have for a time almost no historical notices whatever that serve to reveal to us the actual condition of the church; and such testimony as we have, with the going out of the first century and the coming in of the second, have so questionable a look at certain points, that it is hard to know how far they are to be trusted anywhere. It became the policy of later times to corrupt and suppress documents. The theory thus is of necessity thrown here on presumption and hypothesis. Two broad facts for it however are settled and given; first, that the church started right in the beginning, and secondly, that on coming fully into view again in the third century it is found to be strangely wrong, fairly on the tide in truth of the prelatical system with its whole sea of corruptions and abominations. Between these dates then must be assumed an apostacy or fall, somewhat like that which turned our first parents out of paradise into the common world. When or how the doleful change took place, in the absence of all reliable historical evidence, can only be made out by conjecture; and here naturally the theory is subject in different hands to some variations. The Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist schemes or constructions, are not just the same. All however make the paradisiacal period of the church very short. It is hard to find even one whole century for it after the destruction of Jerusalem; though in a vague loose way it is common to speak of it, as reaching through the second century and some little distance perhaps into the third.

3d. That the change thus early commenced was in truth in full opposition to the original sense and design of Christianity, and involved in principle from the start the grand apostacy that afterwards became complete in the church of Rome, and which is graphically foretold in those passages of the New Testament that speak of antichrist, the mystical Babylon, and the man of sin. The Baptists include in this corruption more than the Congregationalists; and these again include in it more than the Presbyterians, taking Presbytery itself in fact, and that idea of the church which *once* went along with it, for the first stage of the downward progress; but as to what lies beyond this, the vast world of notions and practices namely that go to make up the prelatical system as we find it in full force in the days of Cyp-

rian, the whole Puritan body of course is but of one mind. It is throughout an usurpation only and an abuse, against the Bible, against apostolical and primitive example, against the entire genius and spirit of evangelical religion. It belongs to an order of thought and habit of life, which however countenanced by many good men in the beginning, must be regarded as constitutionally at variance with the first principles of the Gospel, as antichristian and worldly; the natural and only proper end of which, in the course of two or three centuries, was the complete failure of the church in its original form. It became the synagogue of Satan. Christianity went out in dismal eclipse for a thousand years, with only a few tapers, dimly burning here and there in vallies and corners, to keep up some faint remembrance of that glorious day-spring from on high with which it had visited the nations in the beginning.

4th. That the long night of this fearful captivity came to an end finally, through the great mercy of God, by the event of the Reformation; which was brought to pass by the diligent study of the Bible, the original codex of Christianity, under the awakening and guiding influence of the Holy Ghost, and consisted simply in a resuscitation of the life and doctrine of the primitive church, which had been so long buried beneath the corruptions of the great Roman apostacy. The Reformation, in this view, was not properly the historical product and continuation of the life of the church itself, or what was called the church; as it stood before. It was a revolutionary rebellion rather against this as something totally false and wrong, by which it was violently set aside to make room for a new order of things altogether. If it be asked, by what authority Luther and the other reformers undertook to bring in so vast a change, the answer is that they had the authority of the Bible. This and this only, is the religion of Protestants. Popery was antichrist; the Bible teaches plainly a different religion, which must have prevailed in the beginning, and which Popery had contrived to suppress; and what better right than this fact then could the reformers have or need, to fight against it, to overturn it as far as they were able, and to set up the religion of the Bible, the primitive evangelical religion, in its room and place? Such was their warrant, and such as far as it went their good and excellent work. It is not strange however, coming out of such thick darkness as they had in their rear, that they were not themselves able at once to see clearly all that needed to be done in this great restoration; to say nothing of such outward political limitations as they had to contend with for instance in England. Luther

stuck miserably in the mud of Romanism to the last. Even Calvin had his sacramental crotchets, and talks strangely at times of the church. Anglicanism remained out and out semi-papery. Hence the need of new reformation. This we have in Puritanism; which itself also has required some time to come to that perfection of Bible simplicity and truth, which it now happily presents in this country, especially in New England—and most of all, if we take their own word for it, in the wide communion of the Baptists. Here finally, after so long a sleep, the fair image of original Christianity, as it once gladdened the assemblies of the faithful in the days of Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenæus, and the blessed martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, has come forth as it were from the catacombs, to put to shame that frightful mask which has for so many centuries cheated the world in its name and stead. And what is better still, there is some ground now also to hope, since we have got into the middle of the nineteenth century and Anglo-Saxon mind is in a fair way to rule the world, that this second edition and experiment of a pure faith and true church will be more successful than the first; and that Christ will find it proper *now*, in these last days, to be with his church always, and to make good thus his own promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, as they might seem to have done before, till Shiloh come or to the end of the world.

Such in a general view, we say, is the Puritan theory of the past history of the church, and such is the relation in which it imagines Protestantism to stand to Primitive Christianity. The theory and the fancy we believe to be both together absolutely visionary and false. More than that, they are eminently suited to overthrow at last the credit of Protestantism itself, and along with this to upset all faith in Christianity as being really and truly such a revelation as it claims to be for the salvation of the world. Grant the premises of this wild hypothesis, and infidelity may proceed at once to draw its own conclusions with unanswerable force.

It is truly amazing, before looking at the facts of history at all, that the holders of the hypothesis are not troubled some by the very *prodigiousness* of the conceptions that enter into its composition. They appear to be quite easy and at home, for the most part, in the fabric of their peculiar historical system, as though it were the most natural and reasonable structure in the world; and yet never was fabric of this sort probably so put together, as to furnish by its very texture more just cause for anxiety and distrust. The theory, instead of being natural and

reasonable, is as much against nature and reason as can well be conceived. Let any thinking man put out of his mind the mere habit of looking at the past through the medium of the theory itself, so as to bring home to himself clearly in an abstract way the elements and combinations of which it is constructed, and he must feel surely that no scheme could well be, in an *a priori* view, less probable or worthy of trust. Every presumption is against it. If believed at all by the earnestly thoughtful, it can be only through stress of overwhelming evidence, making it a sin to doubt. The unthoughtful of course feel no such difficulty. Their faith is easy, just because it is hollow and blind.

Only look at the scheme in its own light. All previous history looked to the coming of Christ, and prepared the way for it, as the grand central fact of religion and so of the world's life. The Old Testament revelation, through thousands of years, made room for the magnificent and awful mystery. At length it came, the Fact of all facts, full of grace and truth, heralded by angels, surrounded with miracles, binding earth to heaven, and laying the foundations of a new creation of whose splendors and glories there should be no end. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. His apostles were solemnly commissioned to preach the gospel throughout the world. On the day of Pentecost, they were armed with supernatural power from on high for this purpose; and the history of the Christian Church was opened under a form, that carried in it the largest promise of universal victory and success in following time. With this promise corresponded in full the progress of the new cause, in the age of the apostles and for a short time afterwards. The Gospel was rapidly published throughout the Roman world. The ascended Redeemer at the right hand of God, made head over all things to the church, gave proof of his exaltation and power by causing his kingdom to spread and prevail, in the face of all opposition, whether Jewish or Pagan. The whole course of things seemed to show clearly, that the powers of a higher world were at work in the glorious movement; and that it embodied in itself the will and counsel of heaven itself for the full accomplishment of the end towards which it reached. It is usual indeed to make this early success of Christianity one of the external proofs of its divine origin, a real supernatural seal of its truth, like that of miracles. One would naturally suppose, that such a beginning must have led to some sound and true result, in harmony with its own heavenly conditions. But, according to the hypothesis now before us, the very opposite of this took place. Hardly

had the last of the apostles gone to heaven, before signs of apostasy began to show themselves in the bosom of the infant church, threatening to overthrow and defeat entirely its original design. In the midst of its early triumphs, whilst it had still strength to perform miracles and exhibit martyrdoms on all sides in favor of the truth, the leaven of this malignant corruption went forward, strangely enough, in the most active and virulent way; infecting and poisoning, more and more, the very vitals of the church; till in the course of a single century from the death of St. John, perhaps indeed much sooner, the entire course of its life was changed from what it had been at first, and turned into a false direction. Traces of the original faith and piety are still to be found indeed in the third and fourth and fifth centuries, the echoes and reminiscences as it were, more and more faint, of the better age which had gone before; but these were exceptional now to the central tendency, rather than its true and genuine fruit; the power that prevailed, and that was fast carrying all things its own way, almost without question or protest, was the "mystery of iniquity," that same great anti-christian apostasy in principle and drift, which in due time afterwards culminated in the Pope, and brought upon the world the darkness of the middle ages. The eclipse came not at once in its full strength; but still, from the very start, it was the beginning of the total obscurity that followed, and looked to this steadily as its end. So in truth Satan in the end fairly prevailed over Christ. The church fell, not partially and transiently only, but universally, in its collective and corporate character, with an apostasy that was to reach through twelve hundred years. Had it not been for some copies of the Bible here and there, in the hands of a few obscure and persecuted witnesses for the truth, the light of Christianity would have become absolutely extinct; for the so-called catholic church, in league plainly with the powers of hell, and with the sovereignty of the world in its hands, showed itself bent for ages on the accomplishment precisely of this terrible result. Never was there so glorious a morning, so suddenly lost and forgotten in thick impenetrable clouds! The grandeur of the enterprise is equalled only by the greatness of its failure. And what is that fearful whisper that seems to steal upon us, in view of it, from the very depths of the bottomless pit: "This man began to build, and was not able to finish?" But here again the hypothesis is ready with its own answer. The failure was not final. So long as the Bible lived, there was still room for hope; and at last accordingly, "in the fulness of time," after centuries upon centuries of ecclesiastical chaos, God was pleased

to say once more, "Let there be light," and there *was* light. The reformers of the 16th century drew forth from the sacred volume, by the help of God's Spirit, the true scheme and pattern of the christian faith, as it was in the beginning. The spell of ages was broken. Christ gave tokens that he was again at the head of his church. The unfinished work of the first and second centuries was once more actively and vigorously resumed. In the form of Protestantism, it may *now* be expected, after so long a time, to go forward conquering and to conquer, until all enemies are subdued under the Saviour's feet. True, Popery is not still dead, and Protestantism itself is getting into huge difficulties; but we must now have faith in Christ's headship over his church, and in his promise that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; so as to be firmly persuaded, in spite of all fears and discouragements, that the right course which things have at last taken must certainly prove successful in the end, and that he who sits king in Zion will not rest till he shall have brought forth judgment unto victory.

Will any sober minded man pretend to say, that this, in itself considered, is not a strange and unnatural hypothesis, which it is exceedingly hard to reconcile, either with the divine origin of the church, or with its divine mission, or with the divine presence in it of Him, who is represented as having the government of the world on his shoulders for its defence and salvation?

But the case becomes yet more difficult, when we look into the sacred oracles which lie back of the actual history of the church, and find that instead of lending any countenance to this scheme prospectively, they set before us in the most plain and unquestionable terms an altogether different prospect. Some few passages, we know, have been impressed by a strained and violent exegesis into the service of the theory, by being made in sound at least to foretell a general apostasy of the church, the features of which it has been pretended to identify in the Papal communion; and it is not uncommon to hear the enemies of Popery appealing to these perversions of scripture as the very voice of inspiration itself, and charging those who question the infallibility of their gloss with setting themselves against the authority of God's word. But the day for such arbitrary and unhistorical interpretation, it may be trusted, is now fast coming to an end. On the field of science at least, it is fairly and fully exploded. No real biblical scholar, in any part of the world, is found willing to endorse the vulgar anti-popery sense of these pet texts. On the other hand, however, there are many single passages and texts, which clearly foretell the unfailling stability

of the church, through all ages, on to the end of time. And what perhaps is of still more account, the whole drift and scope of the Bible look always in the same direction, and in this direction only.

Even under the Old Testament, it was a standing article of faith that the theocracy could not fail. But this perpetuity was itself the type only of that higher and better state, in which the Jewish theocracy was to become complete finally as the New Testament church. If it lay in the conception of the old that it should not prove a failure, much more must this be taken to lie in the conception of the new. It is to the times of the Messiah in this view emphatically, that the predictions and promises of the Old Testament in relation to the coming fortunes of the church especially refer. All join in the assurance, that the kingdom then to be set up should be an everlasting kingdom, and that of its dominion and glory there should be no end. Nothing could well be more foreign from the old Messianic scheme, than the imagination that the enlargement of Jacob, by the coming of Shiloh, was to give place almost immediately again to a long night of captivity and bondage, ten times worse than that of Babylon, from which there was to be no escape for more than a thousand years. And just as little can any such view be reconciled with the plan of Christianity, as it meets us in the New Testament. This proceeds everywhere on the assumption, that the kingdom of God, or the church, as now established among men, was destined, not to fall but to stand, not to pass away like the streams of the desert, but to be as the waters of the sanctuary rather, in Ezekiel's vision, an ever deepening and perpetual river. There are, it is true, predictions enough of trials, heresies, apostacies and corruptions; but the idea is never for a moment allowed, that these should prevail in any such universal way as the theory before us pretends. On the contrary, the strongest assurances are given, that this should not be the case.

These stand forth most conspicuously and solemnly, in those wonderful passages from the mouth of the blessed Saviour himself, which form as it were the charter of the church and its heavenly commission to the end of time. "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the *gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" Matth. xvi. 18. The use which the Romanists make of this text, must not blind us to its true magnificence and grandeur. It is still scripture; and we are bound, as good Protestants, to pause with some reverence before it, and to inquire with seriousness what it actually does

mean. Take it as we may, it looks certainly like a most explicit pledge, in terms of unusual solemnity and deliberation, that the church should endure on its first foundation, that is with true historical succession from its own beginning, through all ages. Of the same tenor again precisely is the apostolic commission, after our Saviour's resurrection and just before his ascension: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye *therefore*, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*." Matth. xxviii: 18-20. Here again we have scripture, under a most majestic and commanding form. Has it any meaning answerable to its magnificent terms, or is it a mere flourish of Oriental figures which mean the next thing to nothing? Words could hardly be put together in a way more significantly suited to express the idea, that the object of this commission was one which could not possibly suffer failure or defeat. The enterprise in view is conditioned by the fact, that all power is in the Saviour's hands, that he is head over all things, as Paul expresses it, to the church; and all conceivable difficulties attending it, as in the case of Moses when sent to bring Israel out of Egypt, are reduced to nothing by the one overwhelming consideration, "Lo, *I am with you always*," engaging the entire plenitude of this power for its never ending success. It is useless to dwell on other testimonies that look immediately in the same direction. If these capital and classical passages have no power to fix attention or constrain belief, it is not to be imagined that any amount of scriptural evidence besides will be felt to carry with it any real weight.

It is very certain, that only the most wilful and stubborn prejudice can fail to see, how utterly at war the Bible is with the notion of a quickly apostatizing and totally failing church, in any view answerable to the strange Puritan hypothesis which we have now under consideration. No such notion accordingly ever entered the mind of the primitive church itself. It was for a time supposed indeed that the end of the world was near at hand, and that the resurrection state or millenium would soon appear; and it was only gradually, that this view gave place to the idea of a long course of history preparing the way for Christ's second coming. But neither in the one form nor in the other, was the thought ever admitted that the church itself might collapse or go into universal dismal eclipse. That would have been counted downright infidelity. The promise to Peter and

the apostolic commission were never taken but in one sense; and that appeared to be so plain, that no one but an unbeliever, it was supposed, could ever think of seriously calling it in question. It became accordingly, as we all know, an element of the primitive faith, an article of the early creed, to believe in the being of the holy catholic church as an indestructible fact, a divine mystery that could never fail or pass away.

The biblical doctrine on this subject is so clear indeed, that even the most unhistorical advocates of the Puritan theory are themselves constrained to allow it; though they take care to put it into a shape to suit their own preconceived scheme. Nothing is more common than to hear them talk of the unfailing and enduring character of the church, of its being founded on a rock, and of Christ's presence with it always for its protection and defence; they are willing to say with the ancient creed, when necessary, "We believe in the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic." But by all this they mean in the end, not the church in any outward and visible view, not the historical organization known under this name and claiming these titles from the third century down to the sixteenth, but a supposed succession of hidden and scattered witnesses, in the so called catholic church partly, but more generally after a time on the outside of it, handing down what the theory is pleased to call a pure faith, in conflict with the reigning system, and in the way of more or less direct protest against it as an anti-christian usurpation. It is of the invisible church only, they tell us, the secret "election in Israel," that the glorious things spoken of Zion are to be understood. The church was in the wilderness for a thousand years before the Reformation, among the Waldenses, Albigenses, Henricians, Paulicians, and such like; God was never altogether without a handful of people somewhere; that refused to bow the knee to Baal. No such evasion however is of any force in truth, for getting clear of the difficulty which we have here in view. It turns in the first place on a mere arbitrary assumption, borrowed from the clouds, and got up palpably to serve a purpose, without the least regard to historical facts and dates; an assumption that is doomed therefore, by necessary consequence, to dissolve before the light of history more and more into mere fog and mist. These sects of the middle ages are bad stuff at best, for making out the romance of a pure Christianity, from the fifth century to the fifteenth, on the outside of the Roman church. But allowing them to have been as good as the theory before us affects to believe, and granting it besides a fair proportion of sporadic exceptional cases of piety,

in the reigning church itself, to fill up the thin and airy succession, what sound mind can be satisfied still to take *this* for any fitting verification of the glowing predictions of the Old Testament, any true fulfilment of the high sounding promises and pledges that are contained in the New? No such construction of these predictions and promises certainly ever entered into the mind of the primitive church itself; the construction is perfectly foreign from the sense of the ancient creed; and we may safely say, that nothing short of the most powerful prejudice in favor of a previously established theory can account in any case, for its being accepted as in the least degree satisfactory or probable. The whole is a subterfuge plainly, got up to escape the clear and proper sense of the Bible, and not an honest commentary by any means designed to meet this sense in a fair and open way.

The difficulty then stands before us still in its full strength. The helplessness of the plea thus put in to turn aside its force, only serves to give it greater weight. The more we bring the case home in an actual way to our thoughts, the more are we likely to be confounded with its palpable monstrosity. Puritanism puts an enormous tax upon our faith from the very outset, when it requires us to believe things so contradictory and mutually destructive as are here brought together in one and the same theory or scheme. That the church should have such a history behind it as that of the Old Testament, such a glorious array of miracles, types, prophecies, heralding and foreshadowing its advent, for thousands of years, as the desire of all nations, the last sense and grand fulfilment of all previous revelations; that its actual inauguration in the world should be so every way worthy of this stupendous world-embracing poem, in the mystery of the incarnation itself, ("God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, &c." 1 Tim. v: 16.), in "promises exceedingly great and precious," and high guarantees from the throne of heaven, in signs and wonders and miracles, and in wide pentecostal triumphs throughout the Roman empire; that Christianity should start thus, under such divine auspices, the glorified Saviour head over all things for its single cause and sake, and ever present by his Spirit in the midst of it according to his own word, and by infallible tokens also making his presence known and felt on all sides; that the church in these circumstances should look upon itself as an institution founded upon a rock, and make it an article of faith that its charter could not fail: and yet, that in fact all began to fail, to go into confusion, to run towards apostacy, before the end of the second century; that

this fearful tendency, in spite of Christ's headship in heaven and his, *Lo, I am with you always*, on earth, through fires of martyrdom and unheard of sacrifices for the faith once delivered to the saints, so far prevailed actually as in the course of two or three centuries more to turn this whole faith into a lie; that the church in short, under its original corporate character, ran out historically into a complete and universal failure, so as to be for a whole millenium of the most horrible spiritual darkness and desolation, a mere synagogue of Satan, the enemy of all truth and righteousness, seeking only to pull down and destroy what Christ (King in Zion Ps. ii: 1-6) was still trying to build here and there, by such people as the Paulicians and Albigenes: All this taken together, we say, requires such a cormorant credulity for its full reception, that the most careless minds, when brought to think only a little for themselves, are very likely to start back aghast from the scheme, and may well be excused for gently asking, By what authority and right does it pretend so to lord it over our faith?

It would seem reasonable to expect in so improbable a case, that the main positions of the theory at least would be so supported by clear historical proof, as to carry with them some sort of coercive force for such as are willing and anxious to know the truth. An apostacy so profound and total should be properly attested in some way, by historical testimonies and monuments. Allowing it to have come in gradually, this only gives us the more right to expect and demand the evidence of which we now speak. So vast a revolution, in such view, implies of necessity a moral struggle, a conflict of principles and aims, a tumult of inharmonious and opposing forces. To say that the primitive church yielded passively to the great apostacy from the beginning, without contradiction or protest, is to make it from the very first, not "the pillar and ground of the truth," but the mother of error itself; to conceive of it as built, not on a rock beating back the strong floods of hell, but on the mere sand at the mercy of all winds and waves. The least we can ask then, is to have set before us in history some traces of this grand ecclesiastical catastrophe, by which all our *a priori* conceptions of Christianity are so confounded, and our faith in its divine origin and heavenly commission is so terribly tried. And as we should have clear proof in this way of the failure of the church in the beginning, it would seem but reasonable also that we should not be left to take the Reformation on trust subsequently as a merely human work. Allow the continuous stability of the church, as a divine institution carrying in itself down to that time the

promises and gifts with which it was freighted in the beginning, and we may at least try to justify Protestantism as a true product of this historical life itself; in which view it might need no higher warrant perhaps for its vindication. But give up the historical succession, by taking the ground that the church had failed for a thousand years, except among sects from which it is notorious Protestantism did *not* spring, and that the Reformation was in truth a new setting up of Christianity parallel with its first setting up by the Apostles; and then really we see not, why the proper credentials of a truly apostolical commission should be wanting in the second case more than in the first. Luther himself did not hesitate to pose the radicalism of the Anabaptists with this test: "If they have a commission from God, let them prove it by *miracles*." But if the Reformation itself is to be taken for what this Puritan theory makes it, we must say it was quite as much a new church as the enterprise of Storck and Munzer; and needed quite as much the argument of miracles for its support.

But now when we look into the actual course of history, we find it in no agreement whatever with these reasonable presumptions and anticipations, as directed either towards the end of this supposed failure of the church or towards its beginning. The Reformation, we all know, lacked entirely the seal of miracles, the only truly apostolical warrant for a really apostolical work. In this respect it bore no resemblance to the mission of Elijah, the restorer of Moses in the apostate kingdom of Israel. That such an apostacy, reaching through a thousand years, should finally be set right in this way, is not a little strange. On the other hand however, the coming in of the apostacy is more strangely conditioned still. Never was a revolution so vast and important, so broad and deep in its course, so sweepingly disastrous in its effects. We may apply to it without exaggeration the strong figure: "In those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken." The church, having in charge the most vital interests of a fallen world, proved recreant to her solemn trust, fell from her high estate, and became literally the seat of Antichrist and a synagogue of Satan. Thus fearfully radical, the revolution was at the same time no less dreadfully universal. And yet, strange to say, no one can tell when or how it came to pass. We have indeed certain schemes that pretend to be such an explanation. But these, when examined, are found to be purely fanciful attempts to solve the demands of a theory already adopted, rather

than the exhibition of actual historical grounds for the theory itself. It is assumed in the first place that a certain form of religion, Puritanism for instance, is taught in the New Testament, and therefore that it must have prevailed in the apostolical and primitive church; it is very evident in the next place, that a wholly different form of religion prevailed in the church of the third and fourth centuries, a system intrinsically at war with Puritanism and leading directly towards full Catholicism; here then the fact of an apostacy is supposed to be historically established, and any combination now is taken to be rational and legitimate that serves at all to bind the two sides of it plausibly together. So we have various pretty plans or methods, that of the Quakers, that of the Baptists, that of the Independents, that of the Presbyterians, and coming down somewhat farther that also of the Episcopalians, setting forth with more or less particularity how the corruption of pure Christianity in the first ages took place, first one step and then another, till at last the face of it was totally altered and changed; but if we call for the direct proof of these fine spun constructions, we find it to be either wanting altogether, or at best to consist in a few stray words, picked up here and there without regard to the general formation from which they are taken, and of such slippery and extremely brittle sense, that one may well feel astounded to see what weight they are made to bear. It seems to be counted sufficient for the most part, if no direct proof can be quoted the other way, or if the force of any such quotation can be ingeniously set aside. If Irenæus speak not of infant baptism in terms that cut off all captious debate, the Baptists hold it a good argument that the baptism of infants in his time was unknown. If Justin Martyr teach not diocesan episcopacy in the same terms with Cyprian, the Presbyterians lay hold of him as a good witness that the ambition of prelacy was not yet born. If the primacy of the Roman see be not positively declared by the earliest fathers in round set phrase, the Episcopalians take it as so much testimony that this usurpation, as they call it, came in at a later day. If it appear that the Apostles' Creed is not quoted in its full present form before the fourth century, Puritanism chuckles over the nice discovery, and on the strength of it proceeds at once to deny its apostolical and primitive authority, treating its article of the church as a figment, and seeing in it the germs at least of all sorts of Popish error and delusion. And so it goes throughout the chapter. It never seems to enter the head of these self-complacent theorizers, that the burden of proof lies of right first and foremost upon themselves; that the difficulty of making out

clear and plain testimony in every case for the negative of their arbitrary positions, is not in and of itself any testimony whatever in favor of these positions; that the *indifference* of the argument in this form, the mere want of positive and direct testimony either way, is itself in truth a most powerful presumption, not in favor of their theories, but against them, and in favor only of the cause to which they are variously opposed. The grand difficulty is just to see, how so great an apostacy as is here supposed to have had place, turning the fair bride of the Lamb in so short a time into the similitude of a harlot, should have gone forward through its several stages or steps, as laid down in either of these schemes, and yet have left no trace of its dire revolutionary march on the historic page!

That false tendencies might begin to work in a pure state of the church, is not hard to believe. But the case before us involves immeasurably more than this. These tendencies are taken to be from the start in full opposition to the genius and spirit of the Gospel; they work rapidly in fact towards its overthrow; they bring in by degrees new ideas and practices altogether, the fruit of cunning secular pride and borrowed from Judaism or Paganism, that go directly to undermine and break up the simple evangelical system of earlier times; and yet they provoke no opposition, excite no alarm, but make an easy prey of the whole church, as it would seem, without a protesting cry or a contradictory stroke. The ministers took the lead in the bad movement, and the people fell in passively with their wrong guidance. All sorts of pious lies and forgeries were resorted to for its support; and the daughter of Zion was either too silly to perceive the fraud, or too sleepy to lay it seriously to heart. The old faith died thus, and gave no sign. The apostacy came in without an effort or a struggle. True, as we are told, it had stages and degrees. But each new stage found a generation ready to accept it, as the undoubted sense of the faith they had received from their fathers. The work went silently but surely forward always in the same false direction. It carried along with it the universal church. When this comes fully into view in the fourth century, we find, not a part of it merely, but the entire body fully committed to the sacramental, liturgical, churchly and priestly system, with the full persuasion that the whole of it had come down from the earliest times. All history may be defied, to furnish any parallel to such a revolution, any change political or religious at once so vast and yet so entirely without noise. It passes before us like a scene of magic. As some one has observed, it is as though the world on some one night had

gone to bed Protestant or Puritan, and on waking the next morning found itself thoroughly and universally Catholic.

Only think of a single province, such as modern New England for instance, in the course of one or two hundred years throwing off the whole type of its religion in this way, and with general consent accepting another of diametrically opposite character and cast, without a single monument to inform posterity how the thing was done. Think of her associations and consociations, with their system of parity and rank democracy, passing over in so short a time to a well-ordered hierarchy, revolving round a single centre. Think of her free prayers losing themselves in liturgical forms, her naked spiritualism stooping to clothe itself with the mummery of outward ceremonies and rites, crossings, bowings, sprinklings, with all the paraphernalia of a truly pontifical worship. Think of her sacraments turning from barren signs into supernatural mysteries, of the simple memorial of the Lord's supper in particular assuming the character of a real sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead, and running into the bold and utterly confounding tenet of transubstantiation. Think of her mission of worldly prudence, utility, materialism and common sense, running out into the glorification of monasticism, voluntary poverty, the angelical life of celibates and virgins. Imagine these and other kindred transformations, we say, accomplished between the days of Dr. Increase Mather and those of President Dwight, and all so smoothly and quietly as to leave no trace, not a solitary record or sign of resistance, protestation, division or dissent, to inform posterity in any case when or how the change took place. Would it not be a moral miracle, transcending entirely the common order of history? But in the hypothesis before us, the miracle goes far beyond this. It embraces not one province only, but many, widely separated in space, and differing in every social and national respect. It is universal Christendom, from Britain to Africa, from Spain to India, that is found to have yielded simultaneously to the spirit of defection and revolt, as though it had been animated through all its borders with one and the same principle of evil, bewildering its senses and hurrying it among the tombs. Nothing could better show the universality of the supposed apostacy, and the deep root it had taken previously in the mind and life of the church, than the grand divisions that took place in the fourth and fifth centuries; giving rise to rival communions on a vast scale, some of which have upheld themselves down to the present time. These could not of course consent in any such innovation after they fell asund-

er; on the contrary, the laws of party and sect would have been sure to bring out a loud complaint of the change, if anything of the sort lay within the reach of knowledge before. But the Arians and Donatists brought no charge here against the Catholics. The Nestorians and Monophysites went out and founded new churches, which remain to this day; but they carried along with them the characteristic peculiarities of the Roman system, which they have never ceased since to regard as of truly apostolical force and date. These have indeed become for the most part mere petrifications or dead fossil remains; but in this character they still bear powerful and unanswerable testimony to the fact of which we now speak, the universal and unquestioned authority of this system throughout Christendom in the fourth century. No language written on rocks for this purpose, could be more sure or plain.

The contrast in which this noiseless revolution stands with the known vigilance of the church in other things, serves to make it still more striking and strange. Christianity in the beginning was anything but a passive and inert system, which offered itself like wax to every impression from abroad. It had a most intense life of its own, power to assimilate and reject in the sea of elements with which it was surrounded, the force of self-conservation over against all dissolving agencies, as never any system of thought or life before. It is just this organic and all subduing character that forms the grand argument from history, for its divine origin and heavenly truth. Neander has it continually in view. What subtle speculations were not tried, in the first centuries on the part of the Gnostics, Manicheans, Sabellians, Arians, and others, to corrupt the truth; and yet how promptly and vigorously all these innovations were met and repelled. It was not reflection either that led the way in these contests with heresy, but a fine tact rather and living instinct for the orthodoxy to which they were always opposed. Danger was felt with keen inward sensibility even afar off, and no time was lost in sounding an alarm. There is no lack accordingly of historical witnesses and monuments, to show here what actually took place. They abound in the form of controversies, councils, heretical parties, and wide-spread long enduring schisms. And yet in the midst of all this vigilant activity, if we are to believe our Puritan hypothesis, the great apostacy of Popery came in upon the universal church so quietly that no one now can lay his hand on the origin of a single one of all its manifold forms of corruption and abuse. It gave rise to no controversy, created no party, led to no schism. The Argus-

eyed jealousy of the heretical sects themselves was blinded and deceived. They saw not the wholesale treason which was going forward in such bold and impudent style; and it was allowed by all of them accordingly to pass, without one syllable of remonstrance or rebuke.

But this is not all. The prodigiousness of the theory goes still farther. It is by the Bible it pretends to be sure that the church started on the Puritan model, and that this later state of it therefore must be counted a grand falling away from its first and only true form. But now the Bible itself comes down to us through the hands of this same apostate church, which made no conscience, we are sometimes told, of forging and falsifying documents, to almost any extent, for the purpose of carrying out its own wrong; and we have absolutely to take it on trust from the credit solely of this suspicious source. This is particularly clear, in the case of the New Testament, the main authority of course for the question here in debate. What authority was it that fixed the sacred canon, determining in the beginning what books were to be taken as inspired, and what other books not a few were to be rejected as apocryphal or false? The authority precisely of that very organization, which these same canonical writings are now brought forward to convict of palpable wholesale unfaithfulness to its own trust; and which was in the full career of such sad apostasy indeed, while diligently and as it would seem most faithfully fulfilling this great commission, for the use of the world in later ages. The work of settling the canon began in the second century, but was not fully completed before the fourth; and then it was by the tradition and authority of the church simply that the work, regarded through all this time as one and the same, was brought thus to its final consummation. We have already seen however, where the church stood in the fourth century, and in what direction all its forces were tending in the third. Is it not strange, that we should be under obligation to such a growing mystery of iniquity for so excellent and holy a gift, and that coming to us in this way we can still be so sure that every line of it is inspired, so as to make it the only rule of our faith? Is it not strange that the very Church, which had still divine tact enough for the delicate function of settling the canon, had at the same time no power to see or feel her own glaring departures from the light of this infallible rule, but actually gloried in it as the oracle and voucher of her claims;—not dreaming how, after the lapse of twelve hundred years, it should blaze forth into quite another signification, and be a swift witness against herself, as the whore of Babylon, the mother of abominations and lies.

Nor does the wonder stop here. The faithful execution of this most responsible task of settling the canon, and handing down an uncorrupted Bible, for the use of all following time, is not the only merit of the ancient church. These ages of apostasy, as they are here considered, were at the same time, by general acknowledgment, ages of extraordinary faith and power. Miracles abounded. Charity had no limits. Zeal stopped at no sacrifices, however hard or great. The blood of martyrs flowed in torrents. The heroism of confessors braved every danger. Bishops ruled at the peril of their lives. In the catalogue of Roman popes, no less than thirty before the time of Constantine, that is, the whole list that far with only two or three exceptions, wear the crown of martyrdom. Nor was this zeal outward only, the fanaticism of a name or a sect. Along with it burned, as we have seen before, a glowing interest in the truth, an inextinguishable ardor in maintaining the faith once delivered to the saints. Heresies quailed from its presence. Schisms withered under its blasting rebuke. Thus, in the midst of all opposition, it went forward from strength to strength, till in the beginning of the fourth century finally we behold it fairly seated on the throne of the Cæsars. And this outward victory, as Neander will tell us, was but a faint symbol of the far more important revolution it had already accomplished in the empire of human thought, the interior world of the spirit. Here was brought to pass, in the same time, a true creation from the bosom of chaos, such as the world had never seen before, over which the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. In foundation and principle at least, old things, whether of philosophy, or of art, or of morality and social life, were passed away, and, lo, all things had become new. This is the grand argument for Christianity from its *miraculous success*; of which Puritanism, when it suits, is ready to make as loud use as any part of the church besides, as though it really believed this ancient glory to be in some way after all truly and properly its own. And yet by the same Puritanism we are told again, when another object is in view, that the cause which thus conquered the world by manifest supernatural power, was itself so deserted and abandoned by its glorified King, as to be all the while rushing at the same time towards universal apostasy and ruin, by the mystery of sin which it carried in its own womb!

And then again, when this mystery came fully out, and the apostasy stood completely revealed in the form of full grown and undisguised Popery, followed as we all know by the long deep night of the middle ages, there was still no end to the mor-

al wonders of which we now speak. The Papacy itself is a wonder of wonders. There is nothing like it in all history besides. So all will feel, who stop to *think* about it in more than a fool's way. History too, even in Protestant hands, is coming more and more to do justice to the vast and mighty merits of the system in past times, bringing in light upon it, and scaring away the owls and bats that have so long been accustomed to hoot and flit here at their own will. These ages of darkness as they are called, were still, to an extent now hard to understand, ages also of faith. The church still had, as in earlier days, her miracles, her martyrdoms, her missionary zeal, her holy bishops and saints, her works of charity and love, her care for sound doctrine, her sense of a heavenly commission, and her more than human power to convert and subdue nations. True, the world was dark, very dark and very wild; and its corruptions were powerfully felt at times in her own bosom; but no one but a simpleton or a knave will pretend to make this barbarism *her* work, or to lay it as a crime to *her* charge. She was the power of order and law, the fountain of a new civilization; in the midst of its tumultuating chaos. Take the conversion of Saxon England in the time of Gregory the Great, and the long work of moral organization with which it was followed in succeeding centuries. Look at the missionaries that proceeded from this island, apostolical bishops and holy monks, in the seventh and eighth centuries, planting churches successfully in the countries of the Rhine. Consider the entire evangelization of the new barbarous Europe. Is it not a work fairly parallel, to say the least, with the conquest of the old Roman empire in the first ages? Is not the argument of "miraculous success" quite as strong here as there? Think again of the theology of this old Catholic church, of its body of ethics, of its canon law. The cathedral of Cologne is no such work as this last; the dome of St. Peter is less sublimely grand than the first. How wonderful, that the theological determinations of the fifth and sixth centuries, in the midst of endless agitation and strife, should fall so steadily the right way; and also that these true conclusions should seem to hang so constantly, in the last instance, on the mind and voice of Rome. And then in the ages that followed, how wonderful again, that when there was but small power to build, nothing should be done at least to unsettle and pull down the edifice of sound doctrine as it stood before. However much of rubbish the Reformation found occasion to remove, it was still compelled to do homage to the main body of the Roman theo-

gy as orthodox and right; and to this day Protestantism has no valid mission in the world, any farther than it is willing to build on this old foundation. Its distinctive doctrines are of no force, except in organic union with the grand scheme of truth, which is exhibited in the ancient creeds and in the decisions of the first general councils. Out-off from this root, taken out from the stream of this only sure and safe tradition, even the authority of the Bible becomes uncertain, and the article of justification by faith itself is turned into a perilous lie. In every view, we may say, the work and mission of the church after the fourth century continue to be, as they were before, the most wonderful and solemn fact in the world. And yet, according to the theory now in hand, it was no longer an apostatizing church merely, but a body fully apostate, fallen from the truth, opposed to righteousness, in league with Satan, and systematically bent on destroying all that Christ came into the world to build. Antichrist, the man of sin, reigned terribly supreme, "sitting in the temple of God, and opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped." How truly confounding the incongruous combination! How perfectly self-satirical the incoherent face of the contradiction!

The theory is false. It rests on no historical bottom. The scriptures are against it. All sound religious feeling is at war with it. Facts of every sort conspire to prove it untrue. It is a sheer hypothesis, a sort of Protestant myth we may call it, got up to serve a purpose, and hardened by time and tradition now into the form of a sacred prejudice; or rather it is an arbitrary construction, that seeks to turn into mere myth and fable the true history of the church. In this view we have said, that it may fairly challenge comparison with the famous critical systems of such men as Strauss and Baur. Indeed these are in some respects more plausible. They take the ground, that Christianity as we have it now in the New Testament is a product properly of the second century, rather than the true birth historically of the first; that the original facts and doctrines were far more simple; that the religious imagination of the infant church, or the spirit of controversy among its Jewish and Gentile parties, idealized all into new shape and form; and that most of our canonical books were then forged according to this new and higher scheme, and piously fathered upon the apostles to give them more credit and weight. Monstrous as this representation is, it is truly wonderful what a show of learning, critical and historical, can be urged in its favor, enough almost to deceive at times the very elect themselves. And yet it is a wild theory,

which needs no other force to upset it in the end than the simple persuasion, that the church itself is of divine origin, and not the most abominable imposture that ever has appeared in the world. The article: "I believe in the holy catholic church," which must ever precede in the order of faith, as Augustine tells us, that other article: "I believe in the holy inspired bible," wherever it really prevails in the heart, scatters to the wind all imaginable sophistries and subtleties in this form. The logic of Hegel before it, becomes no better than a spider's web. The true answer to Strauss, as well as to the whole Tübingen school, is an act of faith in the mystery of Christianity itself, as we have this concretely set forth in the ancient creed. But now what better after all, as tried by the touchstone of such faith, is the Puritan theory at which we are now looking? Is it not equally borrowed from the clouds, and at the same time equally fatal to all firm and full confidence in the supernatural origin and mission of the church, whose history it pretends to follow in so strange a way? To allow the suppositions of Strauss or of Baur, is from the very outset to drag down Christianity from the skies, and to make its whole signification not only human merely and earthly, but grossly carnal also and devilish. It is morally impossible to conceive of its rise and growth in any such style, and yet look upon it as a direct revelation in any way from heaven. The two conceptions are incompatible, and go at once to destroy each other. And just so also, we say, to allow the historical suppositions of Puritanism, is to convert the divine origin of the church into a fiction or a dream. Even such a scheme of history as we have in Mosheim for instance, or in the text book of Gieseler with all its show of authorities, is intrinsically at war with any real faith in this mystery, and can never fail to undermine it where no antidote is in the way. The sense of authorities, the force even of facts, turns always on the standpoint from which they are viewed. An infidel hypothesis necessarily sees all persons and things in the light of its own evil and false eye. Both Mosheim and Gieseler in this way are very little better than Gibbon. To accept their disposition and combination of facts, is of necessity to give up secretly the whole idea, that the glorious things spoken of Zion in the beginning ever had any truth. But the common Puritan scheme goes farther still in this infidel direction. It outrages all moral verisimilitude, and joins together such contraries as by no possibility can cohere in the same real and firm belief. What sane mind can bring its theory of the wholesale errors and corruptions of the early church, into any sort of harmony with the

assured feeling, that the heavenly and supernatural conditions of its presence in the world were ever in any real sense what they are described as being, either in the New Testament or in the ancient creeds? There is not the least doubt, but that the theory in fact tends directly to destroy all such assurance, by the monstrous and violent incompatibility of its own terms. This does not imply indeed a formal giving up of the point in question, as an article of so called faith. That is the true logical end of the contradiction. But all men have not logic; and it is quite possible to carry out the rationalism in another form. The article may be shorn of all historical connections, and thrust out from the real world altogether, so that the supernatural in the case shall have no actual being whatever in the bosom of the natural, but be only as a cloud or dream floating over it and beyond it in Gnostic or Nestorian style. In such shape it may be possible still, to believe in a holy catholic church, which was from the very start the mere foot-ball of Satan. But in the same way it is possible also to believe, that the moon is made of green cheese.

And so we come finally to the conclusion, towards which this discussion has been looking and reaching all along, that there never was in truth any such identity as Puritanism dreams between the early church and its own modern self. Its hypothesis of the vast and terrible revolution by which all is taken to have fallen so soon into another type, is unnatural, unhistorical, irreligious, and fairly incredible; and we have a right to infer accordingly that its primary premise is false. No such primeval state ever existed; as makes it necessary to consider the whole subsequent history of the church an apostacy only and a grand universal lie. Dr. Bacon and others are entirely mistaken, when they imagine any counterpart to New England Congregationalism in the days of Ignatius and Polycarp, or please themselves with the thought that the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, in the second century, suffered for just such views of truth as are now preached in the pulpits of Connecticut and Massachusetts. An overwhelming presumption of the contrary lies before us in the later history of the church; and it needs only some proper freedom from prejudice, we will now add, to find this presumption abundantly confirmed by the historical data of this older period itself. True, these are comparatively sparse, and often a good deal indefinite and vague; and it is not impossible for an adroit criticism, on this account, to twist them to its own mind—especially if it have *carte blanche* to treat as interpolation or corruption every passage that may prove refractory in the

process. But the violence of all such criticism appears plainly enough on its own front, and when it has made the most of its cause in this way, the proofs that stand in clear force against it are still amply sufficient for the purpose now affirmed. The force of the argument is sometimes enfeebled and obscured, by fixing attention too exclusively on single points and particular phrases and texts. But what the case requires, is a steady regard to the broad issue in question as a whole, and a fair estimate of the testimony or evidence concerned under the like universal view. It is not necessary to stickle for this or that point separately considered; nor is it worth while to waste either ink or breath, in settling the credit or fixing the sense of one clause here and another there, in the remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, or Irenæus. The main question in controversy is of far wider scope and range than any such particular eddies raised in its bosom, and is capable of being brought to some general conclusion in a much more comprehensive and summary way. It regards not so much mere prelacy, or the use of a liturgy in this or that particular form, or the positive practice of infant baptism at a given time, or the mode in which the water was applied in this sacrament whether in the case of infants or adults, or the acknowledgment of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass—it regards not so much any one or all of these and such like points separately taken, we say, as it does rather the whole idea and scheme of the church, in which all such points are comprehended, and from which they derive necessarily in the end their proper significance and import. The determination of these single points, we know, is of no small consequence, where it can be fairly reached, for the settlement also of this general and main question. But what we wish to say is, that in the case before us the main question is not thrown absolutely or conclusively on any particular issues of this sort, which it may be possible for a small criticism to envelope here and there in dust or smoke. The general spirit and form of early Christianity are capable of being understood from its few historical remains, especially when taken in connection with the tradition of following times, in such manner as fairly to overwhelm the nibbling of such mouse-like criticism at particular points, instead of being dependent upon it at all in any way for their own authority. The sense of the whole here is so clear and plain, that we have the best right to use it as a key or guide for the interpretation of the parts. Take for instance the Baptistic points of immersion and the exclusion of infants from the church; all turns finally on the light in which the sacrament of baptism

itself was regarded, and so on the view taken of the supernatural constitution of Christianity; and it requires nothing more than the most general acquaintance with the first age of the church, and the writings that have come down to us from that time, to see and feel surely that the whole standpoint of Christianity then was completely different from that of the Baptists in the present day; so that no proof they may ever seem to have for their favorite hobbies can have any force at all to identify the one position with the other. Allowing the points of correspondence they claim to be real, to what can it amount still so long as it is plain, that the whole inward posture of the early church was in contradiction to the unmystical, unsacramental and unchurchly system, in which the Baptists now glory as pre eminently their own? The best and most sufficient defence against this system after all, is simply to be somewhat imbued with the general soul of the primitive church, as it looks forth upon us from the writings of Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenæus and Tertullian. With any such preparation, no one can be in danger of mistaking the modern fiction for the ancient truth. They belong to different worlds; and only to be at home in the one, is necessarily to feel the other in the same measure foreign and strange.

It is in this general way that we propose now, to try briefly the whole question here offered for our consideration. May the Puritan system as a whole, whether carried out in the Baptistic or in the Congregational or in the Presbyterian form, or allowed even to get as far as low-church Episcopalianism, be regarded as constitutionally one and the same with what Christianity was in the second century, and so by implication in the latter part also of the first? To settle this question, we need not go minutely into the Ignatian controversy, or any other of like accidental and mechanical character. Strike out as an interpolation every passage in Ignatius that goes directly for episcopacy, and for the argument now in hand but little is lost from the weight that truly and properly belongs to him as a witness. For a really thoughtful mind, this weight lies in no such texts nakedly taken, but in the reigning drift and complexion of the epistles as a whole. A very short writing in this way, such for instance as Pliny's celebrated letter to Trajan, where there is any power whatever to reproduce in the mind its historical surroundings, may convey by its total representation far more than any criticism can reach by mere verbal dissection. In this way it is very easy, we think, to bring the question here propounded to a full and conclusive settlement. Whatever Christianity may have

been in the second century, and in the age immediately following that of the Apostles, it was not the system that is now known and honored as Puritanism, and least of all was it this system under its most approved and complete form as it reigns at the present time in New England.

I. In the first place, it rested throughout on a wholly different conception of the *Church*. With Puritanism, the church is acknowledged to be divine, as having been founded originally by Christ, and as standing still in some way under the superintendence of his Spirit. But this supernatural character, in the end, resolves itself very much into an unhistorical abstraction. The church is not conceived of as a real outward as well as inward constitution, having in such view of its own organism as a single whole, and keeping up a true identity with itself in space and time. It is of the nature rather of a school; the divinity of it falls back entirely upon its doctrine; or rather on the Bible which is taken to contain this doctrine, while men are left to draw it from this source, as they best can, in a perfectly human way. The only realization of the church after all in the world, thus, is in the form of an invisible communion, representing all those who are happy enough, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to find the truth. In the way of such inward spiritual experience, on the part of individuals, there is room to speak still of supernatural operations reaching over into the sphere of our present life; but to dream of any other supernaturalism in the church than this, is counted dangerous superstition. The idea of the church in this way is stripped of all mystery; it falls to the level of any other social or political institution; to believe in it is just as easy, as to believe in the Copernican system or the Parliament of Great Britain. It is neither catholic nor apostolical, except as Aristotle's philosophy may be called Aristotelian for all who are satisfied that he was the author of it. No divine obligation, no supernatural necessity, accordingly, is felt to go along with any actual organization bearing this name; a thousand organizations, wholly independent of one another, may have equal right to such distinction; and though all should fail even for centuries, it would be perfectly possible to restore the machinery again in full force, at any time, and with all its original powers, by the help simply of the Bible, the true *magna charta* of man's rights and privileges in this form. The divine character of the church is in no sense parallel, for Puritanism, with the divine character of the bible. It holds it for a sort of profanity to make any such account of its heavenly authority. Theoretically and practically, Puritanism treats the actual

church as a simply human institution, the work of man's hands, and of divine force at the last only as civil government is of such force, or in the sense rather of the republican maxim, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." The powers of the organization, and so of course the offices by which they are to be executed, are held to come, not from above, but from below. It is made the glory of Christianity to be purely and intensely democratic. No *jure divino* constitution is to be allowed to the ministry, no superhuman force to its functions. The people are the fountain of right, and the basis of all order and law. Congregationalism completes itself in full Independence. All comes thus to the platform of common sense; all goes by popular judgment and popular vote.

Now it is not the truth or worth of this theory, in itself considered, that we are here required to discuss; we merely affirm, that it is in no sort of harmony with the idea of the church which prevailed in the second century. This might be confidently inferred indeed from the simple fact, acknowledged on all sides, that the ruling features of the later church system come fully into view in the next century, as the only scheme known or thought of throughout the Christian world. To imagine the Puritan ideal, as we have it now exemplified in New England, turning itself over, by complete somersets, in the course of one century, into the pattern of things presented for instance in Cyprian or the Apostolical Constitutions, without so much as a historical whisper to show when or how the prodigious revolution was brought to pass, is much like pretending to take Gulliver's travels or the stories of Sinbad the Sailor for sober truth. But besides this, the authorities of the second century itself are full against the whole fancy which is here in question. The drift and spirit of every writing that has come down to us from this time, look quite a different way. To read Ignatius, or Polycarp, or Justin Martyr, or Irenæus, or Tertullian, is to feel ourselves surrounded in the very act with a churchly element, a sense of the mystical and supernatural, which falls in easily enough with the later faith of the primitive church, but not at all with the keen clear air of modern Puritanism, as this sweeps either the heaths of Scotland or the bleak hills of New England. We need not stop here to settle the precise polity of the church at every point, in the age after the Apostles. It is enough to know, that all proceeded on a view of its supernatural rights and powers, which was exactly the reverse of what we have found to be the Puritan scheme. The church was considered a mystery, an object of faith, a supernatural fact in the world, not

based at all on the will of men, but on the commission of Christ, the force of which it was held extended from the Apostles forward through all time. It was taken to rest on the ministry, which was regarded accordingly as having its origin and authority, not from the people, but from God. The idea of a democratic or simply popular constitution in the case finds no countenance in the New Testament; this proceeds throughout on the assumption rather that the powers both of doctrine and government, for the church, start from above and not from below; the apostolate is the root of all following ministerial offices and functions. And fully conformable with this, is the theory and the actual order of the church in the period of which we now speak. We may appeal here even to Clement of Rome in the latter part of the first century, who in a memorable passage, (*Ep. I. ad Corinth. c. 42-44.*) urges the duty of submission to church rulers, on the ground of a divine order in their office, parallel with that of the Levitical priesthood under the Old Testament, of which God had shown himself so jealous through the ministry of his servant Moses.¹ To quote Ignatius on the same general point, may be taken as perfectly superfluous. It is not merely where he bears direct witness for episcopacy, that his testimony is of weight; the force of it lies rather in the universal tone of his several epistles. It is sometimes said, that the episcopal passages have the air of being interpolations, thrust into the text from a later age. But any one may readily see the contrary, who will take the trouble of reading the text with his own eyes, for the purpose of getting out of it its own sense instead of putting into it a sense to suit himself. Their is nothing whatever in these passages at variance with the reigning tone of the epistles, but on the contrary they are in full keeping with this throughout.² There is hardly a sentence or a line indeed

¹ "The apostles had their office from Christ," he tells us, "Christ from God; they were sent by him as he was sent by God. Both in right order according to God's will." Clothed with full power after his resurrection, they went forth and founded churches on all sides, appointing tried men to preside over them as bishops and deacons, which was only fulfilling the sense of ancient prophecy, Is. lx: 17. This they did, in virtue of their own commission, to prevent contentions such as they knew were likely to arise; and not only did they appoint these first officers, but "they made arrangement also for the future, that when these should die other approved men should succeed to their place."

² This is well shown by that most profound and acute critic, Dr. Richard Rothe, in his work entitled "Die Anfänge der christlichen Kirche," where the authority of these epistles, and the whole subject of the constitution of the early church, are handled in a truly masterly style.

in Ignatius, that is not in spirit fully opposite to Puritanism, on the great question of the church. He has in his mind always the mystical order of the creed, according to which the fact of the incarnation underlies in a real way the fact of the church, as the carrying out of the same wonder for faith. In correspondence with the real union of divinity and humanity in Christ, his mystical body must have a real historical and visible being in the world as well as an invisible spiritual character, and this must of necessity carry along with it in such view the attributes of unity and catholicity, as the signature of its superhuman authority. Hence the stress laid on the hierarchy, as the bond, not from below but from above, of that glorious *sacramentum unitatis* on which was felt to hang the virtue and value of all grace in the church besides. Hence the holy martyr's horror of all schism. Obedience to the church is, in his view, obedience to Christ; to be out of communion with the bishop, in rupture with the one altar he guards and represents, is to have no part at the same time in the kingdom of God.¹ The unity must be somatic, as well as spiritual.² To fall away from this bond, is taken to be a falling away to the same extent from the lively sense of the mystery of the incarnation, a species of Gnosticism which turned the flesh of the Son of God into a mere phantom, and so robbed the Gospel of its heavenly power. For those who resolve Christ in this way into a phantom or abstraction, according to Ignatius, make themselves in the end to be without either substance or strength; all true christian strength comes from an apprehension of the whole mystery here in view as something historically and enduringly real. With this agrees again, as all know, the teaching of Irenæus in the latter part of the second century, as it has come down to us particularly in his celebrated work against heretics; and the same views substantially are presented to us also by Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria.

II. The contrary schemes of the church just noticed, involve with a sort of inward logical necessity different and contrary views also of the *ministry*, and of its relations to the body of the people. Puritanism makes the ministers of religion to be much like county or town officers, or sees in them at best only good religious counsellors and teachers, whom the people create

¹ Μη πλανασθε ἀδελφοί μου ἐν τῇ σχιζοῦντι ἀκολουθεῖ βασιλείαν Θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομεῖ, Ad Philad. c. 3.

² ἵνα ἕνωσις ἡ σωματικὴ τε καὶ πνευματικὴ, Ad Magnes. c. 1, 13.

for their own use and follow as far as to themselves may seem good. It spurns the whole idea of a divinely established hierarchy, drawing its rights and powers from heaven, and forming in its corporate character the bond of unity for the church, the ground of its perpetual stability, and the channel of all communications of grace to it from Him who is its glorified head. Every view of this sort runs counter to the democracy of the system, and does violence to its rationalism and common sense. It has no power constitutionally to believe in any really supernatural order reaching here below the time of the Apostles; and it must have accordingly the same guaranties for freedom precisely, which it is accustomed to ask and lean upon in the case of purely human and civil relations. Hence the vast account it makes of the popular element in all ecclesiastical interests and concerns, its zeal for the parity of the clergy, its deep seated hostility to the idea of the priesthood, as well as to all pontifical allusions or associations, in any connection with the work of the christian ministry.

But now how different from all such thinking, is the light in which the ministry is found to stand in the second century. We need not go into any minute examination of the ecclesiastical polity which then prevailed. The question is not primarily whether there were three orders of clergy, or two, or only one; whether the bishops of Ignatius were diocesan in the modern sense, or simply parochial; but this rather, What relation did the overseership of the church bear to the mass of its members? And this, we say confidently, was neither Congregational nor Presbyterian, in the established sense of these distinctions at the present time. Let any one look into the writers already named, especially Ignatius and Irenæus, so as to catch at all their general tone and spirit, and he will feel it to be no better than burlesque, when Dr. Bacon allows himself to transfer to the scene of Smyrna or Lyons, in the second century, the picture he himself gives us of what he takes to be the repristination of the primitive church in this latter city in our own day.¹ The imag-

¹ "The meeting which I attended was a meeting of the brotherhood for mutual conference and inquiry. It was held in a school-room, and very much resembled a Congregational church meeting in New England. There was, however, one obvious difference. Those brethren were not merely concerned with the working of a system defined and understood in all its details, and familiar to them from their childhood. With the New Testament in their hands, they were inquiring after principles and rules of church order; and the question which then chiefly occupied their attention, and seemed somewhat to divide their opinions, was whether the govern-

ination of any such ecclesiastical republicanism, is completely foreign we may say from the whole spirit of this ancient period. Only look at the way in which Irenæus speaks of the episcopate and the apostolical succession, as the grand bulwark of truth against all heresy and schism; not once or twice merely, but whenever the subject comes in his way; showing the view to be inseparably joined with the entire scheme of Christianity in his mind. It is not to be disguised moreover, that the episcopate is viewed by him as a general corporation, having its centre of unity in the church of Rome. Against the novelty of heretics, he appeals to the clear succession of the catholic sees generally from the time of the Apostles; but then sums all up, by singling out the Roman church, founded by the most glorious apostles Peter and Paul, and having a certain principality for the church at large, as furnishing in its line of bishops a sure tradition of the faith held by the universal body from the beginning.² Take this system of church government as we may, it is the very reverse of all such independency and popularity as are made to be the basis of ecclesiastical order in New England. Congregationalism lays no such stress on the episcopate or overseership of the church, regarded as an organic corporation, bound together always by a common centre, and having authority by unbroken tradition from the Apostles. And just as little have we here the

ment of their church should be in part committed to a body of elders, or remain entire in the hands of the assembled brethren. As I listened to the discussions, I could not but admire the free and manly, yet fraternal spirit in which it was conducted. And as I saw what a school for the development of various intellectual gifts, as well as for the culture of Christian affection, that church had been under its simple democratic organization, I felt quite sure that those brethren, with all their confidence in their teachers, would not be easily persuaded to subvert a system to which they were already so greatly indebted, or to divest themselves of the right of freely debating and voting on all their interests and duties as a church."² "Rarely, have I enjoyed anything more than I enjoyed my visit to that missionary and apostolical church. Nor do I know where to look for a more satisfactory representation of the ideal and primitive Christianity, than in the city which was made illustrious so long ago by the labors of Irenæus, and by the martyrdom of Pothinus and Blandina."—*Letter from Lyons.*

² "Sed quoniam valde longum est, in hoc tali volumine omnium ecclesiarum enumerare successiones: maximæ et antiquissimæ et omnibus cognitæ, a gloriosissimis duobus Apostolis Petro et Paulo Romæ fundatæ et constitutæ ecclesiæ, eam quam habet ab Apostolis traditionem et annuntiatam hominibus fidem per successiones episcoporum pervenientem usque ad nos indicantes, confundimus omnes eos, &c.—Ad hanc enim ecclesiam propter potiorem principatam necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, &c."—*Adv. hæres. III. 3. §. 2.*

type of modern Presbyterianism. The bishops of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenæus, however small may have been their charges, were not simply Presbyterian pastors. They have altogether a different look, and hold an entirely different relation to the people over whom they preside. Their rule is not indeed lordly, but neither is it simply representative and democratic; it is patriarchal rather, but at the same time an actual episcopate or oversight, derived from the chief Shepherd, at once supreme and self-sacrificing, in the full spirit of 1 Pet. v: 1-4. The order altogether is that of a hierarchy. The pastors are at the same time priests; and pontifical ideas fall in with their ministry easily and naturally from every side. The altar at which they sewe is not merely a cold metaphor; and the sacrifice they offer upon it is mystical indeed, but nevertheless awfully and sublimely real. In one word, the system contains in element and germ at least the whole theory of the church that is more fully presented to us afterwards, in the writings of Cyprian and Augustine. There is no contradiction between the two schemes. The first flows over without any sort of violence or effort into the last; and becomes hard to understand, only when inquisitorial theorists put it to the rack, for the purpose of forcing from it a sense and voice which are not its own.¹

III. This leads us naturally to the consideration of a third general and broadly palpable difference between Puritanism and the early church, that namely which appears in the view they take of the *holy sacraments*. The modern system owns no real mystery either in baptism or the Lord's supper. It takes them indeed for divine institutions; but the sense of them is altogether natural only and human. They carry in them no objective force, have no power whatever to present what they represent; they are taken to be signs only or pictures of a grace, which exists not in the sacraments themselves, but out of them and beyond them under a wholly different form. Any virtue they have is from the activity of the worshipper's mind, moved it may be by the Spirit of God to make good use of the outward and natural help to devotional thoughts and affections, which is thus placed within its reach. All beyond this is held to be superstition; and the sacramental system in particular of the Catholic church, as well as the whole doctrine of the real pres-

¹ This is shown, with what appears to us to be the most triumphant evidence, by Richard Rothe, in the great work to which we have before referred, *Die Anfänge d. chr. Kirche*, particularly in the third book.

ence in its Protestant form also, is denounced and discarded as a purely diabolical figment, brought in under the Papacy in complete contradiction to the original sense of the Gospel, and without the least ground or reason in the practice of the church as it stood in the beginning.

It might seem plain to any child, that if any such low view had prevailed in the second century, it must have required a miracle to place the entire church, in its doctrine of the sacraments, where we find it to be in the fourth century, or to lead it over even in half a dozen centuries to so astounding a tenet as that of transubstantiation, with like universal and at the same time profoundly noiseless and peaceful revolution. But the second century can easily enough speak here for itself. And so clear and full in truth is its voice on the whole subject, that we venture to say no one can listen to it attentively, having any sort of confidence at the same time in the true apostolicity of its faith, and not be inspired with a feeling of downright horror, in view of the deep yawning gulph by which this is found to be sundered from what we have just now seen to be the modern system. Right or wrong, Puritanism is in its sacramental doctrine a grand apostacy, not only from what Protestantism was designed to be in the beginning, but also from the faith of the early church as it stood in the days of Pothinus and Irenæus. The martyrs of Lyons must have drawn back aghast from the view of baptism and the holy eucharist now commonly prevalent in New England; while their venerable bishops, no doubt, would have placed it in one category with the numerous heresies of the time, that went directly to overthrow the real appearance of Christ in the flesh.

Passing over baptism, let us fix our attention on the sacrament of the blessed eucharist. Nothing can be clearer at first glance, than that the fathers of this period make vastly more of the institution than is at all answerable to the natural and simple light in which it is regarded by Puritanism. They lay great stress on its doctrinal significance, as being in some vital way related to the mystery of the incarnation, and conditioning the whole faith and life of the church; and they seldom refer to it, without bringing into view the idea of its mystical supernatural import. Ignatius takes the real presence of the eucharist to be organically related to the truth and realness of the Saviour's humanity, and upbraids the docetic Gnostics, (who acknowledged thus also the force of the connection,) with abstaining from the institution, because they would not believe that Christ had ever assumed anything more than the show of a human body.

"They refrain from the service," he writes, "on account of their not confessing that the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father in his goodness raised from the dead. Contradicting the gift of God they die in their contention; but it would be their interest to love, so that they too might rise again." In another place, (ad Ephes. c. 20.) Ignatius calls the eucharist the "medicine of immortality" (φάρμακον ἀθανασίας) and the "antidote of death" (ἀντιδοτὸν τοῦ μη ἀποθανεῖν); phrases that are sufficiently explained by the last clause of the foregoing quotation, where the risen flesh of the Saviour is made to be the power that is to reanimate also our mortal bodies. But if there were any doubt as to the doctrine of Ignatius here, or as to its agreement with the reigning faith of the church at the time, it must vanish certainly before the ample and plain testimony of Irenæus.

With this father again, the doctrine of the eucharist is made to be of extraordinary practical and theoretical account. It is not a circumstance merely in the general system of faith, but appears as a truly living and divinely efficacious link, between the mystery of the incarnation on one side and the coming resurrection of our bodies on another; showing plainly that these connections as suggested by Ignatius, were not fanciful or casual, but rooted in the reigning belief of the church. The Gnostics generally held the material world to be intrinsically evil, and so not capable of coming into any real union with the new creation by Christ. They would not allow accordingly that the Saviour took a real human body; and they could not admit of course then the resurrection of the body, in the case of his people. It was a principle with them, that the body as such constitutionally excluded the idea of immortality. Against these errors Irenæus affirms the goodness of the natural creation, the truth of Christ's incarnation, and the commensurateness of his redemption with the whole nature of man, as being able to save the body in the way of future resurrection no less than the soul. One grand source of argument is found in the mystery of the holy supper, which it is taken for granted that these heretics, in common with the church, acknowledged to be a bond of communication with Christ's substantial flesh and blood. However disposed they might be by their spiritualistic system to take these

¹ Εὐχαριστίας καὶ προσηύχης ἀπαχονται διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁμολογεῖν, τὴν εὐχαριστίαν σὰρκα εἶναι τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάσαν, ἣν τὴν χρηστοτήτι-ὁ πατὴρ ἡγείρεται. Οἱ ἀντιλέγοντες τῇ δώρεα τοῦ Θεοῦ συζητούντες ἀποδυσχερανοὶ ἐνυψίττε, ἐκ αὐτοῖς ἀγανακ, ἵνα καὶ ἀναστήσιν.—Ad Smyrn. c. 7.

terms in an improper and merely figurative sense, it seems that they were still compelled to yield here to the pressure of the catholic faith, and to admit thus an actual presence of the Saviour's glorified body, whatever that might be, in this sublime mystery; and no evidence could well be stronger than this, for the universal and vital authority of this faith in the church itself at the time. To deny the possibility of the resurrection, according to Irenæus, involves this consequence: "That neither the cup of the eucharist is the communication of his blood, nor the bread which we break the communication of his body; for it is not blood, unless it be from his veins and his flesh, and the rest of that human substance, by which he became truly the Word of God." Again: "Since we are members of him, and live from the natural creation, which he furnishes to us for this end, causing his sun to rise and sending rain according to his own pleasure; he has proclaimed the cup which is of the natural creation to be his own blood, from which he moistens our blood, and has established the bread which is of this creation to be his own body from which he nourishes our bodies." And still farther: "When therefore the natural cup and bread, by receiving the word of God at consecration, are made the eucharist of the blood and body of Christ, by which the substance of our flesh is advanced and upheld, how can they deny that the flesh is capable of the gift of God, which is eternal life, since it is nourished by the blood and body of Christ and is his member? Even as the blessed Apostle says in his Epistle to the Ephesians, *We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones*; not speaking of the spiritual and invisible man, (for spirit has neither bones nor flesh,) but of that constitution which is truly human, consisting of flesh and nerves and bones, which is nourished from the cup that is his blood and from the bread that is his body. And as the slip of the vine laid in the ground brings forth fruit in its time, and the grain of wheat falling into the earth and undergoing decomposition rises manifoldly by God's Spirit, through which all things are upheld; which then by the wisdom of God come to be for the use of man, and receiving the word of consecration become the eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ: so also our bodies nourished by this, and laid away in the earth and dissolved into it shall rise again in their time, the Word of God bestowing the resurrection upon them to the glory of God the Father." In another place, Iren-

¹ Adv. hæres. v. 2, §. 2, 3.

aens calls upon the heretics either to give up the errors now noticed, or else to abstain from the eucharist, as some of the earlier Docetae actually did in the time of Ignatius, according to what we have seen before. "How can they say," he exclaims, "that the flesh perishes and attains not to life, which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord? Let them change their view, or refrain from offering these things. Our view, on the contrary, agrees with the eucharist, and the eucharist again confirms our view. For we offer to him things that are his own, setting forth congruously the communion and unity, and confessing the resurrection of the flesh and spirit. For as the bread from the earth, when it has received the invocation of God, is now no longer bread, but the eucharist consisting of two things, an earthly and a celestial; so also our bodies receiving the eucharist are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to everlasting life."

So much for the real presence of the Saviour's glorified humanity in the holy supper. Can there be any doubt in the face of these passages, whether such a mystery was held by the early church, or whether it was considered to be of necessary force as a part of the faith originally delivered to the saints? We see too, how the service was regarded as carrying in it the force of a sacrifice or oblation, analogous with the offerings of the altar under the Old Testament; an idea which Irenæus elsewhere utters in full and distinct terms, applying to the case, in the spirit of later centuries, the memorable passage, Mal. i: 10, 11, where it is said: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts." But what student of antiquity needs to be told, that the eucharist in this early period carried in it a significance and solemnity, of which no rational account can be given, except on the ground that such powers as those now mentioned were supposed to go along with its celebration?

We inquire not now into the truth of this old sacramental doctrine; neither is it necessary to define in what mode precisely it understood the mystery of the real presence to take place. It is enough to know, that the mystery itself was universally

¹ Adv. haeres. iv. 18. §. 5.

² See an interesting and clear representation of the testimony of Irenæus on the whole subject in Möhler's *Patrologie*, pp. 377-391.

received, as of fundamental consequence in the christian system; and that the doctrine therefore stood in no sort of harmony with the common Puritan view of the present time. The martyrs of Lyons and Vienne died in full hope of the resurrection; but this hope was based on a species of realistic sacramentalism here, which we feel very sure would bring upon them now through all New England the charge of gross superstition, and leave no room for them whatever within the magic ring of its "evangelical sects."

IV. A like wide contrast between the early system and the modern comes into view, in the next place, when we look at their different theories in regard to the *rule of faith*.

It is a primary maxim with Puritanism, that the Bible alone is the rule and ground of all religion, of all that men are required to believe or do in the service of God. In this sacred volume, we are told, God has been pleased to place his word in full, by special inspiration, as a supernatural directory for the use of the world to the end of time; for the very purpose of providing a sufficient authority for faith, that might be independent of all human judgment and will. If it be asked, how the Bible is to be interpreted and made available as a rule of faith, the answer is that every man must interpret it as he best can for his own use, under the guidance of God's Spirit, and with such helps as he may happen to have at his command. In other words, the ultimate tribunal for the exposition of God's word is private judgment. No other tribunal can be regarded as of any legitimate authority or right. All tradition especially, pretending in any way to over-rule private judgment, is to be firmly rejected as something inimical to the rights of reason and conscience. What men can see to be taught in the scriptures is to be of force for them as revelation, and what they cannot see to be so taught there is to be of no such force. The great matter accordingly is to place the bible in every man's hands, and to have him able to read it, that he may then follow it in his own way. The idea seems to be, that the bible was published in the first place as a sort of divine formulary or text book for the world to follow in matters of religion, and that the church rested on no other ground in the beginning for its practices or doctrines, appealing to it and building upon it in a perfectly free and original way after the fashion of our modern sects; in which view it is to be counted still the foundation and pillar of the truth, so that the dissemination of its printed text throughout the world, without note or comment, is the one thing specially needful and specially to be relied upon for the full victory of Christianity, from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

This theory has many difficulties. To place a divine text at the mercy of private judgment, looks very much like making it a mere nose of wax. Men deal not thus with the authority of other laws and constitutions. All the world over the sense of written statutes is ruled more or less by the power of an unwritten living tradition, (such as the "common law" of England and this country,) which at the same time is applied to the case by some public tribunal, and *not* by every man at his own pleasure. So deeply seated indeed is this order in our very nature, that it is never surmounted even by those who in the case before us pretend to set it aside. Puritanism never in truth allows the bible *alone* to be the religion of Protestants. Every sect has its tradition, its system of opinions and habits, handed forward by education, just as much as the Catholic church itself, through which as a medium the written word is studied and understood at every point. In no other way could it exist as a historical body at all. The private judgment of a good Presbyterian is always carried, from infancy on to old age, in the bosom of a general Presbyterian stream of thought, that has been flowing in its own separate channel from the origin of this communion in the days of John Knox; and the same thing precisely is true of the Methodists, as well as of all the other scores of sects that in as many variant ways follow the same infallible rule of faith and practice. It cannot well escape observation again, that the bible itself lends no sort of countenance to the hypothesis, which turns it thus in such abstract style into the sum total of all God's mind and will, mechanically laid down for man's use, like the directions for the building of the tabernacle in the book of Exodus. It never speaks of itself as being either a system of divinity or a confession of faith. It has no such form, but shows as clearly as possible an altogether different construction and design. Nay more, it is perfectly certain from the New Testament itself, that Christianity was *not* made to rest on any such foundation in the beginning, but on a living authority, which started in Christ and passed over from him to the ministry of the church. This is as plain as words could well make it, from *Matth. xvi. 18, 19; Matth. xxviii. 18, 20; Eph. ii. 19, 22, and 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16.* On the basis of the apostolical commission, backed by heavenly miraculous authority, and entering into no negotiation whatever with the world's private judgment, the early church was in fact planted and built throughout the Roman empire. The books of the New Testament came afterwards as part and parcel of the glorious revelation committed to her hands; and it was not till the fourth century, as we have before seen,

that the arduous and responsible task of settling the canon was brought to a complete close, although the main parts of it were acknowledged and in general use probably before the middle of the second.

These are difficulties, we say, which from the Puritan standpoint it is by no means easy to meet. But we do not press them at present. What we wish to hold up to view is the clearly evident fact, that the church of the second century was not Puritan but Catholic, in its conception of the rule of faith, concurring here in its whole habit of thought with the order that actually prevailed, as just now stated, in the first planting of Christianity in the world. The sacred books are indeed referred to with high veneration in this age, as they are in all subsequent times of the Catholic church, but never under any such abstract and independent view, as they are made to carry in the private-judgment sect system of the present day. Of a bible, out of which every man was to fetch the doctrines and practices of religion as he best could with the bucket of his own common sense, these early Christians had not so much as the most remote imagination. They own the inspiration of the scriptures and appeal to them as the norm and measure of their faith; but it is only and always as they are taken to be comprehended in that general tradition of infallible truth, which had come down from the Apostles in a living way by the church. The bible was for them the word of God, not on the outside of the church, and as a book dropped from the skies for all sorts of men to use in their own way, but in the bosom of the church alone, and in organic union with that great system of revelation of which this was acknowledged to be the pillar and ground. Sundered from that organism, cut off from the living stream of catholic tradition, the holy oracles in the hands of heretics were considered as shorn of all their force. Such men as Irenæus and Tertullian had no idea of sitting down, and debating points of doctrine with the Gnostics out of the bible, in any way owning at all their right to appeal to it as an independent rule; just as little as it ever entered into their heads probably to put the people, "with the New Testament in their hands," on inquiring "into the principles and rules of church government," after the democratic fashion of the nineteenth century. They will not allow the heretics to put their cause on any ground of this sort; they cut them off by prescription, that is, by the clear title of the regular church to the succession or tradition of Christianity, as it had been handed down, under the broad seal of its original charter, from the time of the Apostles. Some notice has been taken be-

fore of the way, in which Irenæus appeals to the known apostolical succession of the bishops in his time, and their collective voice in favor of the truth, bringing all to centre and culminate in Rome as the principal see. This constitution, and no other, is with him the organ of unity both in doctrine and government; all else is heresy and schism. "It is necessary to hearken to the presbyters in the church," he tells us (Adv. haer. iv. c. 20), who have the succession from the Apostles, and along with the succession of the episcopate have received the certain gift of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father." Again (iv. c. 33, §. 8.): "The true knowledge (γνῶσις) is the doctrine of the Apostles, and the ancient constitution (συστήμα) of the church in the whole world, and the character of the body of Christ according to the successions of the bishops, to whom they (the Apostles) have committed the church in every place." The paths of heresy are many and variable, but the doctrine of the church is one and unchanging all over the world; "she preserves the traditional faith, though spread throughout the earth, with the greatest care, as if she occupied but one house; and believes it, as if she had but one soul and one heart; and proclaims, teaches, hands it forward, with marvellous agreement, as if she had but one mouth. The languages used are indeed different, but the matter of the tradition is still one and the same" (i. 10. 2. comp. v. 20. §. 1.). Again (iii. 4. §. 1.): "If the Apostles had left us no writings, ought we not still to follow the rule of that tradition, which they handed over to those to whom they committed the churches? To this rule many nations of barbarians do hold in fact, which believe in Christ, and have his salvation inscribed by the Holy Ghost without ink or paper on their hearts, carefully following the tradition &c." Specially striking is the passage, L. iii. c. 24. §. 1., where this tradition is made to carry in it a divine element, rendering it infallible; gathering itself up into the mystery of that faith "which we have received and hold from our church, and which the Spirit of God continually renovates, like a precious jewel in a good casket, imparting to it the quality of his own perennial youth." Such is the testimony of Irenæus. Tertullian is, if possible, still stronger in the same churchly strain. He will know nothing of any private argumentation, from the scriptures or any other source; all must yield to the smashing weight of ecclesiastical tradition. Christianity is built, not on a book, but on a living system handed down from the day of Pentecost. Truth is fellowship with the churches derived by regular succession from the Apostles; they have collectively but one doctrine; and whatever disowns this

order, is without farther examination to be rejected as false. His whole tract on the *Prescription of Heretics* rests on this view, and might be quoted here with effect. The heretics have no right to appeal to the scriptures. These belong only to the church. She may say to them: 'Who are you? Whence do you come? What business have you strangers with my property? By what right are you, Marcion, felling my trees? By what authority are you, Valentine, turning the course of my streams? Under what pretence are you, Apelles, removing my land-marks? The estate is mine; why do you other persons presume to work it and use it at your pleasure? The estate is mine; I have the ancient, prior possession of it; have the title deeds from the original owners. I am the heir of the Apostles; they made their will, with all proper solemnities, in my favor, while they disinherited and cast you off as strangers and enemies.' Tertullian had no idea of making exegesis the mother of faith.¹

Is it necessary to say, that the faith of the second century, as here portrayed, is something very different from the reigning evangelical scheme of the present day? No honest student of history, we think, can fail to see and confess, that the doctrine of Irenæus and Tertullian on the relation of the bible to the church is essentially one and the same with that which is clearly presented afterwards by Chrysostom and Augustine, and that in sound at least it is very much like the Catholic doctrine as opposed to Protestantism in modern times.

V. Take next the *order of doctrine*. Single truths have their proper value and force, not merely in themselves separately taken, but in the place they occupy as parts of the whole system to which they belong. Much depends then on the order in which they are held. The doctrinal scheme of the early church has come down to us in the Apostles' Creed. Into the question of the origin of this symbol, it is not necessary now to enter. Its universal prevalence in the fourth century is itself argument enough for a thinking mind, that it must have come down from time immemorial before in substantially the same form; but independently of this, it is abundantly plain from the writers of the second century, that the whole theology of that period was shaped in the mind of the church on this model at least, and on no other. But this at once conditions and determines its uni-

¹ See Rothe's work before quoted; also Mühler's *Patrologie*, pp. 344-357, 737-748.

versal character, setting it in close affinity with the later theology of the Catholic church, and placing it in broad contrariety to the Puritan scheme of doctrine as we now meet with it in New England. Puritanism, by its abstract spiritualistic character, has lost the power to a great extent of understanding both the old creed, and the catholic theology of which it was the foundation; and with a certain feeling of superior maturity is disposed generally to put the whole away as somewhat childish and out of date. The objection is not so much to single points in themselves considered; for most of these may be translated into some good modern sense; but it holds rather against the order in which they are put together, the architecture of the creed, its reigning animus, its too much of one thing and its too little or nothing at all of another. The sound of it is uncomfortably mystical, sacramental and churchly. Puritanism knows very well in its inmost soul, that no *such* creed is the symbol exactly of that form of belief which it now parades as its own, and as being at the same time the only true and perfect sense of the bible. It would never have produced any creed of this sort. It sees all truth in a different order, and holds it in quite other proportions and relations. When it undertakes to give us a creed in fact, (as it is ready to do commonly at a moment's warning and to any order,) the product is something very different from the ancient symbol of the Apostles.¹

¹ See an article entitled "Puritanism and the Creed," in the *Mercersburg Review* for November 1849, published at the same time also as a separate tract. It will be remembered, that the *Puritan Recorder*, of Boston, plainly acknowledged "that the Creed and Puritanism have not a kindred spirit," and that only by courtesy it found a place originally in Puritan formularies and catechisms. "Its life and spirit," it was said, "never entered into the life of the Puritan churches; and consequently it now exists among us as some fossil relic of by-gone ages. And we look with a sort of pity upon those who are laboring to infuse life into it, and to set it up as a living ruler in the church. We are free to confess, that this Creed has forsaken the Puritans, and gone over to become the idol and strength of all branches of anti-puritanism. And there are good reasons; for Puritanism builds on the Scriptures, and this Creed teaches, in several respects, anti-scriptural doctrines." It should have been said rather, that Puritanism has forsaken the Creed; breaking away at the same time from the faith of the universal church as it stood in the second century, and while it accepts the bible from the hands of this same church, coolly turning round and saying to it: You never understood your own scriptures; we know what they mean, and you and your creed may go to the tomb of the Capulets. We have never heard of any repudiation of this monstrous sentiment, on the part of the interest thus represented by the *Puritan Recorder*, and take it for granted therefore that it is nothing more than a true picture after all of what must be considered here a general falling away from the *regula fidei* of the primitive church.

There is a real difference, as regards the *tout ensemble* of Christian doctrine between the Patristic system and Protestantism in its original proper form. More than one has felt something of the experience given in the following striking passage from Thiersch. "It is a strange impression," he remarks in his work on the *Canon*, p. 280, "that the church fathers make on one who first enters on the study of them, under the full force of a merely Protestant consciousness. So fared it with the writer himself. Nurtured on the best that the old Protestant books of devotion contain, and trained theologically in the doctrines and interpretations of the orthodox period of Protestantism, he turned finally to the fathers. Well does he remember how strange it appeared to him in the beginning, to find here nothing of those truths, which formed the spring of his whole religious life, nothing of the way the sinner must tread to arrive at peace and an assurance of the Divine favor, nothing of Christ's merit as the only ground of forgiveness, nothing of continual repentance and ever new recourse to the fountain of free grace, nothing of the high confidence of the justified believer. Instead of this, he found that all weight was laid on the incarnation of the Divine Logos, on the right knowledge of the great object of worship, on the objective mystery of the Trinity and of Christ's Person, on the connection between creation, redemption, and the future restoration of the creature along with the glorification also of man's body, on the freedom of man and on the reality of the operations of Divine grace in the sacraments. But he was enabled gradually to live himself into this old mode of thought, and without giving up what is true and inalienable in the Lutheran Protestant consciousness, to correct its oneness by a living appropriation of the theology of the fathers. He soon saw, that over against the errors of the present time, its pantheism and fatalism, its spiritualism and misapprehension of the significance of the corporeal, the church needs a decided taking up again of what is true in the Patristic scheme of thought, and an assimilation of her whole life to the ancient model—in spirit and idea first, as outward relations are not at once under human control. This old primitive church stood out to his view more and more in its full splendor, in its sublime beauty, of which only fragmentary lineaments are to be recognised in the churches, confessions and sects, of the present day."

Thiersch here finds Protestantism itself materially different from early Christianity; while he holds it however, in its legitimate character, capable of a living conjunction with the ancient faith, though carrying in itself a fearful tendency to fall away

from it altogether; a tendency, which is now getting the mastery of it in truth in many places, and that needs to be counteracted by a return to former ideas. What he has his eye upon immediately is the rationalism surrounding him in Germany. But the tendency is not limited to that form of open unbelief. It lies in all unchurchly religion. It animates the whole sect system. It forms the proper soul of Puritanism. This is not original Protestantism, carrying in it the possibility merely of a full dissociation from the mind of the ancient church; but it is this possibility actually realized. It is a growth completely to the one side, which refuses now all organic agreement with the trunk of Christian doctrine as this stood in the beginning. The two schemes of thought are quite apart, and can never be made to fit together with any sort of symmetry or ease. Puritanism, by its very constitution, ignores and abjures the old sense of the Apostles' Creed.

VI. Look finally at the subject of *faith in miracles*. It is well known, that the early church not only believed firmly in the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, as well as in those of the Old Testament, but had a most firm persuasion also that the same power was still actively displayed in her own bosom, and that it lay in her commission in truth to look for its revelation, as occasion might require, "always to the end of the world." It is generally admitted even among Protestants not openly rationalistic, (though some feel it necessary with the celebrated Dr. Conyers Middleton to take different ground through fear of Popery,) that many supernatural signs and wonders were wrought in the service of Christianity during the first three ages. But what we have to do with just now is not so much the actual truth of these miracles, as the state of mind on the part of the church itself, by which they were considered possible, and which led to their being readily received on all sides as nothing more than the natural and proper fruit of the new religion. The apologists appeal to them boldly as notorious facts. Both Irenæus and Tertullian challenge the heretics to prove their authority by miracles, as the church did hers in every direction; and the proofs mentioned are such as giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, casting out devils, healing sicknesses, and even raising the dead to life. To question the fact of miracles in the church, would have been in this period equivalent to downright infidelity. It lay in the whole sense the church then had of the realness and nearness of the supernatural world, in her felt apprehension of the living communion in which she stood with it through Christ, that such demonstrations of its

presence should be regarded as most perfectly possible, and in some sort as a matter of course. Her idea of *faith* was such, as of itself involved this from the very start.

But who needs to be told, how different from all this the tone of thought is that now pervades the universal empire of Puritanism? The difference is not in the mere want of miracles; though that is something too for a thoughtful mind; it appears rather, under a more alarming and affecting view, in the want of power to exercise faith in anything of the sort. Puritanism pretends indeed to great faith in the invisible and supernatural; just as the Gnostics did also in ancient times. But its faith, like theirs, is in the language of Ignatius wonderfully asomatic and unreal. The action of the supernatural is remanded by it to the world of mere thought. God works miracles now in the souls of his people; and away back in the shadow land of the past, he wrought them by special dispensation also under a more outward form. But the age of such proper wonders is long since past. It is unsafe to speak of them after the third century, and not very wise to lay much stress on them even in the second. All pretensions to anything of the sort may be set down at once, and without any examination, as purely "lying wonders." Such we all know to be the reigning habit of thought here, with this popular system. Dr. Middleton's theory suits it to a tittle, and is drawn as it were from its very soul. Puritanism has no faith in miracles answerable at all to what prevailed in the early church, no power we may say to believe them in the same way. Its inward relation to the world from which miracles come, is by no means the same. The difference is not in the judgment exercised in regard to this particular miracle or that, but in the total frame of the mind with regard to the universal subject. This is not faith, but absolute scepticism, just as complete as anything we meet with in Gibbon, Voltaire, or Hume.¹

The martyrs of Lyons knew nothing of such scepticism. It required another sense of the "powers of the world to come,"

¹ Both the N. Y. Observer and the N. Y. Churchman, representing but too faithfully we fear the spirit of their respective communions, noticed not long since with pure derision a sermon by Dr. Forbes, the late convert to Romanism, in defence of the idea that Christ has continued to fulfil his promise of miracles in the later ages of the church. The misery of all this is, not that this or that wonder of popular belief in the Catholic church may be shown to be false and ridiculous, but that the basis on which alone any such popular beliefs are made possible, the sense namely of the supernatural order of Christianity as a real and ever present fountain of the miraculous in the church, is rationalistically undermined and destroyed.

to carry so many simple and plain persons, with such triumphant courage, through the scenes that are described in the account of their martyrdom. They had no difficulty in admitting the reality of signs and wonders in the church. Nay, these had place in connexion with their own sufferings, and are reported by Irenæus, (the supposed writer of the account,) as carrying in them nothing incredible whatever. Blandina, a weak slave, was regarded as being upheld, quite beyond the common course of nature, in the terrible torments through which she was made to pass, from the break of day till night. The deacon Sanctus was tortured with hot plates of brass and in other ways, till his body became so covered with wounds and bruises that the very figure of it was lost; a few days after which he was brought out again, when it was supposed that the inflammation of his sores would cause him, under the repetition of the same cruelties, either to yield at once or expire. But "to the amazement of all, his body under the latter torments recovered its former strength and shape, and the exact use of all his limbs was restored; so that by this miracle of the grace of Jesus Christ, what was designed as an additional pain, proved an absolute and effectual cure." The martyrs appeared to move in a perfect nimbus of supernatural grace; even "their bodies sent forth such an agreeable and pleasant savor, as gave occasion to think that they used perfumes." The wild beasts of the amphitheatre, to which she was exposed, could not be provoked to touch Blandina. One of the martyrs "had a revelation" in regard to another, which this last made it his business dutifully to follow. What remained of the bodies, after the terrible tragedy, was burned to ashes, and thrown into the waters of the Rhone; but it was believed, that a part of these ashes was afterwards miraculously recovered, and the relics were deposited under the altar of the church which anciently bore the name of the Apostles of Lyons.

We say nothing of the credibility of these statements, nothing of the opinion we should have of what they pretend to describe. We hold them up simply as a picture of the mind that was in the church in the days of Pothinus and Irenæus; and in view

¹ It is related in the acts of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, written by the church of Smyrna, that when fire was set to the pile prepared to burn him the "flames forming themselves into an arch, like the sails of a ship swelled with the wind, gently encircled the body of the martyr, which stood in the middle, resembling not roasted flesh, but purified gold or silver, appearing bright through the flames; and his body sending forth such a fragrance, that we seemed to smell precious spices."

of it we have no hesitation in saying, that Dr. Bacon is altogether mistaken, when he finds its *facsimile*, either in Mr. Fisch's evangelical congregation of the present Lyons, or under the keen sharp features of Puritanism in any part of New England.

It would be easy to extend this contrast to other points. Veneration for the *relics* of deceased saints comes into view, as far back as our eye can reach. The bones of Ignatius, who was martyred at Rome under Trajan in the beginning of the second century, were carefully gathered up after his death, we are told, and carried back to Antioch his episcopal see. According to Chrysostom, they were borne in triumph on the shoulders of all the cities through Asia Minor. In Antioch they were placed finally in a church distinguished by his name, which St. Chrysostom encourages people in his day to visit, as having been to many the means of undoubted help both spiritually and corporally. In the case of Polycarp, the church of Smyrna writes that the malice of the devil was exerted to prevent his relics being carried off by the Christians; "for many desired to do it, to show their respect to his body." At the suggestion of the Jews, the proconsul was advised not to give the body into their hands, lest they should pass from the worship of the crucified one to the worship of Polycarp; "not knowing," say the acts, "that we can never forsake Christ, nor adore any other, though we love the martyrs, as his disciples and imitators, for the great love they bore their king and master." The corpse accordingly was reduced to ashes. "We afterwards took up the bones," the church adds, "more precious than the richest jewels or gold, and deposited them decently in a place, at which may God grant us to assemble with joy, to celebrate the birthday of the martyr." How different all this is from the spirit of modern Puritanism, even a child may see and feel. But the veneration for relics is itself only the proof and sign of a great deal more, embraced in the article of the "communion of saints" as it was held in the early church, every vestige of which has disappeared from the thinking of this later system. It is equally evident again, that the church of the second century attributed a peculiar merit to the state of celibacy and virginity, embraced for the glory of God and in the service of religion, which falls in fully with the tone of thought we find afterwards established in the Roman Catholic communion, but is as much at war as can well be imagined with the entire genius of Puritanism in every form and shape. It is not necessary, however, to push the comparison any farther, in the consideration of these or of other kindred points. Our general purpose is abundantly answered, our cause more than

made out, by the topics of proof and illustration already presented.

The Puritan hypothesis, we now repeat, is false. There never was any such period of unchurchly evangelicalism as it assumes, in the history of early Christianity. Its whole dream of a golden age, answerable to its own taste and fashion, after the time of the New Testament and back of what it takes to be the grand apostacy that comes into view in the third century, is as perfectly baseless as any vision could well be. It rests upon mere air. It has not a syllable of true historical evidence in its favor; while the universal drift of proof is directly against it. Those then who will have it that New England Puritanism is the true image of what Christianity was at the start, and that the church tendency as it appears in universal force afterwards was from the start a corruption only, must take still higher ground than even this dizzy imagination; they must make up their mind, with the heroic Baptists, to look upon the history of the church as a grand falling away from its original design and type, as soon as it passed out of the hands of the Apostles, and long before the last of these in fact had gone to his rest. To this the theory comes in the end; and with the great body of those who hold it, this probably is the sense that always lurks in it at the bottom. But we need have no hesitation surely in saying, that every view of this sort is fatal to the credibility of the Gospel. It is only Gnosticism in disguise.

Our faith in the realness of Christianity will not allow us to bear the thought, that it fell from the very outset into the gulph-stream of a total apostacy, which carried the universal church, without resistance or knowledge, right onward always to the shipwreck of a thousand years—while Christ was showing himself by infallible signs both present and awake in the vessel, and miracles of faith and zeal prevailed on every side. It will not do; the whole supposition is monstrous. Puritanism is mistaken. It is a thousand times safer to interpret the meaning of Christianity from its own actual history in the beginning, than it is to sit at the feet now of any such modern authority, spinning the sense of it from the clouds. As to the likelihood of apostacy and wholesale error, in the main difference between the two forms of teaching, we believe the chances to be immeasurably in favor of antiquity and against the modern authority. It is far easier to believe Puritanism an apostacy, in its rejection of the *mystery* of the church and its sacraments, than it is to brand the universal faith of the second and third centuries with any such character, for the acknowledgment of this mystery as

something quite above the range of reason and common sense. We choose to go here with the early church. We do not believe that it fell into apostacy, as a whole, from the very outset of its course; that it mistook fundamentally the sense and meaning of the faith delivered to it by the Apostles; that it was almost immediately overpowered by a new and foreign idea, a "mystery of iniquity" that turned it finally into the synagogue of Satan. We detest and abhor any imagination of this sort; and pray God that our children may be kept from every such miserable tradition, as a true snare of the Devil that looks directly to rationalism and infidelity. There were faults and corruptions no doubt in the history of the church; but there was no such falling away from its own proper and primitive idea, as Puritanism finds it necessary constantly to assert. The reigning course of Christianity was right, and in full conformity with the will of Him who so visibly presided over it "on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The habit of doctrine and worship in which such men as Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Cyprian stood, which animated the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, and glowed in the seraphic ardor of Polycarp and Ignatius, must have been in the main, not diabolical, not superstitious, but true to the genius of the Gospel as it was "first spoken by the Lord and confirmed by them that heard him—God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." This implies of course that even the Papacy itself, towards which at least the wholesystem was carried with intrinsic necessity from the beginning, came in with reason and right, and had a mission to fulfil in the service of Christianity that could not have been fulfilled as well in any other way. No one indeed can study the history of the church soberly, it seems to us, without seeing this in the actual course of events. The grand bulwark of the true religion, through the whole period of the middle ages, was beyond all question the ecclesiastical organization that centered in the popes or bishops of Rome. Without this, the church would have fallen to pieces, hundreds of years before the Reformation. Only suppose the Papacy to have been overwhelmed by Mohammedanism, or by the German emperors, or by the wild fury of the Albigenses and other such Manichean sects, and what would there have been left of the glorious mystery of Christianity as it first stood, either to reform or mend in the sixteenth century?

If the cause of Protestantism then is to be successfully maintained, it must be on some other ground than the common Puritan.

tan assumption, that it is just what Christianity was in the beginning, and that all variations from it in antiquity are to be set to the account of a devilish apostacy, of which Popery was at last the consummation and end. Come what may of the Reformation, there are certain general maxims of faith here which we can never safely renounce. We must hold fast to the divine origin of the church, and to its divine continuity from the beginning down to the present time. We must see and admit, that Protestantism is no return simply to Primitive Christianity. Its connection with this is *through* the Roman Catholic church only, as the real continuation of the older system. In no other view can it be acknowledged, as the historical and legitimate succession of this ancient faith. This implies, however, that the life of Protestantism must be one with the life of the church as it stood previously. It is to be taken as different from this indeed in the rejection of many accidental corruptions, but not in distinctive substance and spirit. Its doctrines and habits must be felt to grow forth, with true inward vitality, from the faith that has been accredited as divine from the beginning, by the promise and miraculous providence of Christ. Puritanism then, by abjuring this historical and organic relationship to the ancient church, does what it can in truth to ruin the cause of genuine Protestantism. It brings in another Gospel. It throws us on the terrible dilemma: "Either Ancient Christianity was intrinsically false, or Protestantism is a bold imposture"; for it makes this last to be the pure negation and contradiction of the first. But when it comes to this, what sound mind can pause in its choice? To create such a dilemma, we say then, is to fight against the Reformation. Puritanism, carrying upon its hard front these formidable horns, is no better than treason and death to Protestantism.

J. W. N.