

Contributions.

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH—WHICH IS IT?

To Rev. T. Witherow, Prof. Church History, Londonderry:

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR SIR, Your "sixth principle" now comes up for consideration. This principle you define to be "that Christ is Head over all things to the Church." That our Lord Jesus Christ is the great Head of the Church; that He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords," (1 Tim. vi. 15, and Rev. xxii. 14) and that God has given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both of things in heaven and of things in earth and of things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," (Phil. ii. 9-11) is considered by the Church of England not the sixth but the fundamental principle of Christianity. At every service, in every collect, and in every act of devotion, this fundamental principle is most clearly enunciated. In all her prayers where evil is deprecated it is "through Jesus Christ our Lord," that is our Master, Ruler or Head, she teaches us to do so. Is good to be supplicated she teaches us so to do "through the merits and mediation of the same Jesus Christ our Lord." When we lift our voices in hymns of adoration this is the glorious ascription of praise she puts in our mouths: "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ! Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death Thou didst open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants whom Thou has redeemed with Thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. O Lord save Thy people and bless Thine heritage. Govern them and lift them up forever, &c." And again when with humble and contrite hearts we bow before the throne of God she teaches us in the words of her matchless litany to acknowledge the same truth: "We sinners do beseech Thee to hear us, O Lord God, and that it may please Thee to rule and govern Thy Holy Church Universal in the right way," and in the very next petition we pray that He who thus rules and governs His own Church and people would also be pleased to bless and preserve His servant Victoria, our most gracious Queen and Governor. And in the offices for baptism, matrimony, ordination, and the burial of the dead, from the beginning of the Christian life till we enter on the dark valley of the shadow of death we are continually and repeatedly taught that He "who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. vi. 16) is the Governor, Ruler, and "Head over all things to the Church which is His body." (Eph. i. 23.) That you should go to the trouble of proving this universally admitted fact is something I could not at first understand until I read your "application of the text," where your object is then unmasked and stands confessed in the charge you bring against the Church of England of having denied her Lord and Master, refused Christ as her Divine Head, and in His stead erected an idol of her own imagining in the person of the reigning monarch.

When you speak of this matter in connection with the Independents you say, "The Headship of Christ was a principle of Apostolic times. Independents, we are happy to say, acknowledge this principle in all its integrity." (Page 51.) Concerning your own denomination you say: "In the Apostolic Church the Lord Jesus alone was King and Head. This is a truth acknowledged by all Presbyterians and practically acted upon by all, except a very few, who, owing to their connection with the State, have been charged with a virtual departure from the principle. All Presbyterian Churches rank among their most cherished as well as distinctive principles that Christ alone is King and Head of His Church." (Page 55.) But when "Prelacy" in the person of the Church of England is referred to you say: "In our Protestant Establishment the monarch is, by Act of Parliament, head of the Church, and to the King or Queen, as the case may be, the 37th article in-

forms us that 'the chief government of all estates of the realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil in all causes doth appertain,' whereas in apostolic times the Church had no Head but Jesus Christ." (Page 47.)

I must confess, when I read these paragraphs I have quoted and saw the fearful charge of blasphemy and idolatry you thus brought against my Mother Church I felt "the old Adam" working within me and tempting me to say hard things in reply, but, thank God, I remember the words which that Holy Mother puts in my mouth, and therefore refrain: "That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts, we beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord."

And in seeking to fasten this impious charge upon the Church of England you quote part of article xxxvii. In quoting part of the article why did you stop at the word "appertain?" Perhaps it was too voluminous and you could not afford the space, or it may be that you did not have the article before you, and simply took the part you quote at second hand from Dr. Campbell or Dr. King, or some other of the controversial writers you quote from. Whatever may have been the cause I will quote the article in full, and also one of the "injunctions" to which it refers:

ARTICLE XXXVII. OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

"The Queen's Majesty hath the chief power in the realm of England and other her dominions, unto whom the chief government of all estates of this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes doth appertain and is not, nor ought to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Where we attribute to the Queen's Majesty the chief government, by which title we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended, we give not to our princes the ministering of God's word or of the sacraments, the which thing the injunctions also lately set forth by ELIZABETH our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scripture by God Himself; that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.

The bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England. The laws of the realm may punish Christian men with death for heinous and grievous offences. It is lawful for Christian men at the commandment of the Magistrate to wear weapons and serve in the wars."

The following is one of the injunctions of Elizabeth (A. D. 1559) referred to above. It is entitled "An admonition to simple men deceived by malicious."

"The Queen's Majesty being informed that in certain places of the realm sundry of her native subjects being called to ecclesiastical ministry of the Church be by sinister persuasion and perverse construction induced to find some scruple in the form of an oath, which by an Act of the last Parliament is prescribed to be required of divers persons for their recognition of their allegiance to Her Majesty; which certainly never was meant, nor by any equity of words or good sense can be thereof gathered. Would that all her loving subjects should understand that nothing was, is, or shall be meant or intended by the same oath, than was acknowledged to be due to the most noble kings of famous memory, King Henry VIII., Her Majesty's father, or King Edward VI., Her Majesty's brother.

And further, Her Majesty forbiddeth all manner of her subjects to give ear or credit to such perverse and malicious persons which most sinisterly and maliciously labour to notifie to her loving subjects how by words of the said oath it may be collected that the kings or queens of this realm, possessors of the Crown may challenge authority and power of ministry of Divine service in the church, wherein her said subjects be much abused by such evil-disposed persons. For certainly Her Majesty neither doth nor ever will challenge any authority than that has been challenged and lately used by the said noble kings of famous memory, King Henry VIII. and King Edward VI., which is, and was, of ancient time due to the Imperial Crown of this realm; that is, under God, to have the sovereignty and rule over all manner of persons born within these her realms, dominions and countries, of what

estate, either ecclesiastical or temporal, soever they be, so as no other sovereign power shall or ought to have any superiority over them. And if any person that hath conceived any other sense of the form of the said oath shall accept the same oath with this interpretation, sense or meaning, Her Majesty is well pleased to accept every such in that behalf as her good and obedient subjects, and shall acquit them of all manner of penalties contained in the said Act against such as shall peremptorily or obstinately [refuse to] take the same oath."

Now, sir, when you quoted the part of article xxxvii. why did you not give the whole which fully explains the very portion you quote, and declares that the Church of England gives to the monarch "that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scriptures by God Himself." If you took the part you quote at second-hand before you made the application of it you do, you should have referred to the place itself when you would have seen that the fearful and impious charge you bring against the Church of England and Ireland was absolutely false. And if the whole article was before you, and you willingly and intentionally omitted it, then the only conclusion we can arrive at is one I should be sorry to charge you with, namely: that knowing the truth you suppressed it, and only quoted sufficient to give you some slight colour for bringing a charge you knew to be absolutely false. And, further, if the 37th article of the Church of England and Ireland does de-throne our Lord Jesus Christ as the Great Ruler and Head of His Church upon earth, and in His stead erects the reigning monarch to be such, why did you not state the same thing of the Presbyterians, and instead of saying "All Presbyterian churches rank among their most cherished as well as distinctive principles that Christ alone is King and Head of His Church," you should have quoted from the authorized standards of the Presbyterians the following words: "The Civil Magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, yet he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the word of God." (Presbyterian Confession of Faith, c. xxiii. 3, p. 86.) Surely, this is as strong language as ever was used by the standards of the Church of England and Ireland. Here in the plain words of their own acknowledged standards the Presbyterians declare—and adopt the declaration into a Confession of Faith—that the monarch is the fountain of authority (I.) for the "preservation of peace and unity in the Church;" (II.) for the "keeping of the truth of God pure and entire;" (III.) for the "suppression of all blasphemies and heresies;" (IV.) for the "reformation or prevention of corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline. It also declares that the reigning monarch is to take order, that (V.) "all the ordinances of God are duly settled, administered and observed." It also confers upon him (VI.) "the power to call synods and to be present at them;" and to show still further that he is supreme even over the Synods it is for him (VII.) "to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the word of God." And not satisfied with even this the same standards further declare that "infidelity or difference in religion doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from this due obedience to him, FROM WHICH ECCLESIASTICAL PERSONS ARE NOT EXEMPTED." (Ib. c. xxiii. 4.) Therefore, if words are to be taken as signs of ideas and have any established meaning the ideas conveyed in the above extracts are that all those supreme powers and jurisdictions in spiritual things are conferred upon the reigning monarch, be it king or queen, by the Presbyterians, no matter whether that king or queen be a Presbyterian, of a different religion, or even an infidel; while the Church of England positively declares that she recognizes in the monarch no other authority, power, jurisdic-