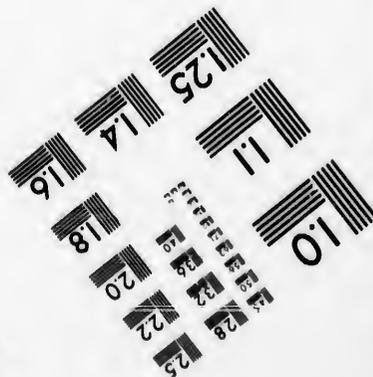
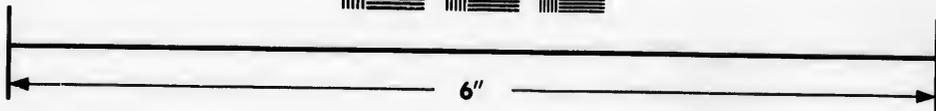
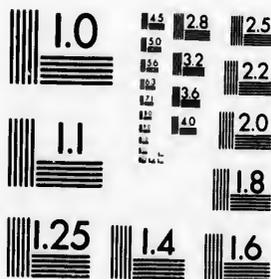


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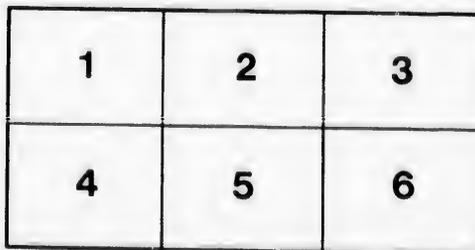
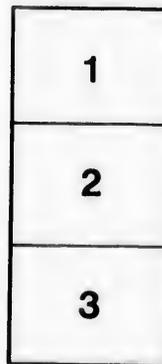
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A

LETTER

TO

REV. E. M. SAUNDERS,

Pastor of Granville Street Baptist Church.

HALIFAX.

By **JOHN Y. PAYZANT,**
Barrister-at-Law.

HALIFAX, N. S.

"HALIFAX CITIZEN" STEAM PRESS.
1868.

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TO
REV. E. M. SAUNDERS,

Pastor of the Granville Street Baptist Church,

HALIFAX.

MY DEAR SIR,—Our long friendship and the high respect I entertain for your Christian character, coupled with the nature of your present position as Pastor of that religious body, from which circumstances of the most painful character have compelled me recently to withdraw my fellowship, render it imperative that I should state frankly to you why I walk no longer with the people of your charge, and with the denomination to which they belong. You can well comprehend, if you believe me actuated by the dictates of conscience and common honesty, that while I have thus adopted the only path which duty seemed to me to point out, I have done so at a cost so great as only to be incurred where principles of a character too sacred to be trifled with were at stake. In leaving you I am leaving the Church of my fathers—the Church in which I was educated—the Church around which the sympathies, associations and pleasant recollections of a quarter of a century gather; and in whose fold I believe I first, in earnest, learnt to

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love that which is good, and to hate that which is evil. In leaving you I have had to endure the averted eye and the cold look; and to feel the edge of that bitterness which the dissolution of old friendships alone can supply; and above all, to experience that, which is pregnant with danger and calamity at all times, though the new belief be better than the old, and a pure conviction shield one from carelessness and religious doubt—the pulling down of old landmarks, and unsettling of old principles. That cost and sacrifice have been incurred by the force of circumstances and facts, from before which I have been unable to find any avenue of escape.

It is unnecessary that I should here go in detail into the merits of the charges made by your Church against Dr. Pryor, their late Pastor. Whether those charges were true or false is foreign to the purport of this letter, and remotely if in any wise connected with my act of separation. Let me only say here, that from an early stage of the proceedings which led to his exclusion from the Church, I have had the deepest conviction of his innocence and moral rectitude; and therefore hold that the act of exclusion was wrong, unwarranted by the facts, and subversive of that respect and control in a community, which a Church of our Lord should possess. Loudly, however, as I do protest against an act so unwarrantable as this, I feel how tenderly the covering of that charity "that suffereth long and is kind," should be spread

over the acts of an erring Church, where the error has been that of the understanding and not of the heart. Had forbearance, honesty and a Christian and sorrowing spirit stamped this act with their own holy impress, I should have been impatient, 'tis true, of the violence done to my feelings and reason, but would have bowed to the decision of the Brethren.

But I look in vain for any such Heavenly marks of discipline as these in Dr. Pryor's exclusion. As I now review its character step by step, as I call to mind the hasty action, the reckless manner of receiving evidence, the rejection of wise and considerate advice, the personal treatment of Dr. Pryor, the sneer, the rebuff, the eagerness to clutch at every trifle against him, and the disingenuous evasion of facts that told in his favor, the rejection of overtures for calling a Church Council, and the rejection of that Council's decision when called, I declare I tremble for the condition of men so deaf alike to the voice of reason, humanity, and religion. If such strange conduct had been the sudden outburst of a moment, or of a few days, I knew that reflection and prayer would have restored the better mind; but when through those weary weeks of wrangling and bad temper I found the evil instead of abating, outgrowing all restraint, I felt that here and now Christian charity should pause before other and sterner duties. Though I know I must have been somewhat influenced by the factious spirit and anger of the hour, I have

had frequent occasion since I ceased to enter the portals of the Church, calmly to review the whole matter. I have tried to examine its every phase by the light of reason and religion. I have asked myself whether that conduct could be explicable on any other ground than that of a bad mind and heart. I have watched narrowly the later developments of the evil in the unmanly attitude the *Messenger* has assumed, in the vile slanders that even now are retailed at the corners of the streets in this city, against Dr. Pryor, and in the unflagging effort to crush him forever—from all which I feel the more thoroughly convinced how impossible was any continuance of fellowship in the past, and how futile, if not wrong, any hope for its renewal in the future.

Though the subject is of a character too painful to be thus adverted to without extreme reluctance, I should be wanting in a proper respect for myself, my judgment and my religion, if I allowed any consideration to influence me in concealing or palliating the final and conclusive nature of my cause for separation from the Church.

But that act of ecclesiastical tyranny had a broader and more fundamental significance than this; it had a meaning that touched the very constitution and government, not of Granville Street Church alone, but of all Baptist Churches. It meant that the majority of individual members in a Baptist Church could lay their hands upon a worthy man and ruin him for life; that whether

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good men or bad men, this majority could act, however tremendously important the issues involved, without appellate control, or regard to ought save their own particular ends; that under the guise of an exalted Christianity and pure discipline it could poise a deadlier shaft and wreak a more terrible wrong; that, in fine, a Church which should aspire in its government to realize the status of a pure theocracy, could assume the functions of the worst religious despotism. Isolated though the case of Dr. Pryor might be, one naturally asked himself what guarantee had he that the next victim to this tyranny might not be himself or his neighbour. Must there not be some thing wrong, some thing radically wrong, in that religious system which became a jeopardy to the reputation and usefulness of its members instead of a safeguard;—was a question I found myself unable to get rid of by means of any previous study or conclusion. I frankly confess that for the first time in my life I opened my Bible with a great concern to know what were its exact teachings on the subject of Church government. That I should have failed earlier to traverse with care Scripture ground so important as this, was assuredly an omission of duty greatly to be blamed and deeply to be regretted, but an omission which, viewed in the light of my religious education, will not occasion you the surprise that it might many others. You know how little importance Baptists attach to creeds,

catechisms and the early inculcation of their distinguishing doctrines in the minds of children, caring mostly for the developement of moral principle and the growth of piety and holiness. You have referred in recent conversations with me to incidents which occurred in the Spring of 1855—incidents that have made that year memorable to many others beside myself—and not the least bitter drop of the cup I have had to drink has been my withdrawal from the communion of those with whom I then first entered the Church, and sat around the table of the Lord—but who of us then as we took our way with our Bibles to the groves and by the streams, thought of Church government? A weightier matter was then upon our minds and absorbing our whole souls. It can therefore be occasion of little surprise, that having thus formally accepted a system, those of us who were not theological students, or whose paths in life did not afterwards lead us into circles where the soundness of the Congregational system was likely to be called in question, should not have scrutinized very carefully the Scriptural warrant for its doctrine, when the great matter of a living faith within and a holy conversation without seemed so much more to demand our meditation and study.

During the few leisure moments I have had through the last few months, I have tried to look into this subject of Church government with the diligence and candor that a layman, not versed in Ecclesiastical lore, but with an open

Bible before him, could attain; and if aught I may write seem to you dogmatic, crude, or unsound, I know you will not construe it as the mark of a perverted mind or the want of a becoming modesty, but as having the force, to my mind, of great and unanswerable facts.

Nothing is more plainly set forth in Scripture than God's design, that His people should be joined together as one body, sometimes known therein as the family, the flock, the kingdom or the Church, but always set forth as possessing a sacred and mysteriously intimate union. Over this Body or Church he is the Supreme and only Governor, ruling, guiding and directing His people on earth, not only by the direct influence of His Spirit on individuals, but also by means of a form of government in the Church itself. *What is this form of government: and in whom is the governing authority vested?*

Let me in the outset insist upon the deep moment of the subject. Whether ecclesiastical authority should flow from properly constituted Heads of the Church on earth downwards to the people, or from the people upwards, may seem to some to be so overshadowed by the grander doctrines of the Christian Faith, as to demand for their right comprehension, study not very profound nor prayer very earnest. I grant that we can never care too anxiously for the health of that inner religious life which clothes all the outward with form and holy

comeliness, nor too diligently foster that living Faith, which gives substance and evidence to things hoped for and unseen. But no reverence for those sublime doctrines should cause us to forget that whatever may be the Bible principle of Church government, the subject itself bears the seal of the Most High, and that out of its right or wrong application must necessarily flow through every fibre of the Body, consequences of startling magnitude both to the individual members and to the Body as a whole.

I thus refer to this great Scripture truth because it has not unfrequently been asserted that "the New Testament sets forth no one form of external government for the Church, but that every people have a right to choose the form of polity appearing most suitable to the circumstances under which they are placed." But with Baptists I apprehend there can be no difference on this point. We are agreed that some principle of Church polity possesses the sign and warrant of Scripture. What is that principle? Not, indeed to us creatures is it given to speculate and question what is theoretically right, when the Creator has spoken. Otherwise I should argue—the late action of your Church speaks it out in trumpet tones—that the same miserable fallacy lies at the root of democracy, whether in the Church or State; that anarchy and despotism ever impend where your system starts with the assumption that the majority of men are good and that the good never err through incom-

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petency, weakness and prejudice. But our lips must be sealed to all such questionings, when the fiat of Deity interposes. Enough let it be for us to comprehend it and bow humbly to its rule.

From the very dawn of the Patriarchal era, down through the Mosaic and the Christian, to the time when John in apocalyptic vision was directed to write those brief but searching Epistles to the "Angels" of the seven Asian Churches, I find but one principle of Church government recognized and enforced—that vesting all authority and Rule on earth in Heads or Overseers of God's people; never are we taught by precept or example that this governing power is vested in a whole Church acting through a majority or the whole of its individual members. Those Heads or Overseers, whether in the persons of the ancient Patriarchs, or the High Priests of the Jewish economy, or the Apostles and their successors of the New Covenant, have always been ministers, their sentence final and their authority unquestioned.

There can be no difference of opinion as to the mode in which God saw fit to govern His people before the Advent of the Messiah. The Patriarch was in all respects an autocrat. The High Priest, the Ordinary Priests and the Levites swayed an authority and exercised offices which none dare question or usurp, under the most terrible penalties. All cavillings and ambitious thoughts were silenced when the proud and arrogant King Uzziah, thinking to take upon himself the burn-

ing of incense in God's Temple, was smitten by Him to whose altars none but His accredited Priests could approach, with the life-long plague of leprosy. "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the Priests, the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense." In the earlier dispensations, then, [we have a principle of Church government recognized and enforced, the very opposite of the Congregational system.

Now in asking ourselves whether at the advent of the Christian era this old principle was cast down, and the opposite erected in its stead, there are two or three considerations never to be lost sight of. We should remember that the Church through all eras is essentially the same. There is but one stock, there are many branches. How tersely did Paul remind the Romans of this, when he likened them to the wild olive tree grafted in among the broken branches of the Olive. Each succeeding dispensation, while pertaining to the same Church, was but the developement and expansion of the preceding one. True in the gradation to the new, the law had its perfect fulfilment in our Lord; to this the ancient service was but typical and preparatory, and change passed over the whole. But in that sweeping demolition of rites and ceremonies, all forms, all rites and ceremonies were not abolished. As in the old Church so in the new, there was a form of entrance provided; there was Circumcision in the old, there

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is Baptism in the new. There was a Paschal Feast in the old, there is the Lord's Supper in the new. As there was a form of ministry in the old so there is a ministry in the new. The Church had a government and discipline in the old, so it has in the new. Now this is your position; you have to admit that in the old dispensation this government and discipline was administered by the ministry alone; you have admit that a ministry and a form of government, of some sort at any rate, descended into the new; but you are driven to maintain that somehow in the descent the principle got reversed, and thenceforward the people were supreme. If Scripture uttered a word to authorize a position so singular I should not feel surprised, but I confess to a great surprise that this should be adopted when Scripture is silent on it. In that silence how dare you or I presume to say the old principle is dead and set ourselves about the discovery of a new one.

Now while there is an absolute silence as to any such transfer of authority at the coming of our Lord, the subsequent New Testament History sets the matter at rest by unfolding a system of ecclesiastical rule vesting all authority, as in the old dispensation, in the ministry. The opening chapters of the Gospels give us the first intimation that the good old principle of the Abrahamic and Aaronic governments had descended, safe through the wreck of the ceremonial service, to the Church of the New Covenant. Our Lord in His Priestly

office could have governed His Church from the season of his advent throughout all time, without the instrumentality of "orders" and "Under Shepherds;" but such was not His great and wise design. One among His first ministerial acts was to surround Himself with a body of twelve ministers—chosen men—whom He exalted to be His co-workers and to assume the government of His people. Now mark the mode of appointment. These were the first ministers of the New Testament era; their mode of appointment, therefore, and their authority we should reasonably expect to form a precedent, and to develop into a system of government suitable for all time to come. The presumption for the same seems to me conclusive, unless the sacred page subsequently expressly nullifies the principle involved. Were these men raised to their sacred office by the people? Our Lord with whom was all power could have commissioned them to the ministry quite as well, by influencing His followers in their election of them, had He designed these acts to develop into a Congregational system of government. But He called them directly and personally. His followers did not meet together and found Churches, and choose these men as Pastors and depose them at their pleasure; the Apostles themselves founded and organized the Churches and ordained therein. Thus the New Testament Church starts with a principle of government like unto the Patriarchal and the Jewish—all authority descending from the

Head, our Lord—through His Apostles to the people; which principle you must show me has been annulled in positive terms, and your Congregational one substituted. This you cannot do.

The "Twelve" remain in authority from our Lord's death, on through the Pentecostal period, down to the date of the Apostle James' death, when the mystical number seems to have been broken up, and the power before vested in the whole Apostolic Body, now vested in one person; for after this event we read no more of the Twelve, but find instead one man in authority at Jerusalem, who exercised rule over the Churches of the land, and to whom even the remaining Apostles seem to have given submission. This was James—called by Paul our Lord's brother. Scripture says but little of this man, but that little is pointed and momentous—I refer now to his position at the Ecclesiastical Council held at Jerusalem. There had been strife and dissention among the Teachers of the Church at Antioch, whether or not the Gentile converts, now fast coming into the Churches of Syria and Celicia should be circumcised. But although Paul was on the spot and contended mightily in their discussions for the right, his dictum, great and revered Apostle as he was, was rejected; and he with Barnabas and others were deputed to go up to Jerusalem for an authoritative decision on the subject. Were not Paul and Barnabas as fit to decide this question as James and John? What then was the object of

sending them away to Jerusalem if not to get a decision in the matter *ex cathedra*. Arrived at Jerusalem, a Council is summoned composed, mark you, exclusively of Apostles and Elders, (Acts xv. 2, 6; xvi. 4); there is no record of the people having any voice whatever in the decision of one of the gravest questions with which the early Church had to deal. The Council opens with a long discussion between ministers whose names are not mentioned. Then Peter, whom God had chosen to open the door to the Gentiles stood up and addressed the Council. Then Barnabas and Paul speak. Then finally, "after they had held their peace," James sums up, referring to previous addresses and citing an authority from the prophetic writings, and pronounces his Judgment thus—"Wherefore *my sentence is*," (*Krino, I judge, decree, decide*), "that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. But that we write to them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood." From that "sentence" there is no dissent; there is no putting the question to vote among the Apostles and Elders, but we find the strict letter of his "sentence" carried out.

I am aware that you seek a shelter for your system from this crushing blow to its soundness, by asserting that this letter to the Antiochians was sent by the whole Church at Jerusalem, the laymen having as much to do with it as the ministry. How do you know this; is it simply because the

words "Elders" and "brethren" appear at the head of the Epistle? Look at Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians; for aught you can gather from the mere heading, Sosthenes had as much to do with it as Paul, but we know that Sosthenes had nothing to do with it; that in the whole Epistle Sosthenes is not so much as referred to again: and to crown all, the inspired writer in closing the Epistle, throws Sosthenese off altogether and gives "the salutation of *me*, Paul, written with mine own hand." And in four other Epistles we find Paul adding the names of others of the brethren at the top of Epistles written likewise by himself, preserving the number and person throughout, and enforcing doctrines and precepts which it would have been incongruous to have attributed to the others. The only rational explanation of this is the same one to be applied to this letter to the Antiochians, viz.: that others, beside the real authoritative writers of the Epistles were sometimes joined with them at the head as a form of salutation and good will. But suppose I were to admit that this decision was not James'; suppose I go the full length you would have me, and say that this Council was composed of the Apostles, Elders and Brethren of the Church at Jerusalem, and that the question was put to vote and carried by a majority of the ministers and laymen present,—for it seems there was a division of opinion among them—then I ask what right had a local Church at Jerusalem to legislate for the

Church at Antioch. How, with your ideas of their ecclesiastical polity, could one Church have thus lorded it over another in remitting the load of Circumcision and in binding them to abstain from certain things.

Indeed every other notice of James makes it evident that he was in authority at Jerusalem. Paul after his missionary tours comes up to Jerusalem and reports to James, (Acts xxi. 18.) Peter after his liberation from prison directs Mary's household to report the fact immediately to James (xii. 17). Paul charges Peter with inconsistency in his acts before and after "certain came from James." (Gal. ii. 12.)

How James was invested with this authority and how he transmitted it to his successors Scripture does not tell us; nor are there revealed any of the minor details of the Apostolic system of Church government. What was the position of Peter among the Twelve? Why was it necessary to preserve the mystic number intact when Judas fell, and not when James suffered martyrdom? How did the two dispensations harmonize at the coming of our Lord, the jurisdictions of which for nearly half a century seem concurrent? How was Paul invested with the care of the Churches, and what were the exact limits of power of the different orders of the ministry? Respecting these and cognate subjects we are told little or nothing. That we have the framework only of a system thus given us, the filling in and finishing being withheld,

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James makes it a duty at Jerusalem. (Acts comes up to Jerusalem s. xxi. 18.) Peter immediately directs Mary's attention to James with inconsistency. Certain came from

his authority and Messengers Scripture revealed any of the system of Church position of Peter it necessary to act when Judas and martyrdom? harmonize at the means of which for rent? How was Churches, and of the different being these and le or nothing. a system thus being withheld,

can be no cause of marvel, when we think of the many splendid works, the sublime lessons, the doctrines, the precepts and the prayers of Christ and His Apostles, of which no record has come down to us. In point of fact there seems to have been no division of opinion as to the government of the Primitive Church, and therefore unlike most other of its doctrines, less cause for a formal enunciation of the same. But whenever the sacred writers do touch the subject, it is to enforce and illustrate the very opposite of the democratic idea.

But if St. Luke does not pause in penning those graphically written historical events to expound this great Church principle, the life and writings of St. Paul speak out with a clearness which only the prejudiced and Shibboleth-bound can misinterpret. Those writings are divided into classes; the first class addressed to Churches in their individual and collective capacity; the second class to individual men, Timothy and Titus. Now this is to me a most significant fact that throughout those full and elaborately written Epistles "to the Churches," there is not one word touching the choice, qualification or ordination of their ministers; nay more there is not one direction which would explicitly convey to the mind of an unprejudiced reader, that the power of discipline was committed into the hands of the individual Church members. The only apparent exception to this is in such general exhortations and directions as are contained in Chap. v. of the 1 Cor. and Chap. iii. of 2 Thess.

But when these are viewed together with the scope and general design of these Epistles, they seem to me to be nothing more than the appropriate utterances which any Head of a Church possessing in himself ecclesiastical power might offer as words of warning and counsel to his hearers. But if Paul meant that these laymen should choose their own minister, or depose him at will from his sacred office, why did he not instruct them in their proper choice of such; why did he not tell them the kind of men Bishops and deacons should be?

That there is nothing in the structure or design of these letters calculated to govern us in construing any detached portion of them as authoritative in matters of Church government is most important to bear in mind; inasmuch as on every other subject the writer is precise, cogent and persuasive, preserving on this a silence to be accounted for only on the ground that as Church members they had nothing to do with Church authority.

But look at that other class of his Epistles—those three Pastoral letters addressed, not to Churches but to ministers of Churches, Timothy and Titus. No longer does the Apostle indulge in those pungent appeals to the Churches for greater faith, purity and love; here he does not go down into the subtleties of doctrinal argument, nor soar aloft in beatific visions of the future; now the burden of his communications is, how the Churches shall be governed; how their members disciplined;

what shall be the qualifications of its officers. Mark how he writes an Epistle to the Ephesians, without saying a word on Church government; then writes an Epistle to Timothy directing him how to govern the Ephesian Church. You have only to run your eye along the salient features of that Epistle to comprehend the full import of this meaning. First Timothy is left in charge of the Ephesian Church; in carrying out his authority he is to allow no false doctrine to be taught; he is told what public prayers and thanksgivings are to be made; what should be the attire and deportment of women; what the qualifications of Bishops and deacons; how Timothy shall "command and teach" respecting certain heresies; how elders shall be disciplined; the treatment of widows; the care to be exercised as to whom he ordained; duties of servants; and closing with a most solemn charge to keep that which was committed to his Trust. These directions are not written to the Church, for the Church had nothing to do with them, but to Timothy, the Overseer of the Church. Mark especially how Timothy was to deal with an Elder. Was the Ephesian Church to arraign, to sit in judgment upon or expel an erring Elder, as your Church expelled their late Pastor? No word is breathed of the like; but Timothy, their head, was directed how he should receive an accusation against an Elder.

In describing the qualifications of a Bishop there occurs this significant language, "One that *ruleth*

well his own house, *having his children in subjection*, with all gravity; *for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God."*

Again in his Pastoral to Titus, whom he had appointed in Crete "to set in order the things that are wanting and ordain Elders in every city," Paul gives like specific directions for the government of the many Churches in that Island. Titus is to act with "all authority." "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition *reject.*"

But I refrain from giving further evidences. In all these Epistles but the one principle of Church government is recognized and enforced—the government of the ministry. I care not a straw what names you attach to the governing ministers; you may call this man a Bishop, that an Elder and the other a Deacon, and maintain that they have jurisdictions differing in degree or co-equal; that is not now the point; names are nothing. The great fact I find taught is, that in that ministry, whatever its nature, resided all governing authority in the Church on earth.

The last Scripture recognition of this principle is found in those short but comprehensive letters of St. John the Divine, written under the direction of our Lord, to the "Angels" of the seven different Churches in Asia. Who was the Angel of the Church of Ephesus? Was he a minister like yourself elected by the individual votes of that

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Church to be its Pastor, or was he like Timothy thirty years before him appointed and ordained thereto by one having authority and credentials not conferred by the People? I will answer this by referring to a ground against episcopal government you have more than once taken in conversations with me, viz.: that no principle of government can be discovered in the acts of the Apostolic ministry applicable in our day, inasmuch as the Apostles were inspired men and had extraordinary powers conferred upon them which were not transmissible by them, but ceased with their death. What force there is in the objection I shall presently consider; but do you not see how its admission militates against you. The Apostolic days were not yet numbered when John wrote these last Epistles. Those extraordinary powers had not yet been buried with the last Apostle. Was it necessary there should be apostolic appointment and ordination while Paul lived, and not while John lived?

If this system of government belonged to Apostolic times alone, even then you must admit that while the venerable vicegerent of our Lord lived and wrote and raised his authoritative voice, this system had not only spread with the growth of Churches over Asia Minor, but had become the settled Church polity of the numerous Churches throughout Europe and Asia. And if this be true, then these "Angels" were ministers in authority over their Churches. Besides which, if

if they were only congregational ministers, why address them personally, holding each one, to a certain extent, answerable for the condition of the Church over which he was placed. This is not the Baptist mode of addressing communications to the Churches.

But this Church polity did not die with the Apostles. Those wondrous powers with which they were endowed, distinguishing them from, and elevating them so far above their long line of successors, seemed designed for a special object—the founding of the Christian Church—and with the proper accomplishment of that object, to have passed away; but not so with Church government; it in some form or another could not cease, though the working of miracles did; therefore so far as it concerned Church rule the successors of the Apostles must have occupied precisely the Apostles' positions; unless, indeed, you can shew me in the Bible, that in the withdrawal of the miraculous powers from mortals, Church authority slipped out of the hands of the ministry into the hands of the people. If the Apostolic government were a too sacred matter to be transmitted into the hands of the ministry for all time, surely the same reason should have rescued it from the hands of an irresponsible, it may be, ignorant and self-sufficient laity.

I have now but one other subject to allude to, in confirmation of this principle—its recognition in the Church universally in the years immediately

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succeeding the Apostolic era. I know how zeal-
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 Canon in all things pertaining to their religion,
 yielding but a modified countenance to the writings
 of those holy men, the Fathers, many of whom
 sat at the feet of the Apostles, were their fellow
 laborers, received their highest commendation,
 and won crowns of martyrdom for the faith they
 preached. I freely admit how dangerous it would
 be to receive the doctrines of men so great and
 good even as these, where the letter or the spirit of
 the inspired Books teaches differently. But I con-
 ceive that upon points touching the management of
 the Primitive Church—points upon which in these
 latter days so many learned and pious men differ
 in their interpretation of Scripture, some weight
 and authority should be attached to the clear
 and positive writings of men, who sat under the
 Apostolic ministry, and were themselves ministers
 of repute in the Apostolic Church. Now you
 know better than I do, that if there be any doubt
 as to the meaning of St. Paul or St. Luke on this
 point, there is none whatever as to that of such
 men as Clement of Rome, whom Paul calls his
 "fellow-laborer, whose name is in the Book of
 Life;" or Ignatius or Polycarp, disciples and co-
 workers also of the Apostles. No men could have
 known better than these what the practice of the
 Apostolic Church was; yet every one of them, as
 you well know, is singularly explicit in describing
 a Church in which all authority was vested in a
 properly constituted ministry.

I have not been able to have access to any complete collection of the Patristic writings, but give a few quotations therefrom, as I find them among a mass of others, all of like import, in Dr. Kipp's works.

CLEMENT, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, which was of such high authority in the Primitive Churches, as to have been publicly read, we are told, along with the inspired Epistles, says—"God has ordained by His Supreme will and authority both where and by what persons they (His services) are to be performed. For the Chief Priest has his proper services; and to the Priests their proper place is appointed; and to the Levites appertain their proper ministries; and the Layman is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to the Layman. Let every one of you, therefore, brethren, bless God in his proper station, with a good conscience and with all gravity, not exceeding the rule of his service that is appointed to him."

"Let us consider those who fight under our *earthly* Governors; how orderly, how readily, and with what exact obedience they perform those things that are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor tribunes, nor centurions, nor inferior officers, but every one in his respective rank does what is commanded him by his King and those who have the authority over him. Let, therefore, our whole body be saved in Jesus Christ; and let every one be subject to his neighbour according to

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the order in which he is placed by the gift of God."

"So likewise our Apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there should contentions arise about the name of the Bishopric. And therefore having a perfect foreknowledge of this they appointed persons, as we before said, and then gave direction how when they should die, other chosen and approved men should succeed in the ministry."

IGNATIUS says:—"I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord; your Bishops presiding in the place of God; your Presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles; and your Deacons most dear to me being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ." In his Epistle to Polycarp, this communication is made through him to the Church at Smyrna,—“Attend to the Bishop that God may attend to you. I am of the same mind with those who are subject to the Bishops, the Presbyters and the Deacons." In his Epistle to the Ephesians:—"It becomes you to acquiesce in opinion of your Bishop which you do."

I might cite many pages from these writings, all showing that in the last days of the Apostles and during the succeeding ages all Church authority was vested in the ministry. Are these emphatic utterances to go for nothing? Even the learned among the Congregationalists, if I am correctly informed, agree with the statements of the earliest and most eminent Historians that the Epistles of Clement were written long before St. John's Vision in Patmos and before the date of

his Epistles; and that Ignatius and Polycarp flourished before the death of that eminent Apostle. And yet though Clement was a fellow laborer with Paul for the truth, though Polycarp, if tradition be true, suffered martyrdom in the amphitheatre at Rome for that truth, and for it Ignatius died a martyr's death; and though these men had caught from the Apostles own lips and teachings their spirit and zeal and knew how the Churches should be and were governed; and though their writings reveal most clearly what the nature of that government was; yet they are to be set aside as of no weight because not just canonical. If these writings be entitled to as much credence even as those of Tacitus or Cornelius Nepos—and I believe that most learned Theologians are agreed in the main as to their genuiness—nothing in my opinion but the most emphatic Scriptural contradiction of their teachings should govern one in rejecting them; for, admitting that they may have greatly erred in expounding many of the deeper doctrines and mysteries of the Christian Faith, they could not have erred, without being guilty of the most wilful perversion of *facts* before their eyes, in describing the form of government existing in those Churches in which they and the last Apostles labored.

I must not omit in concluding this hastily written letter, to put one question to you which has a most significant bearing upon the matter in hand. If Congregationalism flourished when John wrote his

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Epistles to the Churches, and Episcopacy took its place a few centuries after, how is it that History has brought down to us no word of this most sweeping revolution? Can you believe a change of such tremendous magnitude, and effecting most vitally the dearest rights of Christendom, to have been wrought out, without a loud and stirring remonstrance, whose echo at any rate should have come down to us? The Baptists of the present day form but a small part of the Christian world, but suppose that Episcopacy were attempted to be forced on them, what a record of tumult and strife would History carry down with it to all posterity; how is it then that we hear nothing of this *universal* change? The page of Ecclesiastical History has not failed to chronicle through all ages the schisms and heresies, the great uprisings against and inroads into the Church, affecting not only her faith and service, but endangering her very existence; but from the days of the Apostles to those of Luther not a word is breathed against Episcopal government. When then did the change take place, I ask, if Episcopacy was not Primitive? "A very strange thing sure it were," as the learned Hooker wrote in 1594, "that such a discipline as ye speak of should be taught by Christ and His Apostles, in the Word of God, and no Church ever have found it out, nor received it till the present time; contrariwise, the government against which ye bend yourselves be observed every where throughout all generations and all

ages of the Christian world, no Church ever perceiving the word of God to be against it. We require you to find out but one Church upon the face of the whole earth that hath been ordered by your discipline, or hath not been ordered by ours, that is to say the Episcopal regiment since the time that the blessed Apostles were here conversant." Not until the days of Luther, Melancthon, Zuingle and Calvin—after 1500 years of Universal Episcopacy—is this great Church principle attacked, and then attacked not because the principle itself was obnoxious, but because it was conceived to be a necessary part of an obnoxious system. These great Reformers would gladly have adopted the same course pursued by the English Reformers in *reforming* the Church instead of founding a new one, if they had deemed the same possible. It was not Episcopacy which drove them out; they would gladly have carried it with them. Listen to one short extract from Melancthon in his apology for the Augsburg Confession, keeping in mind too the recent action of your Church: "I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of Bishops. For I see what manner of Church we shall have, the Ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. *I see that hereafter there will grow up a greater tyranny in the Church than there ever was before.*" These good men left the old polity, but they did not rush into Congregationalism; it was bad enough that they had to give up the government of the Bishops, they would

have recoiled with terror from the government of a fickle or stiff-necked laity. Not until the days of Robert Brown and John Robertson—the times of that Puritanic zeal, which with all its excellencies revelled in all imaginable extremes in Religion, in literature, in government, in dress and speech, in everything, was Congregationalism first heard of in the Christian world.

Prophetic words of Melancthon! Under the new polity Germany has become the home of Rationalism. Under the old England has preserved the primitive faith. Under the new, Disunion is the word that may be written o. er all Christendom—rival and warring creeds, however excellent in other respects, making "Peace," that dear legacy of our Lord to His Church, a mockery. Behold the spectacle your own Church presents to-day. Witness the antagonisms and the heart-burnings already developing themselves in the Denomination—the sacred form of unity and Peace, fainting and prostrate, while your valiant men are whetting their swords and 'girding on their armor to meet each other in the field. To be sure this proves Baptist Churches are "Independent," if you think that a virtue adequate to cover up the sickening spectacle of strife.

How lamentably it appears to me, you fail to realize the Scripture fact that the Church on earth is made up of divers characters. You must know that Scripture is not less explicit in affirming, than experience in proving that every where both the

good and the bad—the wheat and the tares—are found bearing the insignia of the Church and sheltered in its fold. Not only he who is gentle and peaceful in counsel has his name recorded in the books of the Church below, but also the turbulent spirit—not only the unassuming, but also the arbitrary and dictatorial; the conceited and ambitious man as well as the high minded; the good and well meaning, it may be, but misguided and prejudiced; not only the pure in heart, but also the bad and unregenerate. Of such mixed characters, you know, is your independent governing body too often if not always made up. Is the government of such likely to conduce to unity and peace? On every occasion of public worship, in every denominational gathering, in the denominational press and in its social gatherings, the door is thrown wide open for disunion, angry debate, clamor, and the engendering of an intensely worldly instead of Heavenly spirit. How often have I seen all good feeling—all holy impression and solemn thought destroyed at a conference or prayer meeting, by the unseemly disputings of a few men eager to hear their own voices and assert their own importance. But this is the "Independence" I hear talked of so much of late—the "blood bought inheritance," any departure from which Baptists are every where warned to carefully watch.

Such are the evidences and facts, to my mind singularly pertinent and cumulative, which convince

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me that the Church principle of government known as the Episcopal is the right one—the only one authorized by Scripture—the only one known in the Primitive and Post Apostolic Church—the only one known in the Church of God in all ages till Luther, who saw not till it was too late, that with the novel and corrupt he was pulling down the primitive and good, laid his hand to the work of demolition.

I look around me in these eventful days at the wild whirl and hustling of rival and ever changing creeds; I see on the page of History how systems of Faith have come and gone like the dissolving visions of a dream; how the proudest Empires, the customs of nations, and the great ideas which have successively animated the world, have flourished but to fall; how change and dissolution have laid their rude hands on all things, but that goodly government and simple faith our Lord gave His Church; so I know that in the future the same principle which has come down to us through Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and Confessors, shall live on, though all else perish, protected by the strong arm of Him who has said, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

I remain yours,

JOHN Y. PAYZANT.

Halifax, January, 1868.

