

Yes, I have stood myself upon the topmost round of this slippery descent, and have seen the depth as it darkened below me. And from my soul I bless the hand of Providence for interposing the faith of the earliest and purest ages as an alternative to my distracted breast. I ascertained that there was a clearer and steadier light than the sparks of reason's kindling, in which Christianity might be considered—not the light of a volcano, bursting in Germany, and leaving the earth strewn with ashes and cinders—not the light of a meteor, flashing on Geneva, and leaving the heavens darker than in the nights of Popery—not the light of a planet, reflecting for a while the bright rays of the body from which it is broken, and then sinking into silence and eclipse—but the steady, unfluctuating light of a primitive age, all radiant with innumerable constellations, that, like the light of the natural firmament, has come down to us undimmed and unimpaired. O it is refreshing beyond all utterance, after following these human guides and wandering stars—the Luthers, and the Calvins, and the Wesleys, of yesterday—to see at last a Christianity shining with that same full-orbed light in which Polycarp and Ignatius and Irenæus beheld its glory, and to know as a historical fact, that it is as much the same, as the light of the celestial bodies above us is the light that shone upon their natural eyes.

I may therefore repeat, that to my mind the inference was irresistible and, may I not say, philosophical, that for the uniform defection of Presbyterian communities from the faith, or their continual tendency to that defection, there must be a uniform cause; and that this cause must be inherent in the system; for the frightful phenomena are everywhere the same; in empires and nations and in narrower localities, separated by sea and mountain, and diverse from each other in language, government, education, taste,