

And here let us consider fairly what a Reformation means. Surely not a thorough and complete demolition of the whole fabric, but the purification and correction of abuses. The Church, though corrupted and defiled, was still a scriptural and apostolic institution. Errors and superstitions could not destroy its form or model; they could not touch the strong rock of its foundation. Our Reformers, then, did what duty and wisdom prompted. They cleared away that rubbish of superstition; they removed those incrustations of error and defilement; and they restored to a gladdened people the primitive holiness, as well as completeness, of the Church of the living God. The Bishops of our communion, roused up from the trance and thralldom of a long night of error, stripped off their Episcopal robes,—not to trample them under their feet, and reject them as unlawful things; but they washed and made clean those garments—which had come down in legitimate course, as the mantle from Elijah to Elisha—and stood again, in their original and undefiled vestments, before the altar of their God.

In this way, my brethren, we came back again to the order, and fellowship, and doctrine of the Apostles. The change from the soundness of their principles had been violently and unauthorizedly made by the ambitious and despotic; and the whole nation, as soon as possible,—as soon as a right and lawful direction was given to their efforts,—repudiated that change, and brought the Church back again to its original condition; to what it was, at its first planting in the land by Apostolic hands.

We ought, then, to consider it a great privilege and a great blessing to belong to this, the primitive Church of our mother country,—this real and truthful branch of the first planted “Church of the living God.” Many good and pious men and women, who, from early and traditionary instruction, had been led off from it, have come back to it again, after