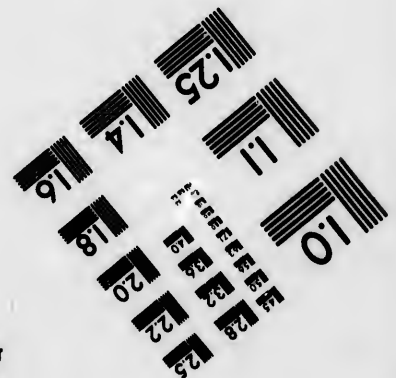
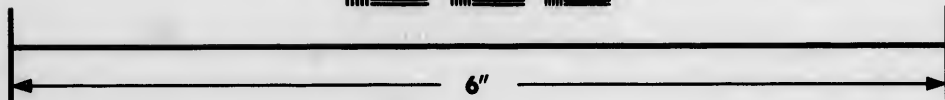
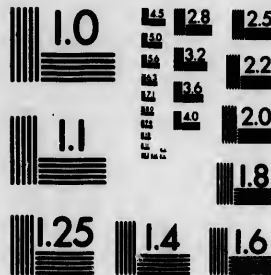


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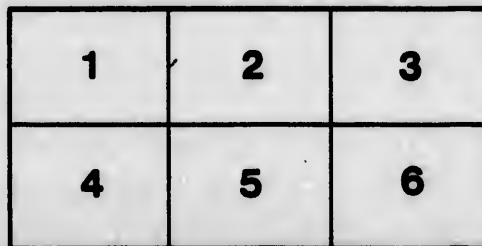
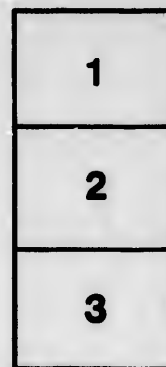
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# LETTER

—OF THE—

**REV. JAMES A. LATANE,**

**RECTOR OF**

**St. Matthew's Church,**

**WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA,**

**TO BISHOP JOHNS,**

**RESIGNING THE MINISTRY**

—OF THE—

**Protestant Episcopal Church.**

---

**MONCTON, N. B.**

Printed by H. T. Stevens, Moncton Printing Office.

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ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, }  
WHEELING, W. VA., Jan. 12, 1874. }

MY DEAR BISHOP,—It is with sincere grief that I write to announce to you my purpose to withdraw from the Ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

I know that this announcement will cause you both surprise and pain; but I beg you to believe that the decision has not been reached without much reflection and prayer, and that the step is taken with the utmost reluctance, and only from imperative convictions of duty. Every earthly consideration is against it. My relations to you, and to Bishop Whittle, and to many dear brethren in the ministry in the Diocese of Virginia, my affection for the Church in Staunton, where I commenced my ministry and labored for fourteen years, my many obligations to the people of my present charge, my desire, attested by my whole ministry, to do the Lord's work in quietness and peace, the natural shrinking which every manly heart must feel from entering upon a course which will cause me to be esteemed a fool by many whose good opinion I value, and the uncertainties of the future, both as to the field of my labor and the support of my family, are all against the step, and have all been calmly, deliberately weighed.

On the other hand, I have nothing to plead in favor of it, and nothing to sustain me in taking it, but a clear conviction of duty to God and to the cause of His truth in the earth.

Let me say further, that in deciding the matter I have not taken counsel with others. For obvious reasons, until my mind was made up I could have, and up to this moment I have had, no communication, directly or indirectly, with Bishop Cummins or any of his adherents. And I beg you to believe that had I felt that the case admitted of it, I would most gladly have sought counsel of you and of some of my brethren in the ministry. But when the matter was not a new one, when

all the facts of the case were before me, and when it was a simple question of duty in view of the facts, I felt that I could most safely decide it where I have at least sought to decide it, in my secret chamber, and on my knees before God.

#### REASONS FOR LEAVING THE CHURCH.

Let me then state distinctly my reasons for leaving the Episcopal Church. They are just those difficulties which have been for some years past a burden and grief to many in the Church.

I. The first is *the unhappy division of the Church into what are known as the High-Church and the Low-Church parties.*

I will not say that in the Church there are two seeds, the seed of Romanism and the seed of Protestantism; but I will say that the Church, as it is now, is an army with two banners, justification by the sacraments inscribed on the one, and justification by faith on the other. And there never can be any cordial union between the parties arranged under these two banners. It has been tried in the Church time and again, tried in missionary operations, in Theological seminaries, and in Church-book Societies, tried honestly, and by good men on each side, and, in every instance, has lamentably failed. The two parties are not agreed, and cannot walk together. Their differences are real, and are irreconcilable. The Low-Church party cannot co-operate with the High-Church party without being false to what it has ever held to be the doctrines of the Reformation, and without sacrificing what it believes to be the first principles of the Oracles of God. The division in the Church, therefore, with the unhappy strife and discord attending it, is one which cannot be healed.

II. The second is *the countenance apparently given by certain expressions in the Prayer-book to those "erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word," out of which the division in the Church has grown.*

Those doctrines pertain to the effects of Baptism, to the nature of the Lord's Supper, and to the office of the Ministry.

There are expressions in the Baptismal Service which seem to teach that every infant, when baptized, is thereby "regenerated with the Holy Spirit." And, though I am satisfied that this doctrine was not held by the framers of the Prayer-book, nor intended to be expressed in the service, and therefore is not



really the doctrine of the Church, yet the expressions are so liable to be misunderstood, and so hard to be satisfactorily explained, and as a matter of fact are so constantly misunderstood, and do practically educate and confirm so many in a false view of the effects of Baptism, that they ought to be altered. Regeneration is stated in the word of God to be essential to salvation; the mode and means of regeneration are things which concern the way of salvation; and to affirm that Baptism invariably effects regeneration, and that every person who has been baptized has, therefore, been regenerated, is dangerously to delude human souls, and that, too, in a particular essential to salvation. And yet this doctrine, contrary as it is to God's word, is distinctly and constantly taught and believed in the Church, and finds countenance at least in that service where the minister, in the case of *every* child and *every* adult baptized by him, is required to say, after the act of baptism, *this* child, or *this* person, *is now regenerate*. And so long as the Baptismal service remains in the Prayer book in its present form, that teaching will go on, as it has done so alarmingly of late, to increase and prevail more and more in the Church.

THE DOCTRINES OF A PRIESTHOOD AND A SACRIFICE IN THE SACRAMENT NOT SCRIPTURAL.

Again, there are expressions in the Prayer-book which give countenance, at least, to the notion of a *Priesthood* in the Christian Church, and of a *sacrifice* in the Lord's Supper.

Now, if there is any truth plainly taught us in the word of God, then it is there plainly taught, especially in the epistle to the Hebrews, that our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the one perfect, ever-living, ever-sympathizing, and all-sufficient Priest of His people, *and that they need no other*, that His death upon the Cross was a full, perfect, and complete sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, *offered once for all and never to be repeated*, and that priests and sacrifices have been distinctly and forever *abolished in the Church on earth*.

And yet the opposite notion, unscriptural as it is in doctrine and corrupting in practice, finds countenance at least in the Prayer-book, in the following instances:

First of all, it constantly applies to the ministers of the Church the name *Priests*.

Then, in the service for ordaining them, the Bishop uses this language, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work

of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands. *Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*" (There is here an alternate form allowed, but a majority of the Bishops use the form I have given.)

Then, in the stated services of the Church there is a "Declaration of *absolution* or *remission of sins*, to be made by *the Priest alone*, standing: the people kneeling."

And then, in the service for the "institution of ministers into Parishes or Churches" (a service adopted by the General Convention of the Church, and now found, whether rightly or not, in every Prayer-book), the table used for the administration of the Lord's Supper is spoken of as an "*altar*" the minister's relation to the people of his charge is described as a "*sacerdotal*" connection between him and them," and he is invested with power "to perform every act of *sacerdotal function* among them."

Now in regard to the form of words quoted above from the ordination service, let it be remembered that no such words were used in the Church of Christ, in the ordaining of her ministers, for more than a thousand years after the Apostle's time, and that it was not until the Church of Rome had begun to assert her high claims, and in the days of her grossest corruption, that she impiously presumed to use them.

In regard to the word *Priests*, let it be remembered that the inspired writers of the New Testament seem scrupulously to have avoided applying the term in any way, directly or indirectly, literally, or even figuratively, to the ministers of Christ. So true is this, so divinely guided were they in guarding this point, that no writer of any age, so far as I know, has ever claimed to have found one passage in the New Testament which, even in the remotest way, applied the term *Priests* or *Priesthood* to the Christian ministry. Yet in the face of this fact, and contrary to God's word, the Prayer-book constantly calls them *Priests*.

I know that the word *Priest* is said to be a contraction in the Prayer-book for *Presbyter*. But *Priests* is a plain English word, and has a plain English meaning. It means one who is verily a "sacerdotal function to perform," an expiatory sacrifice to make, and the real blood of some slain victim to offer unto God. The word is never used by any English speaking people,

or in any English book, except the Prayer-book, in any other sense.

Can we be surprised, then, when the Prayer-book calls the ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church *Priests*, and uses such language in regard to their office, that many of them come to look upon themselves, and their people to look upon them, as really priests, and their office as a priestly office, and the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, and the Lord's body and blood as in some form *offered* in that sacrifice? Or can we wonder when such language is used in the Prayer-book, in investing the ministers of the church with the office of Priest, that the doctrine and practise of priestly confession and absolution should claim a rightful place in the Church? Or can we hope to get rid of the teaching and the error until we get rid of the language which teaches the error?

#### THE HOPELESSNESS OF THE CONTEST WITH THE HIGH-CHURCH ELEMENT.

III. *The third is the absolute impossibility of getting rid of these objectionable expressions in the services of the Prayer-book.*

I use the expression "absolute impossibility" advisedly, and am indebted for its use in this connection to Bishop Potter, of New York. In 1869, when certain innovations in doctrine and usage, of Romish character, were being boldly propagated in the Church, and were fast bringing its Protestant and Scriptural character into distrust and reproach, and when, in consequence, there was a movement on foot which, if not arrested, must end in a disruption of the Church, nine of the Bishops met in New York to confer together as to what was to be done to avert the danger. The result of their conference was "the conviction that if alternate phrases or some equivalent modification in the office for the ministration of baptism of infants were allowed, the pressing necessity would be met." They therefore undertook to secure such alternate phrases or equivalent modification, and with this view addressed to the other Bishops the paper known as the "Proposition of the nine Bishops."

The proposition was a *modest* one. It did not involve the change of one word in the Prayer-book. It did not require any clergyman to omit one word, or to add one word, in the Baptismal service as he had always used it. It only asked that

any minister who desired it might be allowed to omit from the service that single clause which makes him seem to declare of every infant, after he has baptized it, this infant is now regenerated with God's Holy Spirit.

And the proposition was a *reasonable* one. All that is essential to baptism, I mean outwardly, is the application of water "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This is the formula given by our Saviour Himself, and the baptism is perfect and complete when the water has been applied and those words pronounced. The liberty asked for could, therefore, in no possible way, affect the validity or efficacy of the sacrament. And as it would have been a great relief to many in the Church, it ought, in brotherly kindness and charity, to have been allowed them.

And then the proposition was couched in the *most becoming terms*. The nine Bishops put it in the form of a "respectful and affectionate request of their brother Bishops."

And what was the result? The proposition was fairly scouted. Bishop Potter at once made it the subject of a pastoral letter, in which he declares that he is "too entirely assured of what the judgment of the General Convention must be, to *feel the smallest concern*, save for the character and well-being of a certain number of individuals;" that "the movement will end in a *mortifying discomfiture*;" that "very nearly the whole Church will stand amazed that any respectable body of churchmen, not to say Bishops, could have been found to give their countenance to such propositions," and that "it is indeed astonishing that they did not see that the thing to which they were urged to give their countenance was *an absolute impossibility*." Not satisfied with this, he next very kindly takes the trouble "to point out to the nine Bishops, and to their friends, that, with their views and wishes, they can have no interest in asking our General Convention to undertake the task of revising the Prayer-book;" and lest this should not have the desired weight with them, he boldly threatens them that whenever such revision shall take place, then, "if two-thirds of the Bishops and three-fourths of the Dioceses may be expected to act according to their principles," it would result in such changes (and he distinctly specifies them), as would make the Prayer-book teach unmistakably the doctrine of priestly absolution, and the doctrine of the presence of our

Lord's body and blood, "verily and indeed," in the Lord's Supper.

And for one, I honestly believe that in this matter Bishop Potter has stated nothing but the truth. When at the last General Convention (Baltimore, 1871,) the majority voted down every Canon that could be framed against Ritualism in the Church, when respectful petitions for alterations in the Baptismal service in the Prayer-book were so easily disposed of, without even the formality of a discussion, and especially when such a modest and reasonable proposition as that of the nine Bishops, not really altering one word in the Prayer-book, failed so signally to accomplish anything, and the movement ended, as Bishop Potter so confidently predicted it would end, in a mortifying discomfiture, I cannot hope for the success of any new movement in that direction.

I know it will be claimed by some that the "Declaration of the Bishops" touching the Baptismal service was gained at that Convention. I wish I could regard that Declaration as in any sense "a gain" to the Low-Church party. But I cannot. 1st. *It had no authority*; being merely an informal and unofficial expression of opinion on the part of most of the Bishops, or if of any authority, the precedent was a most dangerous one for the minority in the Church. 2nd. *It meant nothing*; some of the signers declaring afterwards that it made a *moral* rather than a *religious*, a scholastic rather than a theological distinction; and not a single High-Church Bishop admitting that it touched the doctrine of *Spiritual* regeneration in Baptism. And 3rd. *It effected nothing*; the Declaration has been lost, thrown aside, torn up, scattered to the winds, by most of the laity who ever saw it, and meantime the Baptismal service remains unaltered in the Prayer-book, and every minister of the Church has to go on declaring, again and again, as before, that every baptized child is regenerated. Out of regard to Dr. Andrews, to whom the credit of having devised and brought about this *mode of relief* is generally ascribed, I would gladly have withheld the expression of this opinion of its merits; but in this instance surely, *Magnus Apollo dormitat*.

THE POSITION ASSUMED TOWARDS OTHER PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

IV. Still another reason is *the attitude in which the Episcopal Church stands in the present day to other Protestant Churches*.

It is now held by an overwhelming majority in the Episcopal Church that there can be but one form of Church polity; that ordination by Bishops, deriving their authority by succession, in an unbroken line, from the Apostles, is *essential* to a valid ministry; and that without such ordination there can be no *true* Church, and no *lawful* administration of the sacraments.

Now I have faithfully sought to bring this theory to the test of Scripture, at three several periods of my ministry, each time devoting weeks and months to the careful examination and comparison of all the passages in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles which seemed to bear upon the question, and the result is the clear conviction that no such claim is authorized by the Word of God. The Mosaic dispensation, for obvious reasons, was designed of God to possess one unvarying form through all the ages of its destined continuance. Therefore, when it was to be inaugurated, God called Moses up into Mount Sinai, gave him the minutest directions concerning every particular of it, even showing him *a pattern* of the Tabernacle and of all the instruments to be used in the service thereof, and solemnly charged him: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount." Had our Saviour designed His Church to be constructed on any such principles, or to be of one prescribed and invariable form, then surely, when He gave His last charge to His Apostles, He would have showed them a pattern of the Christian Church, or given them explicit instructions as to its intended form. Or if He had left it to His Apostles, acting under Divine Inspiration, to establish forever such a form, then surely they would have drawn the plan and written out the details, and left them on record. And in the absence of any such definite plan and instructions, either from Him to His Apostles, or from His inspired Apostles to the Church, we must conclude that no such invariable form of government is of Divine authority, or essential to the being of a Church. For if established since the days of the Apostles, it must have been either by a fallible or by an infallible Church; if by a *fallible* Church, it has no rightful authority and cannot be binding for all time and in all places; if by an *infallible* Church, there has never been but one branch of the Christian Church which claimed to be infallible, and those who hold that there can be but one form of Church Government, have no

higher authority for that dogma than for any other dogma of the *Church of Rome*.

THE TREE TO BE JUDGED BY ITS FRUIT.

I have also looked at this theory in the light of existing facts in the Christian world. If the theory be true, if an *exclusive* Episcopal ministry in the Christian Church be of divine origin and authority, then the non-episcopally ordained ministers of the various Churches of the Reformation are committing in our day, as many of the advocates for Episcopacy do not hesitate to allege, the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram in the days of Moses. But if so, where is the evidence of it? Is it in the devout, blameless, consistent Christian lives they lead? Is it in the blessing of God upon their labors, and the power and success of their ministry? Is it in the souls who, by God's grace, through their instrumentality, are turned from the power of Satan unto God, and find pardon, and peace, and life, and salvation at the foot of the Cross of Christ? Are these the marks and tokens of God's displeasure, of God's judgments, against a bold, daring, presumptuous sin? In other words, and to put the question in the very form in which our Saviour put it to the Pharisees, who were denying the baptism of John because he had not asked them for authority to baptise, "the ministry of these servants of Christ, is it from Heaven or of men?" Dare any man say it is not from Heaven? And dare we set up a standard of our own, by which we disown those whom God hath owned, and condemn those whom God hath accepted, and separate ourselves from all fellowship on earth with those with whom we shall be glad enough to take our places in Heaven?

And yet the Episcopal Church in this country and in our day has practically planted herself on this high ground and assumed this imperious attitude towards the great bulk of Protestant Christians. It is true that her standards of doctrine remain unchanged and the Nineteenth and Twenty-third Articles in the Prayer-book still testify to her original Protestant stand on this question. But the other has become the prevailing sentiment in the Church, and is fast becoming embodied in the Canon Law of the Church. So far has positive legislation gone in this direction, if we accept the current interpretation of certain Canons, that no minister of the Episcopal Church can now, *by any official act*, recognize any other Protestant Church as a true

Church, or ministers of any other Church as lawful ministers of Christ. As the *Church Journal*, of recent date, boastingly states it, "It may be an *opinion tolerated in the Church*, that the apostolical succession is not necessary to a valid ministry. It is an opinion, however, which the Church absolutely forbids every Parish, every Convention, every Deacon, Priest or Bishop from acting on." Or, as the *Hartford Churchman*, of the same date, puts it, more pointedly and arrogantly, "Any man has a right to believe Free-trade is better than protection, even though he is living under a Protectionist Government; but if he carry his Free-trade opinions into practice he is a smuggler;" and so the editor believes, and glories in believing, that the Episcopal Church has *outlawed* all non-episcopal ministers, and views any minister of her own who would officially recognize them as an *ecclesiastical smuggler*. This may be *the law* of the Church; I cannot positively deny it. This certainly is *the spirit* of the recent legislation in the Church. But I thank God, it is not the spirit of many of her ministers and multitudes of her people. I thank God that there are thousands in her communion who have never yet bowed the knee to this Baal. Yea, I thank God that there are to-day thousands in her bosom whose hearts beat in full sympathy with the spirit of a late holy man of God and honored minister of the Gospel in the Episcopal Church, in the city of Baltimore, who for the last twenty years of his life made it a rule never to pass, in his daily walks about the city, the Church building of any Christian denomination without silently lifting up his heart in prayer to the Great Head of the Church for his blessing upon *that Church, its minister, its people, and its work!*

#### VINDICATION OF BISHOP CUMMINS.

Again, this question of the attitude of the Episcopal Church towards the other Churches of Protestant Christendom was, after all, the real question involved in Bishop Cummins's communion act at the recent meeting of the Evangelical Alliance. The right or the wrong, the lawfulness or the unlawfulness, of his conduct, turned solely on this point. That meeting was a noble gathering of the great Protestant household of faith. It was a goodly and pleasant sight to see Christian brethren from almost every land, and nation, and people, and tongue, meeting together and dwelling together in such blessed unity. And it



was surely most appropriate that, at the close of their meeting, and before parting never to behold one another's faces again in this world, they should gather as the members of one great and blessed family around the table of their Common Lord. And yet for taking his place at that table and uniting with Christian brethren of other Churches in that sacred service, Bishop Cummins was denounced in the most unmeasured terms, was accused of having violated the Constitution and Canons of the Church, and was charged with having been unfaithful to the most solemn vows a human being can assume.

Now, were these charges false, or were they true? I do not discuss this question so far as Bishop Cummins is concerned. He needs no defence at my hands. His character as a Christian man and a Christian minister stands unimpeached before the Christian world. In the freshness and strength of his early manhood he took upon him the vows of God and devoted himself to the service of God in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ; and sacred, faithfully, and with his whole heart, so far as the eye of man can see, and with signal marks of Divine blessing upon his work in every station he has occupied, has he from that day to this remembered and kept those vows to God. And in now laying down his office in the Episcopal Church, and in going forth to labor in a new field, where, as he honestly believes, he may yet more faithfully serve God and His cause on the earth, he has done what, as a Christian man, he had a perfect right to do, has done it in the most manly, and honest and straightforward way, and has done only what the Reformers of the Church of England did when they came out of the Church of Rome.

But I ask the question because of its bearing on the attitude of the Episcopal Church to the other Churches of the Reformation. And on this point there is this sad and significant fact: *While Bishop Cummins was so loudly condemned for that Communion act, there was, so far as I know, but one paper in the entire Episcopal Church in this country which spoke out in fearless, and honest, and hearty terms, in defence of him and in justification of his act.* Surely this single fact clearly marks how far the Episcopal Church has already drifted from her ancient Protestant moorings, and no one who has watched for the last few years the course of the current of public sentiment in her Communion can question that she is

destined to drift on yet further and yet faster in the same direction. It cannot be otherwise. It follows as a logical necessity from that division in the Church, and from those unscriptural views of the effects of baptism and of the nature of the Lord's Supper and of the office of the ministry, to which reference has already been made. Just in proportion as those views spread and prevail in the Church, will the Church become more exclusive in its character and more unchurching towards other bodies of Protestant Christians.

PATIENCE AND PASSIVENESS OF THE LOW-CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
UNDER THEIR TRIALS—CONTEST WITHIN THE CHURCH USELESS.

And I must say that when, in the last few weeks, I have gone over all these difficulties in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and looked them calmly in the face, the result being a feeling, not of *surprise* at the uneasiness and restlessness many in the Church have felt for years past, but of *amazement* that so many of us, from love to the dear old Church, and for the sake of her peace, and still hoping for better things, have borne them so long and so patiently. And when I have seen so clearly, as it seemed to me, that the whole tendency of things in the Protestant Episcopal Church, as it is to-day, was not for the better but for the worse, I have not wondered that Bishop Cummins has at last felt himself verily *called of God* to take the lead in organizing a Reformed Episcopal Church, and still less do I wonder that many, in different parts of the Church, are, in their secret hearts, anxiously considering the question whether they too are not called of God to join hands with him in the good work.

The main difficulty, I have no doubt, with many, as for days it was with me, is the question whether a reformation cannot in the end be effected in the Church, and therefore, whether it is not a matter of duty *to fight the battle in the Church*. A careful review of all the facts of the case has left me utterly without hope in that quarter. *In the Church the battle has been fought; and in the Church the battle has been lost*. Thirty-five years ago, when the Oxford "Tracts for the Times" began seriously to endanger the Protestant teaching and the Protestant character of the Church in this country, open war was declared, and from that day to this has raged all along the lines. And as the matter stands to-day *in the Church*, as the result of a thirty-five years' struggle, the one party has gained complete ascend-

ency, has a majority of three-fourths in the House of Bishops, and perhaps nearly as large a majority in the Lower House, has absolute control of the entire machinery of the General Convention, and, as a party, is thoroughly organized, flushed with victory, and going on conquering and to conquer. The other party is in a hopeless minority, thoroughly disorganized, dispirited by defeat, uncertain what to do, and like a man who cannot find his hands in the day of battle.

And more than this; *in the Church*, the struggle is hopeless for another reason. The High-Church has on its side the *great educational power of the Church*. It uses readily and easily, for the inculcation of its views, the catechism, and the Baptismal and other services; and these are read and heard read, many times a year, by parents, and sponsors, and children, and the congregation generally, and that, too, on the most interesting occasions, and when they make the deepest impression. While the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church, which were designed to be the standard of doctrine for the Church, and which sustain the Low-Church party in its teaching, and prove conclusively that it holds to-day the doctrines held by the framers of the Prayer-book, cannot be used efficiently either in the education of the young or the instruction of the congregation generally, and, as a matter of fact, are not read, or heard read, by one Episcopalian in ten, more than once in ten years.

With the parties thus unequally matched, and with the contest to be waged on these unequal terms, I can see nothing in the future for the Low-Church party, if it continue in the Church, but further defeat, further disintegration, and in the end the surrender of what it has ever held to be the truth of God.

But even if the contest were not so hopeless, my honest convictions are that *it had better be ended*. There is no necessity that the two parties should fight out their differences in the Church. Where no Divine law compels co-existence, separation is surely better than discord. Where two persons or parties are not agreed, they had better not walk together. And where they cannot do the Lord's work together, they had better, for the present, do it apart. So thought Barnabas and Paul at Antioch, and so they decided to act. Their separation was a painful necessity and a most humiliating occurrence; but *the wrong* of it was in their *disagreeing*; *the wrong* was in their *sharp*

*contention; the wrong was in their quarreling; and not in their separating.* And so in the Episcopal Church to-day, *the wrong* is in there being two contending parties in the Church; *the wrong* is in one party's teaching the doctrine of justification by the sacraments, the other that of justification by faith; *the wrong* is in one party's insisting on having priests, and altars, and sacrifices in the Church, the other on having no priests, no altar, and no sacrifice but Christ; and as each party claims the Prayer-book, and the Prayer-book cannot be altered; and as separation is better than discord, *the only remedy is separation.*

#### REASONS FOR TAKING THIS STEP SOLITARY AND ALONE.

Another difficulty which for days kept me undecided, was the feeling that, in such a matter, there ought to be concert of action on the part of the Low-Church party. But the question was, how was this to be brought about? I have never entered into any secret organization, have never taken part in any secret caucus, and especially in this matter have felt that whatever was done ought to be done openly before the Church, and in the broad light of day. For this reason, a secret meeting to secure concert of action was out of the question. On the other hand, a public meeting was, for obvious reasons, impracticable. If the meeting were called for the avowed purpose of *considering the question* of leaving the Church, those whose minds were made up to take the step could not honestly take part in such a meeting. And if it were called for the avowed purpose of *effecting a separation*, those whose minds were not made up to that step would hopelessly compromise their position in the Church by attending such a meeting. And for still more obvious reasons, no Convention or Council of any Diocese could be expected to take action in the matter, until it had come to be more discussed, more considered, and better understood. Therefore, as soon as my mind was positively made up, I felt that the only course for me to pursue was to lay down at once my office in the Church, take my position distinctly outside of the Church, and from that position say whatever I had to say in justification or explanation of the step.

Under these circumstances and for these principal reasons, I have felt it my duty to withdraw from the Protestant Episcopal Church. In taking the step, I may truly say I do it by faith; for I go out, almost literally not knowing whither I go, or who, if any, of my friends will go with me. The Re-

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formed Episcopal Church, as organized by Bishop Cummins and others, meets entirely my views of a Scriptural Church:

1. It plants itself firmly on the Word of God, as the sole rule of faith and practice.

2. It adopts a Scriptural Liturgy, in which no countenance is given to the Romish doctrines in regard to Baptism, and the Lord's Supper and the Ministry, and it allows Christian liberty in the use of that Liturgy.

3. It retains Episcopacy, not as of divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church government.

4. It recognizes as Christian brethren all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and as sister Churches all the Protestant Churches that hold the faith once delivered to the Saints.

#### WHAT WILL WEST VIRGINIA DO?

But though this Church commends itself entirely to my judgment and my affections, I shall wait to connect myself formally with it until I see what my brethren in the Church of Virginia and West Virginia will do in the matter. I know that there are many of them who have long been distressed and burdened on account of those Romish innovations in doctrine and usage which are fast undermining the Protestant character of the Church, who have longed to see those expressions in the Prayer-book which give countenance to such things stricken out or altered, and who, almost despairing of any reformation in the Church, must now be anxiously considering their duty in regard to this movement for a reformed Church. And I cannot help remembering, and dwelling upon the thought, that the Church in the Diocese of Virginia occupies to-day, in the providence of God, not only a peculiar position, but one of peculiar responsibility. *As yet*, by God's grace, and happily for her, she has been able to keep back from her own borders the rising tide of Romish error, and to maintain her Protestant and Scriptural faith, as no other Diocese in the land has begun to do. And now, with three godly Bishops (yourself, and Bishop Whittle, and Bishop Payne) within her limits, and a band of true men in the ranks of her clergy and her laity, she is a Church complete in herself, and can enter on this needed work of reform as no other part of the Church in England or this country can. Let her undertake it, and none dare question her right to do so; let her consummate it, and none dare impung

the validity of her action; and no living man can foretell the great work which, under God, she may thereby accomplish for Him and His cause in the earth. And I honestly believe, if all the facts of the case, and all the dangers of her longer connection with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, as at present constituted, could be laid before the minds of her people, and a fair representation of their sentiments be had, that nine-tenths of her laity and two-thirds of her clergy would be found uniting their voices in one glad shout: *Let us end this discord in the Church; let us separate from those with whom we cannot dwell in peace; let us stop this tampering with our convictions of truth and duty in the use of expressions which dangerously deceive human souls; let us throw down from the walls of our Zion these coverts and hiding-places for Romish errors, and Ritualistic sacrifices, and priestly confessions, and absolutions; and let us see our Church with her old bulwarks and her old towers, standing again in her rightful place, in the very center of Protestant Christendom.*

#### THE PROBABLE FUTURE OF THE NEW CHURCH.

A reformed Episcopal Church, thus inaugurated, would attract to itself, sooner or later, all the elements of Protestantism in the present Episcopal Church. It would command, at once, the confidence and sympathy of the great body of Evangelical Protestant Christians. It would gather into its fold multitudes, through the length and breadth of the land, who desire an Episcopal Church, with an orthodox faith, a scriptural liturgy, and a Christian spirit. It would take its place among other Protestant Churches, not as a rival sect, but as a Church of peace. It would set them a noble example of devotion to truth in matters essential, of liberty in matters non-essential, and of charity towards all the different households of the great Protestant family. It would be a living witness for their essential unity in the faith; and a standing protest against all narrowness and exclusivism in spirit. It would, so far as in it lay, sheathe the sword of controversy, and give itself to the great and glorious work of preaching Jesus and saving souls. And it would be a great step towards bringing together in closer sympathy the now divided hosts of Protestantism, and preparing them to present a united front in that dread struggle with Romanism and infidelity, which, if the language of prophecy

and the signs of the times have not been strangely misread, is to come upon the Christian Church throughout the Christian world.

Would to God that I could hope to see the Church in the Diocese of Virginia arouse herself, and rise to the dignity of her position, and meet the measure of her responsibility in this crisis of her history. That the present is a crisis in her history and in the history of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, no one, it seems to me, can honestly question. The movement of Bishop Cummins is but a new phase of an old question, but a new spark from a long hidden fire, and in fact but one of the signs of the times. However the Church papers may "pooh-pooh" it, and affect to despise it, the authorities of the Church have shown, by their hasty action in the matter, how differently they think and feel about it. It is as yet, it is true, the day of small things with the movement; but what sane man, in the light of scripture, or reason, or history, will despise it on that account? When waters have been long damned up and are ready to overflow, a little child may let them out; with one of its little fingers may make a line across the dam, along which the waters will begin first to trickle, then to flow in a little stream, then to deepen and widen a channel for themselves, and in the end become a mighty and resistless torrent. And so this movement may yet be "as the letting out of waters." Certainly the Low-Church party cannot much longer maintain its present position, as one of defense and toleration in the Church; cannot much longer maintain its existence as a party of mere negations in the Church, denying baptismal theories, and denying sacrificial offerings, and denying priestly assumptions; cannot much longer afford to be wasting its time, and consuming its energy, and wearing out its spirit, in needless controversies about unscriptural words and expressions in the Prayer-book; cannot much longer be expected to go on using language which seems to teach one thing and needs to be explained to mean a very different thing, and so countenancing errors which could be cut up by the roots in a single day, effectually eradicated from the Church, by the change of a dozen words in the Prayer-book; and in a word, cannot much longer be confined in a Church which imposes such a yoke, and must and will continue to impose it, because a large majority in the Church has at length come to hold and teach, and means

that the Church shall hold and teach, just those errors which, contrary as they are to the word of God, and to the Thirty-nine Articles of faith in the Prayer-book, and to the real doctrines of the Church, find their countenance and their only countenance in those few expressions in the Prayer-book. The movement which has already carried Bishop Cummins and others out of the Church, is, therefore, under God, as sure to go onward in some form, as waters to flow downward.

### THREE QUESTIONS THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES IN THIS CRISIS.

And the great and solemn questions before the Church in the Diocese of Virginia, as to-day, in the Providence of God, occupying so favored and so responsible a position, are these three:---

Will it remain in the Protestant Episcopal Church, with the almost certain prospect of the final overthrow and surrender of its principles?

Or will it withdraw in a body, as a Church complete in itself, and thereby secure at once a Reformed Episcopal Church?

Or will it leave many of its members to withdraw one by one, "as people, being ashamed, steal away when they flee in battle?"

I know it will be said that in taking the step I have taken I have pursued this last course, and already fled away in day of battle. But if so, it has surely not been from any fear of man, or man's reproach. It has been simply on the principle that a *man's actions* will speak louder than *his words*, and simply that I might bear, in the most honest, and distinct, and emphatic way possible, my feeble testimony to the necessity for a Reformed Episcopal Church. Had I seen any other way of doing this half so effectually, I would gladly have chosen it, and God helping me, fearlessly have pursued it. And surely the struggle the step has cost me, could my brethren in the ministry and other friends only know it, and the sacrifices it involves, ought to satisfy them of the strength of my convictions and the sincerity of my motives.

And now, in concluding this letter, permit me, my dear Bishop, to add, that if anything in it shall appear to be wanting in respect to you or your office, I beg you to believe it has not, for a moment, been intended. My respect and admiration for you as the most faithful preacher of the pure gospel I have ever heard in any branch of the Church of Christ, my personal



obligations to you for so many kindnesses received at your hands, and every feeling of my heart, would forbid anything of the kind. When I commenced to write this letter, I had no idea of the length or the range of discussion it would assume. But as I have mused, the fire has burned, my convictions have come out clear and strong, and I have felt that, as a servant of Christ, and in furtherance of what I believed to be for His glory, I ought to be neither afraid nor ashamed to utter them. If aught has been written amiss, may he pardon and overrule it; if aught according to His will, may he bless and prosper it.

With sincere veneration and affection,

I am, my dear Bishop,

Very truly, yours, etc.,

A. J. LATANE.

*To the Rt. Rev. John Johns, D. D. Bishop of the P. E. Church  
in the Diocese of Virginia.*

