

because I feel it so exactly in accordance with the will of God. I have found it to be a good state for my own soul, when I have known what it is to loathe and abhor myself. I was once brought very low before God, when mine eyes were first opened to see my real state. A passage which I found in a book was the means of giving me deliverance from my bondage: I read that the Israelites believed that their iniquities were forgiven and taken away, by being placed upon the head of the victim that was sacrificed according to the ceremonial law. I thought of this, compared their state with my own, saw that Christ was sacrificed for me, took him as my Saviour, and was determined that the burden should not remain upon my conscience another hour: and I am confident it did not remain another hour, no, not another minute. I cannot help trusting that I shall see a kind of revival amongst us before I am taken away. I have been prevented from going to London to attend the Jews' society by indisposition. Who knows whether good may not come even of this? Who can tell but what God may have so ordered it that something I have said this evening may fix in some of your hearts, to bring forth fruit to his glory? For this I would willingly be laid up with ten gout, yea, suffer death itself. I do believe the Lord will shew me that he has kept me here on this occasion for the accomplishment of his own blessed purposes.—“His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.”

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH;
IN TWO LETTERS TO A FRIEND.
LETTER I.

(Concluded from our last.)

But I did not rest my belief upon my view of the subject thus far considered. Although I found Episcopacy good in itself, and as I thought from the divine institution, agreeable to the will of God, I proceeded to discover, if possible, what government was established for the Church by Christ and his apostles. The three orders we find existing while the Saviour was upon earth, consisting of himself, the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples. This seems an intimation, at least, that he intended the form of government which had prevailed among the Jews to be continued so far as related to the number and gradation of its offices; and after his ascension, it appears to me evident that the three orders still remained. Of the appointment of the deacons we have a particular account, and that they preached and baptized, whether as deacons or evangelists matters not; for their being deacons made them evangelists, and we have a history of their being solemnly ordained, by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, to the office of the former and not the latter. The term *evangelist* did not point out the nature of the office, but merely signified that the person to whom it was applied was a preacher of the Gospel. In regard to the office of Presbyters there is no question; and what is the testimony in proof of the superior order of Bishops?

All the Apostles were bishops, and as such received their commission from Christ, and under his commission they could exercise equal power, plant churches, and ordain teachers as they thought necessary. But it does not follow, that because they received but one commission and were alike authorized to perform all the duties of the Apostolical or Episcopal office, that the equality descended to all they ordained. We know it did not in regard to the Deacons, for Peter and John went down from Jerusalem to Samaria, to confirm the converts whom Philip had baptized, which it seems he had not the power to do. And there are very strong circumstances, which show also a difference in respect of presbyters. Timothy was the Bishop of Ephesus; and I do not see how any candid person can read St. Paul's Epistles to him without being satisfied that he had the sole government of the Church in that place as it respected the ordination and reproof of presbyters, and many things relating to the worship and conduct of the flock. Now, had the presbyters at Ephesus equal authority with Timothy? We read in the twentieth chapter of the Acts, that St. Paul called together the elders or presbyters of this Church, and addressed them in the most affectionate language for the last time.—And is it not surprising that he does not say one word to them about the government of the Church, ordaining, reproof, &c. when he never expected to see them again, and when, according to the system of parity, this was as much their duty as it was that of Timothy? He tells them to “feed the flock of God,” but to Timothy he points out the qualifications of those whom he was to ordain, and directs him to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” Is there any reasonable person that can say Timothy was not superior to these presbyters? and if so, to what order did he belong if it were not to that of Bishops? The directions given to him are such as are followed by the bishops of the Episcopal Church at the present day; nor do they, as far as I am acquainted, exceed the duties which he was commanded to perform; and so strong is the evidence from this particular, that it was said by a celebrated divine, “that he that could not find a bishop in Ephesus would be puzzled to find one in England.”

And the case of Titus is, in my mind, no less demonstrative than that of Timothy. He was sent to Crete, where St. Paul had previously established the Gospel; and what was his business? “To ordain elders in every city.” Was this the office of a bishop, or of a congregational minister? It appeared to me the former, and I thought also, that as St. Paul was in great need of the assistance of Titus with him at that time, it was strange he did not direct him to return after having ordained two or three presbyters, enough to constitute a council, and leave them to ordain the rest, if they had the power; instead of which he himself was to go through the whole hundred cities of Crete. It seemed, also, probable that if St. Paul had been there before, and converted the island to Christianity, he had left some presbyters; and if such were the case, why did he send Titus for the express purpose of ordaining elders in every city?

A further testimony from Scripture, in support of Episcopacy, I thought I perceived in the direction to the angels of the seven churches of Asia, in the Revelation. These angels I suppose were Bishops, who had the jurisdiction over all the churches in

the cities where they respectively dwell. These were large places, containing many thousand christians. In the church at Ephesus were probably many societies, and consequently a considerable number of presbyters. Still, one person is addressed as the angel or bishop of the church at Ephesus, and so at Smyrna, Thyatira, and the rest. But if there were no distinct order of bishops superior to that of presbyters, all the latter were angels, and had equal power to reform abuses and confirm piety. The church collectively, as including all the different societies in a city, is called a candlestick, to which one star is attached. To me this intimates, at least, diocesan Episcopacy, and seems in perfect agreement with the instances to which I have before alluded.

Now what is there to counteract all this Scripture evidence, and to establish congregational independence or parity? It is said that the words Bishop and Presbyter are indiscriminately applied to the same persons, and that Timothy was ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, but what does all this prove? In regard to the first, it is not the *name* but the *thing* for which the church contends. The word bishop, I am told, literally signifies an *overseer*, and may as well be applied to a presbyter as a bishop. The present bishop of New York is the overseer of his diocese as extending through the state, and the Rector of St. Stephen's or Christ's Church, is the overseer of his particular flock. But because one term is applied to both, does it therefore follow that they are equal in office? The presbyters of Ephesus were all bishops or overseers of single societies, but had they, therefore, the same power with Timothy, who had the oversight of them all? It is from the duties attached to the office, and not from the name, that we are to argue the superiority, and of those I think there are sufficient scriptural examples to set aside the doctrine of ministerial parity.

In regard to Timothy's being ordained with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, it is undoubtedly true. But St. Paul tells him that he was also ordained by the laying on of his hands. And so every presbyter in the Episcopal Church is ordained by the bishop with the assistance of his presbyters. This is, therefore, a circumstance in favour of Episcopacy rather than against it. St. Paul himself, as bishop, ordained Timothy, but there were elders or presbyters present, assisting him in the work, and these, for aught we know, may have been bishops or apostles.

From the testimony of Scripture, which is to me as clear as the light of day, I proceeded to the history of the Church, and here I discovered such confirmation, as I should hardly think scepticism itself would deny. All the ancient writers speak of Episcopacy as the universal government of the Church, and but one solitary instance of dissent is mentioned previous to the fourth century. Particular persons are also styled bishops, not of single societies, but of cities comprehending many churches, and thus forming dioceses, as the bishop of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Alexandria, &c. An author, who wrote in the beginning of the fourth century, gives a history of the church down to his own times, and names all the bishops, in succession, of four principal cities. And it is an indisputable fact, which even the greatest opponents of Episcopacy admit, that in two hundred and fifty years from the time of Christ the whole Christian world was Episcopal, and so continued until the sixteenth century. And did Christ and his apostles establish Congregationalism or Presbyterianism which was so inefficient that no vestige of it was to be discovered after the short space of two hundred and fifty years? If this were the case, it is wonderful, it is miraculous that a universal change should have been so soon effected, and this too without opposition or notice. I find in ecclesiastical history an account of all the sects and heresies from Cerinthus down to Calvin, but I see no relation of a change from the original government of the Church to Episcopacy. And yet in the beginning of the third century it was Episcopal in every country, and in every Society, throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. Can it therefore be, that any revolution actually took place? Is it possible that a few ambitious men should rise up against the great body of Presbyters and take from them their rights, without meeting with resistance, their power of ordaining and governing the church? and not only this but assert, also, that they had always had this supremacy in one order from the foundation of the system? And who were these assuming men who aspired to the office of bishop, contrary to the word of God, and the institution of Christ and his Apostles? Their names are not given us, nor the time when they lived, nor the manner in which they accomplished their end. It is said that the change was gradual. But when did it begin and where was its progress? It aimed at the subjection of all the presbyters and deacons in the world, and it effected it too in the short course of two hundred and fifty years. This could not be by very small degrees.—And in regard to ordaining, it was an assumption of power which must have taken place at once, and this could not have been done without opposition, and if opposition had been made we should now be able to find some record of it in history. It is indeed incredible. Such as the church was at the commencement of the third century, in regard to the nature of its government, it was in the beginning; or Congregationalism was changed into Episcopacy by as great a miracle as that which was manifest on the day of Pentecost. But the burden of proof lies with the Congregationalists; and if they cannot shew that they had any existence in the Church until 1600 years after its establishment, they must be content with the name of innovators. And if they had, let them point out the time when and the place where. It was not in Jerusalem, for there James was the first bishop; it was not in Antioch, for from thence Episcopacy was translated to the East Indies, and has been continued in the Syrian Church, discovered by Dr. Buchanan, ever since.—It was not in Rome nor in Greece, in Spain nor the islands of the sea. Is it not passing strange, that we can point out the rise and progress of all other sects and denominations, while in regard to Episcopacy the farther we go back, the more extensive we find it, until at last it pervades the whole Church, and we hear and read of nothing else from the establishment of Christianity? Taking all these circumstances together, the propriety of the Episcopal government, its agreeableness to the will of God, its support in the apostolic age, and its universality for 1600 years after, can you wonder at my having

renounced the system in which I was blindly educated, and attached myself to that which is so ancient, so pure, and so divine?

Among the collateral evidences which have confirmed me in the belief of the apostolic origin of Episcopacy, there is nothing which has had more weight upon my mind than the history of the Syrian Church to which I have before alluded. This little society was discovered some years ago by Dr. Buchanan, the celebrated missionary, in Asia, and traced its records back to the time of its establishment by one of the Apostles. For more than 1300 years it had held no communication with any foreign church, and yet was found under a regular Episcopal government. Now, whence did it derive this if not from the original source?—It could not have been from the Greek or the Romish Church, for it had never been connected with either until after its discovery by the Portuguese; nor did it receive the Episcopacy from England, a country of which it was altogether ignorant until Dr. Buchanan came amongst them. This Church has since been visited by the American missionaries, whose accounts do not materially differ from those of Dr. Buchanan.

A similar argument may be produced from the history of the Greek and Romish Churches, which, though in many essential points opposed to each other, have nevertheless always maintained Episcopacy. That the incumbrances of Pope and Patriarch should have grown out of it, furnishes no greater objection to it, than may be urged against Congregationalism from the circumstance that, according to the assertion of its advocates, this gave rise to an unscriptural prelacy.

There is, also, a further consideration, which I must acknowledge has had some influence upon my mind. And this is derived from the fact, that men of the greatest eminence in piety and talents, have lived and died in the communion of the Episcopal Church; and this too, when habits of education and motives of interest might have led them to espouse another cause. To what writers is the Christian world so much indebted for learned expositions of doctrine and forcible persuasives to duty, as to Bull, Beveridge, Hall, Tillotson, Taylor, Seed, Secker, and Porteus? To whom are we indebted for that translation of the holy Scriptures which has so long withstood the assaults of infidels and heretics, but to members of the Church of England? And who has not found his understanding enlightened, and his faith invigorated by the compositions of the pious Milner, the evangelical Cooper, and the devout Scott? I would not wish to be understood as desirous of having one rest his belief solely upon human authority; but as we must, in many respects, be dependent upon this, where shall we go with greater confidence, than to those who have been most distinguished for the ability with which they have supported and defended the revelation of God.

THE CHURCH.

COBourg, SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1838.

To one who has occasion to observe the general religious condition of this Province, embracing especially its more secluded portions where the population, reared in ignorance of the sublime truths of the Gospel, have not subsequently enjoyed the advantage of a stated ministry, a very painful subject of contemplation is presented. We see here and there, it is true, some cultivation of the moral soil,—are here and there cheered by an observation of the effects of religious culture by a steady and judicious hand:—we see it in the improvement of the social habits, the diminution of vicious and demoralizing practices, the more holy observance of the day of God, the less frequent violation of the laws of the land, a better respect for all that are in authority.—But very different is the picture in those spots where the moral cultivation and the religious improvement is left to the chance philanthropy of any religious teacher, who may now and then lift up the voice of denunciation, exhort to the duties of repentance, and urge to the acceptance of the faith of Christ crucified. In such places, and under such circumstances, religion with all its high claims and incomparable blessings, becomes a mere matter of impulse, perhaps of speculation:—some look coldly on; others jeer and scoff; while a few, excited by the manner rather than the matter of the appeals which are made to them, embrace certainly the Christian profession as it is proposed, but in a way so unsettled and so uncertain that the solid advantages of its adoption are not to be discerned. The result in the first instance of excitement,—for neither the human faculties nor the human affections can long bear this strain and tension,—it soon sinks, not into quietude and calmness merely, but into deadness and apathy,—only to be resuscitated by a fresh impulse, as wild in its workings and as brief in its duration as the other. So that it is no unusual thing to find that the Methodist of to-day—according to the bias of the agent of the new impulse—becomes a Baptist to-morrow; the Baptist, from a similar influence, merges by and by into the Christian; the latter, after a time, discovers grounds for preferring the more novel creed of the Disciples; and this last is perchance abandoned in the end, for the wild and untenable schemes of the Mormon. The last speaker and the latest excitement has, as is usual, the greatest, because the freshest influence; and in due keeping with the rotation of excitement, we have often, in the same individual, periodical changes in religious belief. And what is worse than all, every such excitement, while it brings to many a new set of convictions, produces at the same time a corresponding share of heart-burnings, envyings and dissensions;—contempt from those in whom the charms of a new opinion have thrown former impressions into the shade; and mortification, jealousy, and hatred from others who see their once prospering work all shattered into ruins by the innovating zeal of a new fanatic!

But surely it becomes the sober portion of the Christian community,—it surely becomes a government which desires the best welfare of its subjects, to employ some means for the correction of an evil so lamentable and so notorious;—to employ what would, to a very successful extent, prove an undoubted corrective of the evil, namely, the establishment in every well-settled spot in the country of a clergyman, the tenure of whose sacred office would not depend upon the capriciousness of his hear-