

Suppose a man assert his freedom, and throw off these "more human shackles," and seeking spiritual communion with God, manifest no care whether his creed square with any existing form of belief or not. Suppose he assert his right to worship God in his own time, and in his own way. After proclaiming one creed as good as another, and thus granting his premises, how can you resist his conclusion? Do you see anything startling ahead? Can that dark chasm be Deism or Atheism? Are you quite sure that this negative-protesting system, though it may not ruin you, will be quite safe for your children—the generation who take up 'liberalism' where you leave it? How, without creeds, will they constantly and firmly retain the doctrines of the Divinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Atonement, the Intercession of Christ?

As the body without the spirit is dead—as faith without works is dead—as the jewel without its setting would be lost—even so has universal experience in Geneva, in Germany, in Ulster, in England, in the United States, taught that without a fully constituted Church and her Creeds—without a Keeper of Holy Writ—a Pillar and Ground of the Truth—the pure faith of Christ is inevitably lost.

The fundamental error is this:—men talk on the platform as if the Bible only was given by God, and the Church was invented by man,—as if the Bible came first and the Church afterwards, whereas the exact contrary was the case. Where was the Old Testament in the time of Moses? Where was the New Testament for several years after our blessed Saviour's resurrection? Though the books were not written the truth was committed to her who came before the books—even to God's Church, the Keeper of Holy Writ. And a noble use she made of the unwritten Word, for when was the truth more pure or more successful than in the Apostles' days? And as God gave the truth to the keeping of His Church, it cannot—humanly speaking—remain in the world without her. And because she is, as an instrument, necessary for its preservation, God's promise is that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.

After the Word had been established it was written. Were organizations of no assistance towards its establishment? Were creeds of no consequence towards keeping it in its integrity afterwards?

The world—like the eunuch—was the reader. The Church—like St. Philip—was the living voice sent by the Holy Spirit to guide the understanding, to decide controversies, to restore the wandering.

And what though corruptions have since at times marred God's Church? Have not God's right hand and His holy arm from time to time reformed and restored her? And have we any reason to doubt that they will continue to do so?

And this Church exists now, and ours is manifestly a branch of it,—having in its creeds the Apostles' doctrines—in its orders the Apostles' fellowship—in its sacraments the breaking of bread and the prayers. As a pure branch of Christ's Church we should uphold her. We should put her forth not as a thing of human workmanship—not as an affair of no comparative importance, but as the Church is indeed, of Divine institution, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth.

Take away our faith in the Divine origin of the Church—drive us out of this Ark, and our soul must flit to and fro over the tumultuous waves of the world of thought till at length, finding no rest, no refuge, no hope, no stay, she sinks into the deep emptiness of comfortless Deism, or the still deeper abyss of more terrible Atheism.