

# HIGH CHURCH PRINCIPLES

OPPOSED TO THE

GENIUS OF OUR REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS.

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TO THE EDITORS OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

GENTLEMEN—I think that I may claim a place for some remarks on a letter from James M. Garnett, Esq., published in your paper of September 21, 1828.

The reason why this reply has been so long delayed is this: Just at the time when the number of the *Intelligencer* containing Mr. G's letter came to hand, I was under the necessity of taking several long journeys in immediate succession. On my return home, professional duties required every moment of time which the state of my health permitted me to devote to them. The paper too was lost; the whole matter, as far as Mr. Garnett was concerned, had ceased to interest me, and I was willing it should be forgotten. Others are of a different mind. My former letter, and Mr. G's answer, have been reprinted in pamphlet form, and circulated as a Tract, with that industry which characterizes sectarian zeal. It is this circumstance which calls forth the following remarks; and as my name was first brought into your paper, I feel that I have a right to all the "room" which I wish to occupy.

It is very far from my intention to make this either a *personal* or a *theological* controversy. My own "charity" shall certainly not vaunt itself in the newspapers; and as for Mr. G's *polemic chivalry*, he may dispose of it just as he pleases. It is my privilege to belong to a church which acknowledges no "dignitaries;" but I am connected with a public institution which would suffer in its interests, if it were generally supposed that I am capable of bringing serious, but unfounded charges against an adversary, for the sake of throwing odium on him and his whole party. It is my duty to prevent

this injury, if it is in my power ; in a word, I am prompted by public not by private considerations.

It is not a just representation of the course which I have pursued, to insinuate that, after I had written what nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand would understand to be a charge against a whole denomination of Christians, on being called to account for it, I have begged leave to explain, and declared that I did *not* mean what every body supposed that I *did* mean. On the contrary, from the beginning of this controversy, I have used the same language, and have uniformly avowed that my attack was not directed against the Episcopalians, but against *high church principles*. Whether this is a distinction without a difference will presently appear.

It is true that, during our colonial bondage, and while there was a religious establishment, the Episcopal Church was very commonly called the *High Church of England*. And this form of expression has not entirely gone into disuse ; so that many, on hearing the phrase *High Church*, think immediately of the Episcopal Church. But, thanks to all to whom thanks are due, this is a great mistake. There is no High Church now in this country. May it be so for ever ! It does not follow, however, that there are none who hold High Church principles.

As to the distinction between High and Low Church, it is readily admitted that no line has ever been drawn which clearly separates the whole Episcopal Church into two parties. But what then ? Do not the parties exist ? In the late Presidential contest, were there not many citizens exactly in the predicament of a very pleasant and facetious gentleman, named *Christopher Quandary*, who, peace to his memory ! lived not four years ago ? And if a real line, literally cutting the body politic, as the mathematicians cut a circle, had been drawn, would not many of our fellow-citizens have been bisected ? But was there no palpable distinction, after all, between the *Coalition* and the *Combination* ; between Adamsites and Jacksonians ?

To the student of Ecclesiastical history, scarcely any thing is more familiar than the distinction between High and Low Church. It began at least as early as the reign of Charles I. Let your respectable correspondent consult the "illustrious Mosheim," (as Bishop Horsley calls him) [Cent. xvii. part 2, chap. 2, sec. 20,] and he will find that Charles had directed

all the exertions of his zeal, and the whole tenor of his administration toward three objects, of which the second was, "the reduction of all the churches in Great Britain and Ireland under the jurisdiction of Bishops, whose government he looked upon as of *divine institution*, and also as most adapted to guard the privileges and majesty of the throne." No doubt he had learned the favorite maxim of his royal father, "no Bishop, no King."

Your correspondent may next, if he pleases, turn to pp. 505—9, of the same work, (vol. ii. 4to. edition,) and he will find an account of the *latitudinarians* or *Low Churchmen*, and of the *High Churchmen*, or *Church Tories*. Of the former, this learned historian writes thus : "They were zealously attached to the forms of Ecclesiastical Government and worship that were established in the Church of England, and they recommended Episcopacy with all the strength and power of their eloquence ; but they did not go so far as to look upon it as of *divine institution*, or as absolutely and indispensably necessary to the constitution of a Christian Church : and hence they maintained that those who followed other forms of government and worship, were not, on that account, to be excluded from their communion, or to forfeit the title of brethren." Among these Low Churchmen, he mentions the names of Hales, Chillingworth, More, Cudworth, Gale, Whichcot, and Tillotson. Now, I only ask here, were not such men as these sound Episcopalians, and true sons of the Church ? Mosheim further informs us, that the High Churchmen were so called "on account of the *high notions which they entertained of the dignity and power of the Church*, and the extent they gave to its prerogative and jurisdiction." Some of their principles are fully embodied in the famous *Act of Uniformity*, "in consequence of which," says the historian, "the validity of Presbyterian ordination was renounced, the ministrations of foreign Churches disowned," &c.

The same distinction is recognized by the learned *Jablonsky*, who, in his Ecclesiastical History, (vol. iii. p. 342,) gives us a specimen of High Church principles, as held by the learned and famous *Henry Dodwell*. He maintained, "that a Bishop is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and governs the Church over which he is appointed, by the authority, and in the place of Christ," &c.

If further evidence were needed, one might refer to the History of the *Bangorian Controversy*—to Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Times*—to Neale's *History of the Puritan's*, &c. Burnet says that "an inclination to favor Dissenters passed among many for a more heinous thing than a leaning to Popery itself." Vol. ii. p. 145, folio edition.

Here, again, I only ask, is it necessary, in order to one's being a good Episcopalian, that he should be a High Churchman? Let any one answer who will.

It is evident, that the distinction which originated two centuries ago, and which is as familiar as "household words" to every one versed in ecclesiastical history, exists in full force in this country. For proof, I refer to the events connected with the election of a Bishop, assistant to the venerable Bishop White, of Pennsylvania; and the attempt to elect a successor to the late venerable Bishop Kemp, of Maryland.

But I am required to show that I have given a just account of the principles of High Churchmen. And the very worthy gentleman whose letter has called forth these remarks, has intimated, that if I can do this he is willing to give them up to my fiercest denunciations. Nothing can be more easy than the task assigned. But as for the men themselves, I have no denunciations to make. Only, if they must be Episcopalians, let them be such sons of the Church as Tillotson and Chillingworth. As for the proof—why, gentlemen, your ample paper, should you leave out every thing else for a week, would not hold all the quotations at hand. I shall not, however, ask for more than a column or so for this purpose.

But first, allow me to make an assertion. There is not in the United States a High Churchman who does not disown the validity of all but Episcopal ordination, and refuse to interchange ministerial services with clergymen of any other denomination: not one of them will acknowledge any of their fellow Christians in other societies as members of the Church of Christ; nor will they go to their communion table. If your respectable correspondent doubts this, let him ask the minister of his own parish.

He, however, calls for proof. The following must suffice:

"When the Gospel is proclaimed, communion with the Church by participation of its ordinances, at the hands of the *duly authorized priesthood, is the indispensable condition of salvation.* Separation from the prescribed government, and

regular priesthood of the Church, when it proceeds from involuntary and unavoidable ignorance or error, we have reason to trust, will not intercept from the humble, the penitent, and obedient, the blessing of God's favor. But when we *humbly submit to that priesthood* which Christ and his Apostles constituted; when, in the lively exercise of penitence and faith, we partake of the ordinances administered by them, we maintain our communion with that Church which the Redeemer purchased with his blood," &c.

After another salvo for those who labor under *involuntary* error, the writer proceeds thus:

"But great is the guilt, and imminent the danger of those who, possessing the means of arriving at the knowledge of the truth, *negligently* or wilfully continue in a state of separation from the *authorized ministry of the Church*, and participate of ordinances administered by an *irregular and invalid authority*. Wilfully rending the peace and unity of the Church, by separating from the ministrations of its authorized priesthood; obstinately contemning the means which God, in his sovereign pleasure, hath prescribed for their salvation, they are guilty of rebellion against their Almighty Lawgiver and Judge; they expose themselves to the awful displeasure of that Almighty Jehovah, who will not permit his institutions to be contemned, or his authority violated with impunity."—"Companion for the Altar," by the Rev. John Henry (now Bishop) Hobart. New-York, pp. 202 and 204.]

"Episcopalians present these doctrines to their hearers, in the full persuasion that the *Church*, the *Ministry*, and the *Sacraments*, are as *distinctly and truly* appointments of God for the salvation of sinners, as faith of the Gospel, and that only as these are united in the profession of religion, can the hope thereby given to man be worthy of the name of assurance.

"Episcopalians consider the grace and mercy of the Gospel as matters of *strict covenant stipulation*; as bound up with the authority to dispense them; as *inseparable from that authority*; and *only by virtue of that authority*, (with reverence be it spoken,) *pledging the glorious source of all mercy and grace to his creatures.*" *Doctrines of the Church Vindicated*: by Bishop Ravenscroft, pp. 31, 32.

"You ask, does Episcopal, in contradistinction to Presbyterianial ordination, enter into the essence of the Church of

Christ. To this I answer, without the slightest hesitation, that *it does*: and for this plain reason—because I believe the one to have a divine and verifiable commission to ordain, which the other does not possess.”—Id. pp. 43, 44.

“The authority of Christ is the *only warrant* to act in his name; and succession from his Apostles, the *only satisfactory evidence*, that any man or body of men are possessed of this warrant. And from the very nature of things, ministerial commission and authority can no otherwise be so verified, as to be consistent with assurance, as to the validity and efficacy of religious ministrations in the name of Christ. *The ministry of the Church is a substitution for the Lord Jesus Christ in person,*” &c.—Id. p. 47.

“When you baptize, do you not profess to bring an alien into covenant with God, and seal him to the day of redemption? When you administer the Lord’s Supper, do you not negotiate afresh the pardon of the penitent, and replenish and confirm the grace of worthy partakers? When you visit the sick and dying, are not the consolations of religion at your disposal, according to the circumstances of the case?”—Id. p. 28.

Is not this proof enough? I might go on to show that High Churchmen deny the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and attribute to *the Church*—by which they undoubtedly mean in this connexion, the clergy—the right of authoritatively interpreting the Scriptures. For that, says a Bishop, is to be received as the true meaning of Scripture, which the Church, in every age, has declared to be its meaning.

Allow me to repeat, gentlemen, that none of the opinions above stated, are necessary to constitute men Episcopalians. Otherwise, Cranmer and his noble compeers and successors, down to the days of Laud, were not Episcopalians. Even the *judicious* Hooker; the *mighty* Chillingworth, the *eloquent* Tillotson, and hundreds of others, the ornaments of the Church of England, and in whose services the universal Church has rejoiced, must be disowned as sound and true Episcopalians. In my attack on High Church principles, then, might I not, with the utmost propriety, declare, that I make no assault on the Episcopal Church—or on individuals as *Episcopalians*—but only as High Churchmen? Suppose that an honest Englishman, in writing on the constitution and government of this country, should severely

censure the enormous patronage of the Federal executive, might he not justly say, I am not censuring the Americans, considered as *republicans*, but as pursuing a practice not at all necessary, to say the least, to constitute them members of a free commonwealth? He might write as awkwardly as Jeremy Bentham, but my life on it, not one in a thousand of the citizens of this country would mistake his meaning, or rail against him as a hostile assailant. True, if we could not be republicans at all, without this great executive patronage, there would be no room for the distinction. But as the case is, the distinction is made every day, and so respectable and amiable a gentleman as your correspondent required some excitement, surely, before he could refuse to admit it.

Again: I am represented as *injurious*, for saying that High Church principles are opposed to the genius of our institutions. It is useless to disclaim, in presence of heated partizans, all intention of doing injury. But if I can fairly prove the soundness of my opinions, the impartial will acquit me of evil intention, in giving them utterance. I show no enmity when I tell the truth. Hear, then, my reasons.

The laws of our country secure perfect religious liberty to every citizen: and all have equal rights. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Episcopalians, &c. all stand on the same level. And the ministers of any one religious denomination have, according to the law of the land, the same authority to teach, and administer ordinances, as those of any other denomination. Marriage celebrated by a *Dissenter*, is as valid, and as sacred, as though the service were performed by an *Archbishop*. But the High Churchmen, to a man, maintain that none have a right to teach or administer ordinances, save only ministers of their church. Indeed there is no church—there are no true sacraments—no valid ministrations, but theirs. Now here is direct opposition. The law of the land says one thing; High Churchmen affirm directly the contrary.

There is, indeed, a just distinction between *civil* and *ecclesiastical* rights: and the High Churchman is by no means charged with confounding them. He doubtless knows and admits that, in this country, the men whom he persists in calling Dissenters, have a civil right to do what he denies that they are authorized to do by the law of Christ’s Church. But this does not destroy the force of the allegation. Be-

cause the religious principle, when excited, is the most powerful in human nature. The interest created by religion is all absorbing in its influence; it reaches to all man's relations and concerns. More than any thing else, it comes home to his "business and bosom." "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." One must be quite ignorant of the history of religion to deny, that it is comparatively easy to persuade a man that any thing is totally and absolutely wrong which he believes to be opposed to the fundamental principles of his religion. But the quotations made above, show that High Churchmen regard *the particular form of the church as essential to being of the church*. It is, in fact, a question of church or no church; and all who are not members of the Episcopal Church are under "great guilt." The whole body of American Christians belonging to non-episcopal churches, are schismatics, and without any assurance of salvation, are left to uncovenanted mercies. It is the church, ministry, and sacraments, which render the *Scriptures sufficient*, &c. I ask, then, is not a religious man, who has adopted High Church principles, under the influence of a cause which operates against the American principles of perfect religious liberty? Let intelligent and impartial men judge.

It would require more room, I fear, than you could afford, to adduce historical evidence in support of these "reasonings"—for so, with Mr. G's leave—*pace tanti viri*, I must call them. Let me only ask, who supported the courts of High Commission and the Star Chamber? Who were the staunch advocates of all the arbitrary measures of the house of Stuart? Who opposed the glorious revolution of 1688? and who were the enemies of our own more glorious revolution, but High Churchmen? On the other hand, in all these instances, did not Low Churchmen and Dissenters, as far as politics were concerned, unite heartily, and co-operate vigorously? The faithful records of history afford, on this subject, a series of most instructive facts, and warrant the strongest conclusions as to the tendency of High Church principles.

But while impartial men easily see the truth of these statements, it may not be so obvious to the most respectable and intelligent, whose minds are filled with the prejudices of education, and excited by the heats of controversy. And un-

happily this has long been a subject of controversy. How can it be otherwise, when High Churchmen proclaim, that all the authority of the church is in their hands; but as for us, our Ministers, they say, are intruders into the sacred office; our sacraments are invalid; our hopes unwarranted; and our meetings schismatical assemblages. In this state of things there *will*, and there *ought to be*, controversy. The High Churchmen *will* endeavor to support their dignity; and *Dissenters* ought to maintain their rights, and to "stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made them free." Yes, there must be controversy, while extravagant claims are put in on one side, and the spirit of religious freedom exists on the other. But, it may be asked, do not High Churchmen declare that the effect, of which I speak, has not been produced on their minds: and do they not indignantly repel the charge made against their principles? Undoubtedly they do—and I admit, with the utmost sincerity. The reason is, without any very strong religious feeling, they are, in this country, under the influence of powerful counteracting causes. A man's opinions are the result of all the intellectual forces which bear on his mind. And in a given case, to form any thing like a correct judgment respecting the tendency of a particular sentiment, we must know all the circumstances which operate on the understanding. In the present age, a very great majority of our fellow citizens are opposed to High Church principles; and the current of public opinion in favor of liberty, civil and religious, is irresistible. The balance of all the forces which press the mind, is therefore in favor of the institutions of the country. But who can say that this would be the case if a majority of the nation held High Church principles? In England, notwithstanding many a hard struggle, the act of uniformity was not repealed until England had a Presbyterian King, and Low Churchmen got into power. The *Corporation* and *Test Acts* could not be abolished until it was done by Dissenters and Low Churchmen. Who would not be sorely unwilling to trust his religious liberty with those who have power, and who sincerely believe that none but themselves are of the true church, or have ecclesiastical authority?

I have never said, or thought that any of my fellow Christians of any denomination are, in this age, unfriendly to the institutions of our common country. But I have said, and

I do still believe, that High Church principles are, in their nature, opposed to the genius of American institutions. And how far the heaven may work, who can pretend to say? The silent, steady, powerful operation of a moral cause, such as that of religion, may, in this modification of it, produce results entirely unexpected, and undesired too, by any Christian now living in the United States. If the records of past time afford any ground for reasoning as to the future, I feel that I am justified in all that I have written on the subject.

And feeling thus, I protest against the inference, that I intended to excite odium against any denomination of Christians. I meant to show that particular sentiments, not necessary to constitute a man a genuine Episcopalian, ought to be renounced. I meant to do all in my power to ensure their renunciation; and this in the full persuasion that *the Church* would flourish more, and be better able to do her part in the great work which must be done by American Christians, without these principles, than with them. Believe me gentlemen—all persons of truly liberal minds *can* believe that my chief concern, as a minister of the gospel, is that the power of Christian truth may be felt, and the blessings of genuine religion may be enjoyed, by all in our country. But this, I am persuaded, can never be the case while the form and manner in which the truth is communicated is regarded as equally essential with the truth itself. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

Your correspondent represents, in pretty strong terms, that I bring a charge of *stupidity* against great numbers, including many most able and respectable men, when I say that High Churchmen do not perceive the consequences of their own principles. I must confess that this charge surprised me not a little. And the more I have considered the matter, the more I am surprised that Mr. Garnett should have given it such a turn as this. Whether there are many thousands of High Churchmen in the United States, he certainly ought to know better than I do. But how he can speak so confidently, if the line of discrimination has not been clearly drawn between them and Low Churchmen, it is not for me to say. I cannot believe, however, without very strong evidence, that in this country, and in the nineteenth century, there are many thousands of Protestants who believe that

clergymen are the substitutes for the person (vicars) of Christ on earth; that, by them alone, the source of all grace can be pledged to fulfill his own engagements; that great guilt rests on a man for not being a member of the Episcopal Church; that ordination by a diocesan Bishop is necessary to constitute a true clergyman; that the administrations of all others are entirely invalid and null; and that none but Episcopalians have any *warranted* hope of Heaven, &c. I should suppose the number *very* small. But this does not much affect the main point now before us.

It is well known that the matters involved in the High Church controversy are very little studied by the great body of the people. I was once asked by a very intelligent Episcopalian, with whom I had the pleasure of daily affectionate intercourse, "What is the reason why our ministers say, you have no right to administer the sacraments?" Indeed, the subject of ecclesiastical polity is rarely made one of careful and continued examination. Its *history* has never yet been adequately treated; and it is not too much to say, that its bearing on civil and religious interests is not generally understood. The prejudices of education, or family influences, for the most part, determine people's church connexions; and very often men become heated with controversy before they have thoroughly examined the subject in debate. It is so in politics as well as religion. In all such cases it is very common to say, without any imputation of stupidity, intended or understood, surely you do not perceive the consequences of your principles. To charge an adversary with consequences which he disavows, is intolerable. To state consequences as legitimately deducible from his principles, is another affair. To state them as an objection to the principles themselves is a very common method of arguing. If the objection is decisive, and the antagonist still holds his opinion, what can one do, but say, as in this case I have said to High Churchmen? The present tariff is occasion of great controversy. Half the nation, and perhaps more, with the venerable ex-President Madison at their head, believe it to be constitutional: very many of our ablest politicians, on the other hand, think it a violation of the Constitution. What then? Shall it be said that the majority *design* to violate that sacred instrument? Surely not. Can they say any thing else than this? Gentlemen, you do not perceive the consequences

of your own reasoning on this subject. How furious must be the partizanship of the man who should start up and exclaim, "So you include us all in one sweeping charge of stupidity. Very modest, and very charitable, truly!" It surely would not be worth while to take as much time to answer a declaration of this kind as I have employed in hastily writing the above remarks.

The last topic which I shall touch in this communication is one for which I must beg another column. I am strongly censured for saying that it is time for the American people to waken up, &c. &c. On this subject, I wish for ample opportunity to explain my views. The relation between civil society and the Church has always been a matter of great difficulty and delicacy. On this subject, the people of this country are making an experiment which never has been tried before. Our situation is perfectly singular and unique. No nation has ever before enjoyed perfect religious liberty. Who can tell what are to be the consequences?

The power of religion, as a moral cause, and the extent to which it sends its influence through every department of human life, have already been mentioned. This is a case which deserves most serious consideration; because there is no human power which can restrain the operations of the religious principle. It is in the mind, and cannot be fettered. It will penetrate the halls of legislation; be found at the polls, and makes its way into the inmost shrine of domestic life; it will be felt every where.

Besides: The Church is an association distinct and separate from that formed for civil purposes. It has its laws, its officers, its councils, its pecuniary interests. The bond of this society is stronger than any political bond. In religion man acts for eternity; and he will forsake father and mother, and houses and lands, and his own life, to fulfill the duties of discipleship. Here then, is *imperium in imperio*, where there is no such alliance between Church and State as makes the former dependent on the latter. Is it wonderful that many sagacious politicians have been greatly at a loss what to do in this case?

Allow me to present, here, a very brief historical sketch, for the sake of illustration.

When Christianity appeared in the world she found religion every where established by law. In the Roman em-

pire paganism was connected with the State. And, from the time of Augustus, the emperors thought it necessary to sustain, in their own person, the office of *pontifex maximus*. A great change, however, was approaching. Christianity increased amidst opposition and persecution. It displaced heathenism, and took possession even of the throne of the Cæsars. But the Emperor could not be Chief Pontiff of Christianity. The Bishops, totally different from the humble Pastors appointed by the Apostles, had been too long accustomed to exercise authority and dispose of the revenues of the Church, to yield the supremacy to the civil ruler. And history records many astonishing instances of arrogance on the one side, and submission on the other. The imperial authority, however, while it retained any of its vigor, did hinder the complete revelation of the man of sin. But, in the distractions which ensued, the power of the clergy uniformly increased, until, in process of time, Christendom may be said to have been brought under an Ecclesiastical government. Then was established the most frightful tyranny which the world has ever seen; and the Church was any thing but what Christ and his Apostles had made it.

Things continued thus, until the period of the Reformation. During this great revolution in human opinions, it was a question of much importance what relation the Church ought to bear to the State. Henry the Eighth, whose political sagacity cannot be questioned, boldly declared himself Head of the Church. He saw that if religion was left entirely free it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to restrain the power of the Clergy. This, no doubt, was one object; another was, to maintain his own authority. His example was followed, to some extent, by all Protestant governments. Indeed, it deserves to be remarked, that no country in Europe, whether Protestant, or Catholic, enjoys even a shadow of liberty, where the established clergy are not dependent on the civil government. The necessity of this case, perhaps, urged many of the Reformers to advocate measures inconsistent with their principles. They recommended the application of force, and even violence, to such as refused to acknowledge the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion.

A sense of justice, as well as inclination, prompts me here to remark, that, in the times of which I speak, only one man

among the Reformers had the penetration to discover a sure method, by which the undue power of the clergy may be restrained, even when religion has no connexion with government. He was bred to the law; but having embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, he became the best Ecclesiastical historian, and the ablest commentator on the Bible, of his age. His consummate knowledge in these departments of learning enabled him to approximate very nearly to the primitive polity and discipline of the Church. And although his character was colored by the spirit of his times, yet he had the sagacity to see, that, by making all clergymen equal, and giving laymen a place in the government and discipline of the Church, a complete check might be laid on clerical power. When he had made this discovery, he boldly taught, that the only province of the civil magistrate was the protection of religion. It was this principle, and by no means his theological doctrine, which rendered him so obnoxious to the friends of arbitrary power in every country. *I speak of John Calvin.* And it is right curious, that in every age, down to the present, *his bitterest enemies have always been found among those whose Church government most approximates to a monarchy.* It is true, too, that all the principles of religious liberty which are now embodied in the fundamental laws of our country, were taught by men of Calvin's school, long before the fathers of those who framed our institutions were born. These principles were brought with them by many of the first settlers of this western wilderness. Our Revolution only gave them clearer development, and more universal acceptance. And now, while religion is established by law in every other country in the world, in ours it is perfectly free. Will it continue so? Who can tell? The causes which influence public opinion, and produce changes in national character, are slow in their operation; and the result of our experiment is yet hid in futurity.

We do, however, owe it to the world to make a *fair* experiment. If America can prove to other nations that religion can be sustained in its purity, and all its blessings enjoyed, without an establishment, she will possess a higher title to the gratitude of mankind than any other nation now, or heretofore in existence. But, whence does danger of failure arise?

In answer to this question, permit me to reply negatively,

*not* directly, as I believe, from the *clergy or people* of any Christian denomination in this country. Although your respectable correspondent passes several left-handed compliments on my understanding, I hope that he does not imagine that I join in the senseless clamor so often raised by shallow or interested politicians respecting the clergy, as aiming at an establishment. Especially, I do trust, that no one ever imagined that I meant to charge any Protestant clergyman with aiming at any such object. Every man of any tolerable information knows enough about establishments to know, that, in them all, since the Reformation, the clergy are dependent on patronage, and are restrained in the discharge of their functions by the civil magistrate. The primate of all England, with all his Bishops united, dare not consecrate a man to take part with them in their ministry, without a *conge d'elire* from his most sacred Majesty: nor can they appoint one to that office in foreign parts, without an act of Parliament obtained for the purpose. The clergyman is even expected to *pray* according to the prescription of the supreme ruler: and can it be supposed that the free, high-minded clergy of this country would renounce their independence, and the blessings of liberty, and cringe to some lay patron? But this surrender must be made, or an establishment cannot long exist. History shows that the clergy are not so disposed to relinquish power and influence. They had far rather reign in the hearts of their people than own dependence on the civil magistrate. These remarks are made on the supposition that the clergy are as ambitious as politicians represent them. But let it be acknowledged that they are sincere and honest in their efforts to promote religion—then, I say, they can have no motive to wish for an establishment. Religion, to be completely successful, *must be free.* Experience shows that, in this country, it has the energy of liberty: it “has free course, and is glorified.” Beyond a doubt, it will ultimately triumph. At this present time there are more than a million of communicants in the several Protestant Churches in the United States. Probably a larger proportion than exists in any other country in the world. The number increases at the rate of one hundred thousand a year. Such increase is perfectly unexampled since the days of the Apostles. Religion will triumph; and no power on earth can prevent it. And it will triumph precisely because



it is perfectly free. The intelligent clergy of all denominations understand this; and would be the very foremost to oppose any effort to bind religion to the car of State.

I am not so sanguine, however, as to suppose that religion will achieve its triumph without a struggle—it may be a fierce one. But the only danger arises from the probability that religion will not be permitted to retain her freedom. And who will take it away? I answer, *not Christians*, but *POLITICIANS*. Bear with me, while I assign my reasons:

1. This country is the only one in the world, where perfect religious liberty is enjoyed. Foreign powers look with a more jealous eye on this part of our institutions than on any other. It is in Europe a subject of universal interest; and millions ardently wish that our experiment may prove to be a complete failure. The political influence of the world then is working against us. And with the present facilities of intercourse among nations, this is no trifle.

The established churches of Europe, too, feel a lively interest in the religion of this country. While I was editor of that Magazine in which the controversy between me and High Churchmen originated on my part, the following facts were brought before me. 1. That the Pope had established several new bishoprics, and had made an *additional* appropriation of \$24,000 per annum for the extension of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. His Holiness considers the entire Protestant population of this country as straying sheep, which he would gladly bring back into his fold. And many true sons of the mother church are prompt to afford the Holy Father efficient aid. For, 2. I was informed by a very intelligent friend, that there exists in Paris a missionary society of great activity, and very considerable resources, the express object of which is the sending out, and the support of Jesuit Missionaries in the United States. Members of the Royal Family, and persons about the court, were known to be members of that society. Even royal munificence has not refused to aid in decorating Catholic Churches in our large towns. But, 3. A few years ago several agents went from this country to England to solicit assistance in building up institutions of theological and other learning among us. The application of one individual called forth a circular address from several distinguished men, from which the following is a faithful extract: “The undersigned

cannot but notice, as a strong additional motive for supporting the plans of Bishop Chase, that the Roman Catholic Bishop in the State of Ohio, according to information lately received from that quarter, is now on a special mission at Rome, in order to solicit the means of establishing a college in Ohio; while it is announced in the public papers of this country that the Pope has made an additional annual grant of \$24,000 (5,000 guineas,) to the *Society de propaganda fide*, for the support of the Roman Catholic Church in North America. As the great importance of making early efforts in the new settlements of America will doubtless cause much of this wealth to flow to the Westward, the friends of the Protestant faith will feel a particular obligation lying upon them to strengthen Bishop Chase's hands.” This circular was signed by *Lord Kenyon*, *Lord Gambier*, the *Rev. Dr. Gaskin*, and *Henry Hoare, Esq.* These facts are not adduced to bring odium on any one, but to show that the members of foreign establishments do take a lively interest in the religious affairs of this country. And here is a very curious instance of the jealousy of one foreign church, in regard to the exertions of another in the United States, and of an appeal to party prejudices for the purpose of increasing the amount of contributions solicited. The plain English of the whole matter is this: let us be prompt and liberal, or the Roman Catholics will run before us, and preoccupy the ground.

And here I would ask, am I, as the editor of a public journal in this country, to be reprehended for having, with these facts before me, uttered to my countrymen the voice of warning? Could I have selected a more appropriate time than while reviewing pamphlets in which it was vehemently urged that none but preachers of one class are to be regarded as Ministers of Christ, or have any right to teach and administer; and that none but the people of one denomination are to be regarded as Christians at all, or in any sense members of the Church? But I drop this topic.

The first cause of danger to our religious liberty arises from the *influence which, in our unrestrained and constant intercourse with the nations of the earth, foreign Governments and religious establishments will exert on public opinion in our country.*

2. The second reason is founded on the wonderful pro-

gress of our population, and the opposition made by many leading men to the measures adopted for the purpose of supplying sound religious instruction to our countrymen. In the next twenty-five years provision is to be made in this way for twelve millions of souls. Where shall we find faithful schoolmasters, and able religious teachers for this enormous multitude? In countries where religion is established by law, this provision is made by government. In this nation, the thing must be done by the voluntary exertions of Christians, or not at all. Well, Christians generally, in perfect satisfaction with our political institutions, have earnestly set to work to afford the necessary supplies. But every where they have to encounter vehement opposition. The threadbare charge of aiming at an establishment is repeated to hoarseness, not only by stump-orators but by grave senators. Now, should this opposition prove successful, what is to be the result? There will be religion of some sort; and there will be teachers of religion, but a deplorable destitution of that firm religious principle which is founded on the basis of truth. The want of this renders the people liable to the wildest excitements of enthusiasm and fanaticism. And one of the most striking characteristics of fanaticism, is its failure to take hold of the conscience and regulate the moral feelings. But while this will be the deplorable condition of the great mass of the people, men of education will probably be infidels. In such a state of things, neither political nor civil liberty can long endure. The government having no control over religion, and the Bible exerting no power to regulate the minds of men, such excesses may be produced as will drive the political leaders of the day to take refuge from intolerable evils in an establishment of religion.

3. But if these evils should be averted, as it is devoutly to be wished they may be, by the energy of an unshackled religion, there is another danger to which this great interest is exposed. Christianity will make great progress in our country. Its influence will be felt, as before remarked, in every department of life. The chief magistrate, the judge, the member of congress, men of all classes, will find themselves obliged to regard the opinions of religious men. This is already in some degree the case. It will be more so hereafter. But, even now, some little impatience, and even irritability on this subject, occasionally shows itself. And no doubt

the indiscretions of Christians—for, amidst so many thousands, however sincere, there will be such things—the indiscretions of Christians will increase the irritation. Reflections on the motives of Christians, and opposition to their measures, will produce excitement on their part, and feeling their strength, they will resolve that their purposes shall be accomplished. Success will elate their spirits. And there may hereafter arise serious grounds to apprehend that our government will become virtually an ecclesiastical government—a spiritual tyranny. That political men will readily adopt suspicions of this kind, appears from the report made some weeks ago in the Senate of the United States, in regard to *Sunday Mails*. In that case, the petitioners simply ask that Congress would retrace their steps, and discontinue the usage of carrying the mail on the Sabbath. This plain, harmless request, seems to have excited the very fears of which I speak. As this whole thing proceeds, and the power of religion becomes greater, it will be recollected that government has no hold of the church; not an atom of power over religion; and it may become a grave question, whether civil and even religious liberty, will not be safer, by connecting the church with the government, than by running the risk of a subjection of temporal affairs to a spiritual authority exercised over public opinion. And this movement will assuredly be made, not by clergymen feeling their personal influence, but by politicians in dread of the influence of the church.

I am fully aware of the political expedient of playing off the different denominations of Christians against each other, and counteracting the supposed designs of one, by the jealousies of another. But it is a wretched expedient; for on some occasion of deep interest, the device may show itself so broadly as to produce a revulsion of feeling, and a compromise utterly destructive of the designs of the politician. If, however, a result like this is not to be apprehended, let every sober thinker consider how deplorable must be the condition of society, when recourse is had to the intense feelings of sectarian jealousy; and the statesman, instead of aiming to promote kindness, peace, and sound morality, displays his skill in exciting theological rancor: when three or four millions of citizens are roused by the zeal of a religious party, against nearly an equal number on the opposite side.

Let such excitements once be raised, and who can quell or calm them? *It is* a most wretched expedient, and no terms of censure can be too strong of the politician who adopts it.

These, gentlemen, are my honest views of this momentous and most difficult subject, taken up after some diligence of inquiry, and very careful consideration, continued through a series of years. They may be ridiculed as visionary by men inattentive to ecclesiastical history; but ridicule is no test of truth. As for myself, I shall continue to believe that *what has been may be*; and that it is the duty of every good citizen, and of every Christian, to study this important and difficult subject with the most profound attention. If your worthy correspondent is correct in stating that there are many thousands of High Churchmen in our country, it only adds to the strength of my conviction. If in this age, notwithstanding the extension and improvement of education, the power of the press, the guaranty of religious liberty by our fundamental laws, and the increase of liberal feeling in the world, there are thousands who do believe that ministers of the gospel are substitutes for the person of Christ; and that in order to be a Christian, and have any warranted hope of Heaven, one must receive the sacraments from a preacher ordained by a diocesan bishop; then, there is an inveteracy in ecclesiastical prejudices, and a facility in propagating them, which render them exceedingly dangerous.

Allow room for a few additional remarks, and I shall have done. In a matter at once so difficult and important as that before us, every citizen may show his opinion. I, also, will show mine.

It is easy to state the general principle on which religious liberty may be preserved. It is simply this—*let religion, and the teachers of religion be kept in their proper place.* The appropriate office of religion is to make men *good men.* They may, then, be safely left to act as they please; for they will choose to act well. The proper business of religious teachers is, so to exhibit the truth that men will receive it and be sanctified by it. But to ensure this happy result, and in doing so to prevent the perversion and abuse of religion, is the difficulty: *hoc opus hic labor est.* I humbly suggest the following considerations:

1. The government must let religion alone; neither attempting to enforce it by law, nor daring to violate its pre-

cepts and ordinances: in a word, doing nothing but affording an honest and impartial protection to every one in the enjoyment of his religious rights. It was the exasperation produced by ten thousand acts of causeless oppression and cruelty on the part of a Pagan government, which first prompted Christians, in violation of the precepts of their Master, to perpetrate the crime of persecution. Our government must not be *Pagan* nor *Infidel.*

2. It is of the utmost importance that the real genius and character of Christianity should be generally understood. It cannot otherwise exert its full moral influence. All men ought to know that he is a Christian, entitled to all the privileges of the church, and all the hopes of salvation, who so believes the truth as to repent and live a holy life; no matter by what name he is called, or from what minister he received the sacraments. Arrogant and exclusive pretensions produce discord; and an undue regard to external observances makes infidels of some, formalists of others, and fanatics of others. I call that an *undue regard* which values outward observances, not for the truth which they represent, but for the form with which they are clothed. The law of the land knows no difference between men of different religious persuasions; and it is highly important that public opinion should so far accord with the spirit of the law as to exert its mighty energies against those who make mere external differences amount to the vital question of "Church or no Church." To ensure peace and tranquillity in a religious community, the different denominations must be liberal enough to acknowledge each other as brethren.

3. To keep religion and its teachers in their proper places, I should think it very important that *the people* should understand the true nature of ecclesiastical authority; with whom it is lodged; and how it is to be exercised. Without entering into this subject, allow me to present a brief contrast of High and Low Church principles.

Low Churchmen maintain that ecclesiastical power is, according to the will of Christ, vested in *the church.* High Churchmen hold that it belongs to *the clergy.*

Low Churchmen hold that it particularly appertains to the church, either collectively or by their representatives, to admit members into the Christian society. High Churchmen hold that this is the sole prerogative of clergymen.

In correspondence with this, Low Churchmen are of opinion that expulsion from the society cannot take place without the act of the society. High Churchmen believe that excommunication is a part of clerical prerogative.

The former teach that the sacraments are nothing more than very interesting methods of exhibiting truth and enforcing obligation; while the latter maintain that the *duly authorized clergyman*, by administering the sacraments, *confers grace*.

The fundamental principle of the one is, the *sufficiency* of the Scriptures: the other denies this, and maintains that the *church, ministry, and sacraments, are integral parts of the plan of salvation*.

The Low Churchman earnestly contends for the right of private judgment; his antagonist asserts that the church has authority to declare the sense of Scripture, and determine what articles of faith it contains.

This one does not believe that any particular form of church government is prescribed in the New Testament, but only general principles, the application of which is left to the discretion of the church. The other is fierce for the *jus divinum*, and stoutly maintains that the *three orders* are essential to the being of a church. At any rate, no Bishop, no Church.

The Low Churchman thinks that, in case of necessity, the people may call a brother to the ministry; and even in ordinary cases there ought to be a judgment of the people in favor of a candidate, before he is called to the pastoral office. But the High Churchman is convinced that ordination is impossible, unless a Bishop is present to communicate something which he has derived from the Apostles, and which no one but a Bishop ever can possess.

The Low Churchman acknowledges as ministers of the Gospel all, who, with the consent (formally expressed) of any Christian people, preach the true doctrine of Christ; and all as fellow Christians, who so receive this doctrine as to repent and live holy lives. But with the High Churchman, no man is to be received as a minister who has not been episcopally ordained; and none are Christians who are not united with the Bishop.

Now, in a country where religion is perfectly free, and is of course out of the reach of the law and the government, I

would ask, which best accord with the genius of our institutions—Low or High Church principles? Let the impartial decide.

And if religion should prevail, so as generally to influence public opinion—and that it will I have no doubt—let me ask which principles of ecclesiastical polity will be most likely to operate in favor of American institutions; those which exalt, or those which restrain the powers of the clergy.

And finally, may not the danger of the church becoming the paramount authority in the nation, and so superinducing all the unutterable evils of a corrupt religion, be best avoided by that system which fully recognizes that fundamental principle of religious liberty, the right of private judgment; which commits the management of ecclesiastical concerns equally to laymen and clergymen; and renders it impossible that the people should be oppressed, unless they choose to oppress themselves? Again, I say, let an impartial public decide.

In conclusion, I must be permitted, in justice to myself, to say, that I have never yet endeavored to persuade a human being to change his religious connexions. And, although I have, what appears to me, a just preference for a particular mode of worship, and form of church government, I have, in no case, represented this as essential to Christianity, or disowned brotherhood with those who, in matters of external observance, differ from the church to which I belong. And farther: I have never engaged in controversy, except for the purpose of showing that differences of this kind ought to put no bar in the way of communion, and produce no breach of Christian fellowship. I have, however, felt it to be a most sacred duty, both as a Christian and a citizen, to do what I could to put down contrary opinions: as a Christian, because these opinions appear to me to be opposed to the genius of Christianity—as a citizen, because I think them contrary to the spirit of our political institutions. And if I am to be represented in the public papers as illiberal and uncharitable, because I endeavor to expose the claims and pretensions of those who hold that they are the only Christians in the world, inasmuch as they have bishops, priests, and deacons, acting as substitutes for Christ on earth—I must even bear it as I may.

Your correspondent, in the fullness of his courage as a polemic, may return to the charge, or "have done with me

for ever," just as suits his own pleasure. I neither seek nor shun an adversary. But, although he certainly has not raised his character as a controversialist, he still retains my respectful regard as a worthy and useful citizen; and my best wishes for his success in enterprizes much more profitable than his attempt to prop up High Church principles.

JOHN HOLT RICE.

*Union Seminary, 9th March, 1829.*