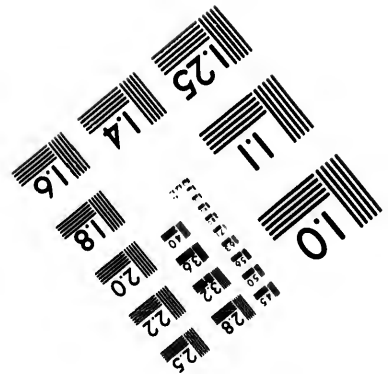
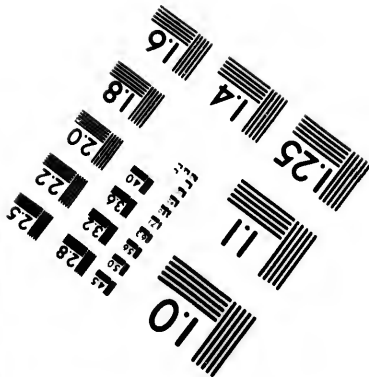
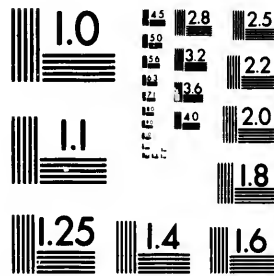


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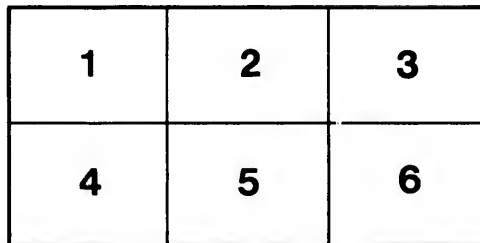
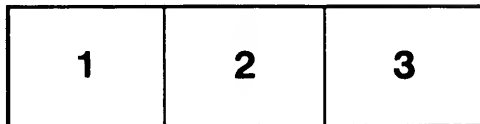
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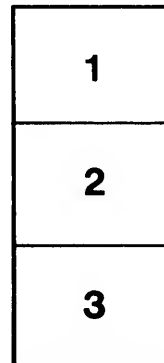
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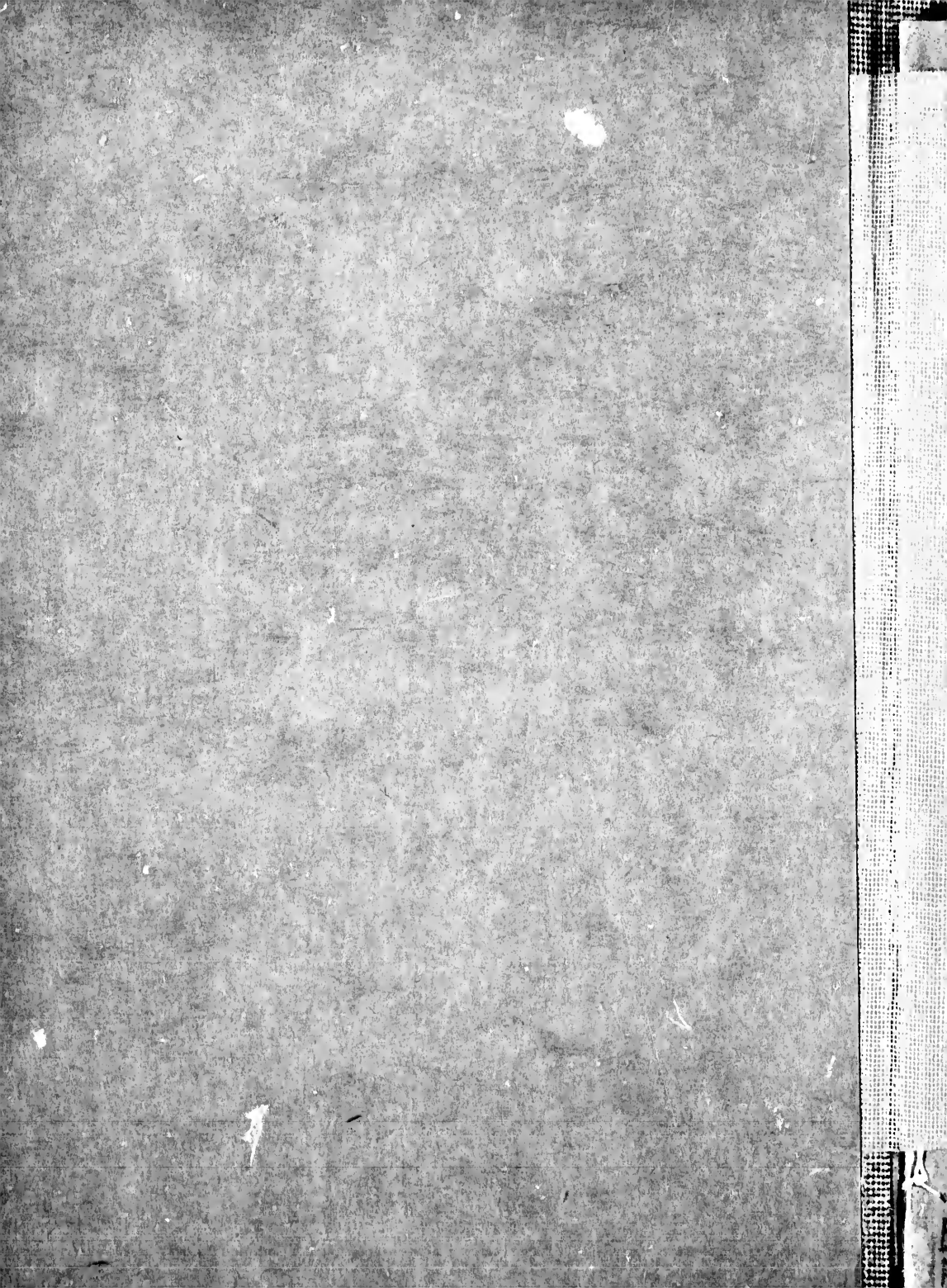
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The Old Paths.

A SERMON

Preached in St. Paul's Church, on Sunday
Morning, August 20.

BY
D. FITZGERALD, A.B., T.C.D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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THE OLD PATHS.

“Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”--Jer. vi: 16.

THE foundation of that religion, brethren, which we profess, and which our church, in its Protestant and Reformed character, has taught for centuries, in all simplicity and godly sincerity, is JESUS CHRIST, who is also the way of life. He is the Head of the Church, and its chief corner-stone, its Foundation and its Rock. What he did, and taught, is our guide. His precepts and teaching we have on the testimony of those who recorded his acts, and were eye-witnesses of his miracles. When these men were removed from their labors they left us in writing what they had heard or learned at the lips of their divine master, which writing is a sufficient guide to direct our steps in the way we ought to walk. Now, these men, in their writings, which were penned under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and given to the church as a complete revelation of the mind and will of God, never acknowledged any other object of adoration than God, never admitted any other mediator than Christ, never spoke of any other expiatory sacrifice for sin than that of his death on the cross, and never preached any other mode of justification than through faith in Him who was the Lamb of God—the Redeemer of the World. In their writings we read of no altars at

the Supper of the Lord ; no confessions to a Priest to obtain the pardon of sin ; no images in places of religious worship ; no universal bishop, who was to bear sway in the church and over the world ; no queen of heaven ; no invocation of saints ; no purgatorial sufferings, nor of any pompous ceremonies or gorgeous rituals being practised or exhibited in the primitive church, whose greatest ornaments were simplicity of doctrine, and sanctity of life. It is true we read in these writings of errors and corruptions that were to arise in the church, and be a source of sorrow to its members. These have existed from the days of the Apostles, and crept into the teaching and practice of the church ; but the Apostles told us we were to expect them ; they have warned us of them, and guarded us against them. The ministers of Christ in those days repeatedly exhorted their brethren to take heed to themselves with regard to deceitful teachers, who were striving to draw away their souls from the truth and freedom of the gospel, and the simplicity of Christ. They ceased not, knowing the evils that would arise, to urge the members of their respective churches " to prove all things, and hold fast that which was good ; " to " contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and " not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel." And if it was the duty of Christians, in the days of the Apostles, to be on their guard against the introduction of unscriptural doctrines and erroneous practices into the church, contrary to the teaching of Christ and his disciples ; it is no less our duty to guard against the introduction of error, to resist the encroachment of practices contrary to the teaching of the church and the word of God, and not to allow ourselves, through love of novelty, indifference to, or ignorance of the

case with many in our day, to be carried away, by the subtle teaching of men, from the "truth as it is in Jesus," to the detriment of our souls and the ruin of the church.

It can be shewn, from the records of Ecclesiastical history, that almost every one of the corruptions which have prevailed in the Christian Church, and which the Apostles warned their hearers against, have more or less been opposed at their first introduction, and that this opposition had been, for centuries, ineffectual in preventing the greater part of the christian world from becoming degenerate and corrupt. It can be shewn that, for fully seven hundred years, the greater part of Saxon England was indebted to the exertions of the British clergy for its conversion to christianity, and not to Augustine and his followers; so that England was not under obligation to Rome, either *originally* or *chiefly*, for the light of the gospel, which for that period of time she received and enjoyed. True it is, that from that date, down to the time of the Reformation, error after error, both in doctrine and practice, found its way into the British church, through the teaching of Romish ecclesiastics, contrary to the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, and the practice of the primitive church. The venerable Bede, who flourished at the close of the seventh century, and who may be regarded as the connecting-link between primitive christianity and the corruptions of the Romish church in Britain, speaks plainly of the abuses which were existing in his day, the irreligion and immorality practised in monasteries, the ungodly lives of some of the Bishops, and the general evils that were fast spreading throughout the land.

It might be interesting to shew, did time permit, the rise and progress of the corruptions of christianity which, for a period of one thousand

destroyed the peace and happiness of the kingdom, till at length, it became necessary, lest the very semblance of christianity should have disappeared, to banish from the church such doctrines and practices as neither the word of God, nor the early christians sanctioned, and to restore things as they were at the beginning; for it must ever be borne in mind that the work entrusted to our Reformers and Martyrs, at the time of the Reformation, was not to destroy, but to bring to light those truths which had been so long hidden and buried under the accumulated rubbish of human tradition. The principle on which our pious ancestors separated from the Romish church was not that they had discovered new views of Scripture doctrine, as some erroneous teachers in our day claim to have arrived at, but that they desired to return to the primitive confession, and to maintain and inculcate the views held by the Apostles, as set forth in their own writings, which writings were handed down as a sacred deposit to the church, to be used for its benefit, under the guidance and direction of the Spirit of God. The great object of our Reformers was, as Bishop Jewel observed, "to approach as much as they possibly could to the Church of the Apostles and ancient Catholic Bishops and Fathers;" and, as another testified, "to depart no further from the Church of Rome than she had departed from the primitive church." And so anxious and careful were they that preachers should not put forward their particular fancies, and thus fall into the other extreme, that the Upper House of Convocation, in the year 1571, directed that they "should in the first place be careful not to teach anything in their sermons, to be religiously held and believed by the people, except that which is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, and which has been deduced from the same by the Catholic Fathers

and ancient Bishops." And on the re-establishment of the Protestant religion in England, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the first Act of her reign, was to declare that no person having authority under the Crown "to reform or correct errors, heresies, abuses, or enormities, by virtue of that Act, should in any wise have authority or power to order, determine, or adjudge to be heresy, but only such as had been determined, ordered, or adjudged to be heresy by the authority of the Canonical Scriptures, or by the First Four General Councils." It can be shewn that the peculiar doctrines and practices of Rome, which distinguish her from other churches, and which our Reformed Church of England got rid of at the Reformation, are all more or less of heathen origin, or have been adopted in imitation of heathen customs, rites, or ceremonies: such as Purgatory; the Pope's Supremacy; the Celibacy of the Clergy; the different orders of Friars, Monks and Nuns; Confessions to a Priest, and enjoined penances to obtain absolution; Abstinence from certain meats, and other religious and penitential austerities; the sacrifice of the Mass, with its pompous ritual and gorgeous ceremonial; the use of holy water; offering of incense; blessing of candles; the carrying of lighted tapers; lighting candles in the day time; worship of images; invocation of saints; prayers for the dead; festivals in honor of saints; procession of Priests and boys clothed in white, with crosses and banners; proclamation of Jubilees, and granting of indulgences; erection of altars, and of magnificent temples, and the form of their construction; bowing to the east; adoration of relics; placing of statues or images on the altar; mixing water with the wine; use of beads and rosaries; wearing of crosses and charms; pilgrimages to holy places; extreme unction, etc.

eral errors and departures from primitive teaching and practice were introduced into the Church, and made articles of faith; for they were nearly all brought in within the space of one thousand years, *i.e.*, from the time when Gregory the Roman Pontiff advised Augustine, whom he sent into England, "to accommodate the ceremonies of the Christian worship, as much as possible, to those of the heathen, that the people might not be much startled at the change;" down to the time when the supremacy of the Pope was rejected by the people of England, and the Reformers of our national faith banished Romish novelties from the worship of God.

It was not what Rome *admitted*, in common with us, that the Reformers rejected, but the *additions* which she made, contrary to the word of God, and the custom of the primitive church; for instance, Rome admits, with us, the authority of the First Four General Councils; but she adds other Councils, which the Christian church does not recognize, because they are not General, and their decrees are contrary to the Word of God. She admits the Bible to be the Word of God; but she adds, as of equal authority with that word, the Apocryphal books, and human tradition. She admits that God is to be adored with a supreme worship; but she adds, on the authority of tradition, that religious worship must be paid to the Virgin Mary, and the saints. She admits Christ as a Mediator between God and Man; but she adds other mediators, and authorizes prayer to be made to them for the efficacy of their intercession. She admits the atonement of Christ, offered on the cross; but she adds the sacrifice of the mass, offered on the altar by the Priest; every time, he, by the saying of a few words, changes the substance of a piece of bread into the very body, soul, and divinity of the Saviour. She admits the

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real humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ ; but she adds the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. She admits that God forgives sins ; but she adds that he has given authority to his church, *i.e.* the Priests, to hear the confession of the sinner, and to give absolution to the penitent. She admits that God is the bestower of grace and mercy ; but she adds that he has left in his church a "Spiritual Treasury," containing the accumulated merits of departed saints, to be dispensed at her will and pleasure. She admits that the merits and sufferings of Christ are infinite ; but she adds that it is necessary for the sinner also to suffer, and make satisfaction for his sins ; that man may not only be saved by his good works, but do more than enough, so that the surplus of his good deeds may be handed over, and applied to the benefit of those who have not performed the required quantity. She admits the existence of Heaven and Hell, and the doctrines of future rewards and punishments ; but she adds the existence of a third place, which she calls Purgatory, where sins unforgiven here may be atoned for there. She admits that Christ instituted two Sacraments ; but she adds five more of her own, and declares that their validity, or the benefit to be derived from their use, depends upon the *intention* of the officiating Priest, so that no one can ever know whether he has received a Sacrament or not, or derived any benefit from its use. She admits that God can pardon, as well as inflict punishment for sin committed against him ; but she adds that he has given to her alone the power of remitting in this life the punishment deserved, and of delivering souls out of purgatory, *i.e.* of shortening the period of their punishment hereafter. Now it is these several *additions* which our church has discarded, for they are human inventions, having no authority from the Word of God. These are not

the "old paths," but novelties fondly invented of men, for their own gains, self-exaltation, and the extension of their power. These are innovations in doctrine and practice, which ungodly and irreligious men brought into the church; but which our Reformers, out of love to God, and the souls of their fellow-creatures, succeeded in removing, though at the loss of their own lives — for it was for denying the supremacy of the Pope, and the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, transubstantiation, and such like, that they were burnt at the stake.

Some of the chief errors that crept into the church, such as the sacerdotal character of the Priesthood, the sacrificial character of the Lord's Supper, and the erection of Jewish or Pagan Altars, were manifestly a departure from the "old paths," and did more than any thing else to unchristianize it, and do away with its New Testament character. It is a matter of history that the introduction of sacerdotal priests, altars, and sacrifices may be traced to Judaism and Paganism: — "The Jewish Priests were appointed by God for the express purpose of offering *sacrifice*, in the name and on the behalf of the people; they alone were allowed to make oblation and burn incense before the Lord; and it was through them that the people were to approach Him, that their service might be acceptable. A very great portion of the Jewish religion consisted in the performance of certain ceremonial rites, most of which could only be performed by the Priests, or through their mediation and assistance; they were to make *intercession* and *atonement* for offenders; they, in short, were the *mediators* between God and Man. And among the Pagans, whose institutions appear to have been, in great measure, corrupt imitations of those of the Patriarchal religion, we find, in

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not exclusively, the offerers of sacrifices, in behalf of the state, and of individuals; they were intercessors, making supplication and atonement for others, and acting as mediators between Man and the object of his worship." Now, on the contrary, in the christian church, Christ being the only High Priest of his people, their mediator and intercessor before the throne, and having, in his own body, on the tree, made an atonement for their sins, he did not appoint his ministering servants as Priests, to offer sacrifices, and to intercede in their behalf, for this he himself does; but he appointed them to preach the gospel, to instruct, exhort, admonish, and spiritually govern the flock over whom he placed them. It is not through the mediation of an earthly priest that we are admitted to offer our supplication before God, but through that of an heavenly one—even Jesus, the Son of God, our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens. "Having, therefore," says the apostle, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." The essential character of the Jewish priests was their offering sacrifices, and making atonement and intercession for the people; whereas the special office of the christian minister, the minister of the new and better covenant, the minister of that church of which Christ Jesus is the alone High Priest, mediator, and atoning sacrifice for sin, is to impart religious instruction, and administer rites which, in their very nature, are totally different from that of sacrifice. It is the office of the christian minister to bring sinners, not to himself,

not to him, but to Christ; and to persuade them to look, not to him, but to Christ alone as their mediator and advocate. This precludes the idea of the minister regarding himself as a mediator between the sinner and his Saviour, and gives him no authority for imagining that he has power to hear confessions and to grant absolutions.

The contrast in this point between the Christian religion and all others, *i.e.* with regard to the character of those who are its appointed teachers and servants, is one of the most powerful evidences of its divine origin; for if the Christian religion were like other systems of religion, either Jewish or Pagan, it would have its sacrificing priests, who would act as intercessors and mediators for the people; but the founder of the Christian religion being himself the Sacrificing Priest, and the only Mediator between God and the sinner, did not give to others those powers and privileges which exclusively belonged to himself; therefore, when he established his religion on the earth, which was to supersede all other forms of religion that went before, he caused no altar to be erected whereon his ministers were to offer sacrifices, for he was himself the altar; he appointed no priest to act as mediator, or to make an atonement for the people, for he was himself the Priest, the Mediator and the Atoning sacrifice; and he gave no directions for sacrifices to be continued after his decease, for he offered up his own body on the cross, "once for all," for the sins of men, no more to be repeated.

Before the Reformation the Priest professed, like the Jewish, to offer sacrifice, the unbloody sacrifice of the mass, *i.e.* the body and blood of Christ presented on the altar, to propitiate God towards himself and his congregation; the efficacy of that sacrifice was made to depend on the intention of the priest, not on the sincerity or faith of the communicant; he, assuming the character of

a mediator, prayed not *with* but *for* the people, in a tongue unknown to them, and in an inaudible voice. The Priest undertook to reconcile transgressors to God, by prescribing penances, to be performed by them, in order to their obtaining *his* absolution; and pretended to transfer to their account the merits of the saints; but, at the Reformation, this most deadly error was removed, the Saviour was assigned his own proper place, and his ministering servants theirs; Christ, the alone Mediator between God and Man, and the Great High Priest of his people; and his ministers the preachers of his word, and the administrators of his sacraments. The late Archbishop of Dublin, from whose clear and logical writings I have taken some of these remarks, has well observed: "that those corruptions of christianity, which arise from the mixing up of Judaism with it, are, for one reason, likely to be more lasting than most others, and to be oftener revived." "Christians," says he, "acknowledge that the Mosaic Dispensation came from God. And that, and also the Christian Dispensation, are contained in the volume which we call the BIBLE. Now, any one who regards the Bible as *one book*, containing divine instructions, without having formed very clear notions of what does and does not belong to *each* Dispensation, will of course fall into the greatest confusion of thought. He will be like a man who should have received from his father, at various times, a great number of letters, containing directions as to his conduct, from the time when he was a little child just able to read, till he was a grown man; and who should lay by these letters with care and reverence, but in a confused heap, and should take up any one of them at random, and read it without reference to its *date*, whenever he needed his father's instructions how to act. Accordingly, many erroneous notions, wholly or partly drawn

from Judaism, have again and again found their way into the Christian Church." The introduction of sacerdotal priests, altars, and sacrifices, he mentions as some of those corruptions which are likely, from time to time, to be received and revived, owing to this method of taking instructions from the Scriptures. Is there not, I would ask, an effort being made in our day receive these very doctrines again into the church? Is there not a party within her sacred battlements, who are striving to bring back again those corruptions of christianity, those Jewish and Pagan doctrines, which have been repudiated by our Reformers, and the compilers of our articles, as things unknown in the christian church in the days of the Apostles? Is not the sacerdotal character of the Priesthood, and the sacrificial character of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, openly taught in some of our places of worship, and by men calling themselves ministers of the Church of England? Are not the doctrines of *confession* to a Priest, and the necessity of receiving absolution from him, in order to be forgiven of God, openly declared? Are not prayers for the dead, and the invocation of saints, and the sacrifice of Christ's body on the altar, offered up for the benefit of absent worshippers, publicly asserted, and made topics of correspondence in the newspapers? Are not books and tracts circulated among the young, and received into our houses, which teach these very doctrines, and advocate practices which have caused the Bishop of Montreal, the other day, to withdraw his license from a clergyman in his own Diocese; and yet those who circulate these books tell us that they contain the doctrines of the Church of England? What, brethren, are we doing to check the revival of these corruptions among ourselves, or how are we striving to stem

young people read these books; yea, we go with them, or we allow them to go, to places where these doctrines are taught, and openly advocated; and still we call ourselves members of the Reformed Church of England; descendants of men who bled and died for the upholding of those truths we are either indifferent about, or are ashamed to maintain. This is not conduct worthy of a disciple of that Master who taught his followers a pure gospel, and gave them a simple ritual. This is not treading in the "old paths," or walking in the good old ways of a pure branch of the Church of Christ. This is not keeping intact the truth committed to our trust. This is not contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. This is not helping to hand down to others the sound doctrines we received from our martyred sires. This is not acting up either to the letter or the spirit of the teaching of our Church, nor following the example of her most worthy sons.

The truths, brethren, for which the Reformers contended had their hearty support, and they equally demand ours. The principles they died to maintain in all their integrity, and to hand down unimpaired to their posterity, are no less important to-day than they were then. Truth is not local or temporary. Christian principles embrace all time, and can never become obsolete. The way in which we ought to walk and please God is the same as that marked out for the guidance of the early christians. The paths that we must tread, in order to secure the safety and happiness of our souls, are the same that our forefathers trod in. The entire sufficiency of Scripture, as the alone rule of faith and practice which they affirmed, we must affirm. The right of private judgment, unshackled by deference to Fathers, or Councils, or Synods, or Popes, which they asserted, we must assert. Justification by Faith,

as "the article of a standing or a falling church," which they held, we must hold. The folly and impiety of the worship of saints, which they maintained, we must maintain. The vanity of any confidence placed in other mediators, save the man Christ Jesus, which they declared, we must declare; and the invalidity of confession to any priest, save our Great High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who has passed into the heavens, which they proclaimed, we must proclaim, would we be their faithful descendants, and worthy members of that church which they restored to its primitive purity, or walk in those "old paths" which they walked in, and secured to their souls peace on earth, and an entrance into the mansions of the just. Oh, brethren, our souls must be sustained, both in duty and in trial, by the truths and promises of that word which sustained the hearts of our brethren in former ages, not by the rubbish of human inventions, the novelties of Romanism, or the corruptions of christianity. Like those who have gone before us, and have entered into their rest, we must live "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us." Would we obtain the forgiveness of our sins, it must be according to the good old way of confessing them to Him who died to redeem us, and whose blood alone cleanseth from all sin; not by confessing them to a poor sinful mortal like ourselves, who will find it quite enough to do to obtain forgiveness for himself, without pretending that he can grant it unto others. There are few doctrines more ruinous to the peace and prosperity of the church; more opposed to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, and the practice of the primitive church; more detrimental to purity of heart, and spirituality of life, and more derogatory to the honor and dignity of the Saviour than that which

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order to obtain forgiveness of sins committed against God. Is it not enough to come to Him, "who forgiveth all iniquity," and obtain what he alone can give, without the intercession of another? Is not the Saviour sufficient, and properly qualified for his work, and able to "save, even unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him," without our going to a mortal man to help us? He says: "Come unto me and I will give you rest"; not go to a priest and confess your sins to him. Independent of the direct teaching of Scripture against such a practice, what is the use of going to a priest? He cannot forgive a sinner, unless he repents; and if he does repent, God forgives him; of what use, then, is the priest's forgiveness? If confession to a priest is intended to supersede confession to God, it is indeed a great evil; and if it is not so intended, it is perfectly useless; for our being forgiven depends on the nature of our confession to God, as penitent or otherwise. Those are hard driven for authority in support of this doctrine who bring forward that passage in St. James, where he tells his brethren to confess their faults one to another; for this passage, while it encourages a mutual acknowledgment of faults, one to another, and places all parties on a level, it by no means sanctions confession of sin to a priest, in order to obtain his absolution. The only instance in Scripture, where confession of sin to a Priest is spoken of, makes rather against than for this practice, for the unfortunate man who made it derived no benefit whatever from his confession. Yea, rather remorse, for on the acknowledgment of his guilt, and receiving no consolation from his ghostly advisers, he went and hanged himself. The "old paths," brethren, are still the safest to walk in, notwithstanding the variety, and the attractiveness, that is to be found in the new

which some love to walk. The good old way is the way of Scriptural truth, which was preached by the Apostle Paul, when he declared to both Jew and Gentile the necessity of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that which the Saviour marked out to his followers, when he said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love which is the fruit and effect of faith; faith in Jesus, in his three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

This way is as old as the Reformation; as old as Christianity, and the teaching of the Apostles; as old as the Mosaic dispensation; as old as the days of Abraham; as old as the times of Noah and of Enoch; as old as the everlasting hills, when Adam, being made upright, went forth in innocence, with a heart full of faith and love toward God. This way is a good way, for it leads to One who is good—that is God,—and it secures good to our souls, even rest and peace and quietness for ever; rest from the anguish of guilt, and the terrors of an accusing conscience; rest from the bondage of sin, and the oppression of the enemy; rest from inward fear, and outward disquietude; rest from temptation, and suffering and danger; rest from the eternal consequences of sin; and rest with God for ever.

May our feet ever be found in the "old paths," eschewing, on the one hand all that is evil and contrary to the word of God; and following, on the other hand, all that is good and "agreeable to the same"; so that, when we come to the close of life, we may enter into that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

And to Him, through whom alone the rest is obtained, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all

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