

Church' of America, the 'Reformed Catholic Church' of Scotland, and the 'Church of England,' of being the one 'Catholic and Apostolic' Church, in its primitive authority and purity. The whole dispute, as I understood it, between this Church and the Romish, and the Dissenters, and what is technically called High and Low Church, may be resolved into this doctrine of the alleged 'infallibility' of the Church. I have read, reasoned, and thought, on this subject, and not having been able to arrive at any satisfactory solution of the difficulty, I have determined to ask for more light from the editor of the *Churchman*; and in asking for more light, I am bound to state the difficulties under which I labor, in not being able to arrive at the same conclusions with my worthy and intelligent pastor.

It is claimed that the Church of Christ, as established by the apostles, being organized, governed, and directed, by persons chosen by their great Master for this especial purpose, and who had his command and authority to continue and perpetuate it, by the transmission of their authority to their successors, with the promise of the Holy Spirit to aid it, and guide it into all truth—that a Church so divinely instituted, guided, and preserved, must be the depository of truth—must be the only authority in matters of faith and discipline—must be the only appointed means through which salvation may be obtained and the true light of the Gospel diffused throughout the world. That a Church so constituted must in its very nature be 'infallible,' I will not deny; but do not 'Protestant Episcopalians' both admit and deny this 'infallibility' in the same breath? It is admitted by them that the Church so instituted did regularly and validly transmit its authority and preserve its purity for some three or four centuries, after which errors began gradually to diffuse themselves, until finally the whole Church became corrupted; maintaining and preserving however the regular and valid transmission of its authority by means of its corrupted and erring ministry, down to the present time, as it exists in the Romish and Greek communions, together with one or two other admitted branches of the true Church of Christ—Now the question may be naturally asked, how a Church so instituted could run into error at all? Established by Christ himself; invested with miraculous powers; guided by the Holy Spirit; such a Church, if infallible in its authority, and in the power of transmitting its authority must have been infallible in its doctrines, and as an interpreter of the truth. I see no way of escaping from this conclusion. The Romanists affirm that such is the fact; and assuming the premises to be true, that is the consistent and inevitable conclusion. This is one horn of the dilemma. Now for the other.

The Church so constituted, and in the admitted possession of its regularly transmitted authority from the Apostles themselves, acknowledged throughout Western Europe, and by general consent, a spiritual head in the Bishop of Rome. Every Christian Bishop in Western Europe, antecedent to the time of Henry the Eighth,

acknowledged him as the spiritual head of the Church and bowed unhesitatingly to the decisions of a Council of the Church acknowledging his spiritual jurisdiction. The English Bishops down to the reign of Henry derived their Episcopal powers and authority from this source, and regarded it coming to them through the true and appointed authority of the Church of Christ. Under these circumstances the Reformation in England began. A few Bishops deriving their spiritual authority from Rome, acknowledged the validity of the source through which they had derived their spiritual powers, by claiming the right in their capacity as Bishops of that Church, to determine truth and error for themselves, proclaimed as errors and corruptions what the Church of which they were constituent parts had, by virtue of its delegated and infallible authority derived from the Apostles, decided to be necessary to salvation! assumed to themselves authority to sit in judgment upon the solemn decisions of councils—to declare as errors what the whole Western Church, from which they derived their authority, had declared to be the truths—to oppose their individual judgments to the judgment of their brethren in council; and refuse their submission to the constituted authority of the Church of which they were members, and from which they had derived their powers! If this be not schism, pray what is it?

Suppose, Mr. Editor, that the good Bishop of Ohio, and three or four of his Western brethren, should take it upon themselves to decide and declare in direct contradiction to the decision of the general council of Bishops, and the universally admitted doctrines of the Church, that there were great errors in the Church; that corruption existed; and that it had become indispensably necessary to the preservation of the purity of the Church, and to restore it to its primitive simplicity and truth, to reform its liturgy, and abolish some of its vain and useless ceremonials—to deny the truth of the doctrine of the real presence—to substitute sweetened water for wine—to deny the efficacy or right of pronouncing absolution—to abolish the custom, as idolatrous, of receiving the communion kneeling—to dispense with the sign of the cross in baptism—to make baptism and regeneration two distinct matters—to abolish the use of vestments—and perform sundry other acts of purification that they might choose to designate. In such a state of things the inquiry would naturally be put to the good Bishop of Ohio and his associates, from whence they derived authority to do these things—to oppose themselves to the Church of which they were members, and from which they held their Episcopal powers—to pronounce its most solemn decisions as errors of doctrine, and its ceremonial as vain and idolatrous? But, suppose the good Bishop were to desist, and treat the authority and warnings of the Church with contempt, and dare and defy its power. Might he not be cut off—degraded—shorn of his Episcopal power? And pray what would he be then? A

Bishop of the Episcopal Church holding valid and regular ordination? I should say not. Neither could he be regarded as holding any spiritual authority whatever from that Church.

This strikes me as a parallel case. The English Bishops, under similar circumstances, separated themselves from the Church—were cut off, degraded, and deprived of their Episcopal powers. Henry, it is true, interfered and made them Bishops again, but it does not appear, "defender of the faith" as he was declared to be, that any authority was given him by the Church to make Bishops. He could and did, it is true, confer the title, or rather the name; but the claim to regular and valid succession, when derived from such a source, and in direct opposition to the authority exercised by an admitted validity in the Church of Rome, appears to me to be singularly unfortunate, if not more than doubtful. Did the act of Parliament constituting him "the supreme head upon earth of the Church of England," really and truly confer the power of making valid Bishops, according to apostolic succession and authority? Could old Sarum rightfully vote upon the question of making Henry a successor of the Apostles, as he must have been, to make Bishops of the "Catholic and Apostolic Church?" Think of it, Mr. Editor; the good Bishop of Ohio voluntarily separating himself from the Church, spiritually degraded, and deprived of his office by the house of Bishops—made a Bishop again by the Chief Magistrate of Ohio, and claiming to hold valid ordination by regular succession from the Apostles, as against all Presbyterians, Quakers, Methodists, and other new lights?

It is claimed, I know, that all Bishops by virtue of their office possessed equal and concurrent powers, and that the Bishop of Rome, in assuming a general spiritual jurisdiction, usurped powers that did not rightfully belong to him. This however does not change the aspect of the case; there remains the simple and undeniable fact, that a few Bishops of the Church of England, took it upon themselves to pronounce sentence of error and corruption against doctrines and ordinances, that their spiritual brethren in council had declared to be essential. If all possessed equal and concurrent powers, if all were true and valid Bishops of the one "Catholic and Apostolic Church," on which side lies the weight of evidence, the mountain's or the mouse's? It is claimed too, I know, that there is an identity between the present Church of England and the ancient Church that existed previously to the invasion of the Saxons. History informs us that the ancient inhabitants of Britain were overrun, conquered, and almost literally destroyed, by the victorious and Pagan Saxons. As a distinct people they were absolutely obliterated. These pagans in their turn were converted to Christianity by missionaries from Rome, and continued in full communion with, and under the spiritual direction of the Church of Rome, until the time of Henry, when Romish Bishops in England set about reforming

the Church. In what then exists this boasted identity, but in our misty ignorance of the past?

How can I solve the difficulty? If I adopt the doctrine of an Apostolic Church with a valid ministry, holding ordination in regular and undenied succession from the Apostles, or from a period touching the times in which they lived; and if it be essential to be in a Church so instituted, there is then far less doubt in the Romish communion than in any other; as the fact of the regular transmission of authority in that Church is not only not denied, but is admitted to be the rock on which the validity of the Church of England rests. The Church of England then, by its own showing, or that of the *tall* Churchmen in it, is no Church at all. The Church of Scotland, from which the American Church obtained ordination, has told the whole story. That Church is now the "Reformed Catholic Church," which in its turn was reformed by the Presbyterians. How is this? The "Holy Catholic" reformed? The Apostolical and infallible Church reformed? And by whom? If reformed "by authority," no novel names to distinguish it would be required. Great Britain, with a "reformed" Parliament, is Great Britain still. The Methodists will now be the "Reformed Episcopal Church." And why not? Wesley received ordination in the English Church, and died in its communion.

With my present information on these subjects, Mr. Editor, I can see no way of escape from the conclusion, that the Episcopal Church in England, in Scotland, and in this country, occupies almost precisely the same position in reference to the claim of exclusive validity, that the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Methodists, and others do; and that it rests upon the right of private and individual judgment, with the aid of the Scriptures, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, to determine truth and error for itself, as against the "divine right" claimed by Bishops and Churches. I ask to be enlightened.

W.

PROSPECTS OF CATHOLICITY IN ENGLAND.

Under this head the *London Sun* has the following remarks:—

At a meeting of the Catholic Institute of Great Britain, held lately in London, Mr. O'Connell said he wanted to see the day when High Mass would be performed in Westminster Abbey, and he doubted not, from present appearances, that ere long he should have that happiness. If Posyism go on at the railroad speed with which it has been advancing for this last ten years, and the feuds between that sect and the Hampdenites be suffered to continue, within ten years more the great champion of the Catholics, should be live, will probably see his wish fulfilled. The bench of Bishops, a vast number of the clergy, and what is still more ominous, the majority of the teachers of youth at the national universities, show a marked tendency towards the new doctrines. All that is wanting is to imbue the law makers with the same