

**THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL: A SERIES OF
DISCOURSES ON THE TRUE COMPREHENSION
OF THE CHURCH, AS EXHIBITED
MAINLY IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND
SUBORDINATELY IN THE STANDARDS OF THE
PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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The church universal: a series of discourses on the true comprehension of the church, as exhibited mainly in the Holy Scriptures and subordinately in the standards of the Protestant Episcopal church by John S. Stone

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JOHN S. STONE

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EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

WITH THOUGHTS ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND WORSHIP:

AND

A VIEW OF THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN.

BY THE REV. JOHN S. STONE, D. D.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, BROOKLYN.

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TO
THE PARISHIONERS OF CHRIST CHURCH,
BROOKLYN,

Before whom the substance of the following LITTLE WORK was delivered in the form of a
Series of Discourses, it is now, in a somewhat enlarged form,

Most Respectfully Dedicated;

With fervent desires that, in connexion with their peculiar privileges as members of the
VISIBLE Church, they may attain to all the graces which can adorn, and to all the blessings
which shall follow, membership in that SPIRITUAL Church, which is the true mystical Body
of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all;"

By their affectionate friend and Pastor,

THE AUTHOR.

Brooklyn, October 1, 1846.



P R E F A C E .

THE form, in which this little work appears, is not such as it would have assumed had it been originally prepared with a view to its appearance from the press. Each Discourse has, indeed, been more or less enlarged; yet, the recasting of the whole into the form of a regular treatise, retaining none of the peculiarities of Pulpit address, would have been a labor incompatible with the concurrent discharge of parish duties. So far, however, as a passing change of phraseology could go, those peculiarities have been laid aside: and the work may therefore be considered as blending, with some of the proprieties of the Pulpit, others more befitting the Press:—whether to the advantage, or to the disadvantage of the book, its readers must judge.

To those, who have opportunity for the comparison, it will be seen, that, in several points, both in the views advanced and in the authorities cited, there is a coincidence of thought and of reference with the Sermon of Bishop McIlvaine on “the Holy Catholic Church.” Indeed, it would be wrong to suffer these pages to go forth without carrying a distinct acknowledgment as well of the author’s great indebtedness to the contents, as of his cordial assent to the views, of that very able and eloquent Discourse and its truly valuable Appendix. In the Church Theory advanced, there is no difference between that Sermon and the present work. The main difference between the two lies in the less extensive citation of other writers, in the wider and more formal range of Scriptural authorities and of Liturgical illustrations, and in the introduction of a greater number of topics, which have been attempted in the ensuing pages.

In his more special appeal to Scripture, the author has been influ-

enced by an increasingly painful conviction, that, unless something, in the Providence of God, arrest the Theologic tendency of the age, the Protestant Church will ultimately reach a state, in which the argument, in the style of the first Christian writers and apologists, from the sole, all-sufficient authority of the Word of God, will fall—a virtually dead weight—on the minds of a majority both of Clergy and of Laity. What little he can do to lift into that peerless honor, which is its heaven-born right, THE HOLY BIBLE, as the only infallible standard and rule of faith, he is most anxious to contribute. To the inspired Word, nothing can give either a meaning or a certainty, which lies not in its own sense: and from it nothing but Inspiration can develop a meaning or a certainty, which the human mind, as addressed in that Word, and as guided by the ordinary teachings of the Holy Spirit and by other accessible lights, is unable to discover. The latter part of this remark applies to *doctrines*, not to *facts*. Testimony to facts, and determination of doctrines are very different things. So far as testimony may be considered necessary to such *facts*, as the application of Baptism to *Infants*, the *change* of the Day of Rest, the origin of Episcopacy with the *Apostles*, and even the prevalence of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, or of any other doctrine, as a matter of History, we may receive that testimony if good and sufficient in kind and amount,—just as we receive any other good and sufficient human testimony; regarding it as adequate to the reasonable proof of any fact, possible under the government of God. But, we cannot receive any exterior documents, or authority, as necessary and sufficient to determine, with infallible certainty, what are the otherwise undiscoverable *doctrines* of Christianity, without thereby elevating those documents and that authority to a certainty and a value above those of the Sacred Records themselves. If, in matters of *doctrinal* truth, the Bible—under the ordinary teachings of the Holy Spirit, and amid the lights, with which a Divine Providence has surrounded it,—cannot disclose its own sense to that mind of man which it addresses, then nothing, lower than a new Revelation, can be *made*, with certainty, to disclose that sense. Such new and clearer Revelation, were it given, could not be safely received unless accredited by *miracles*: and such a Revelation, so accredited, would rise at once to a certainty of authority and an eminence of value, above those of the ancient Bible itself. Hence the peril of receiving TRANSMISSION, in any form, as a necessary and infallible interpreter of the doctrinal sense of the Bible. To be of any higher authority than that of ordinary human testimony, or of any other value to interpretation than that of ordinary human helps, under the teaching of the Spirit, Tradition must necessarily take rank with Revelation; and when used to fix

on the doctrinal sense of the Bible an infallible interpretation not otherwise discoverable, must necessarily take rank *above* the Bible. And yet, the Tradition, of which so much is made, has none of the accrediting *miracles* of a Revelation. The gravest suspicion may well be considered as resting on all pretensions to miracles subsequent to the Apostolic age.

The fact, that Mr. Newman's "Essay on the development of Christian Doctrine" was written after he became, though before he avowed himself, a Romanist, destroys not its force as a true exponent of the tendency of the Tractarian doctrine on the subject of Tradition. The starting point of that doctrine cannot be distinctly and intelligently assumed, and the line of that doctrine honestly and logically followed, without reaching an elevation of authority and of value not only *with* but *above* the Word of God. Whether or not the advocates of that doctrine ever go, with Mr. Newman, to the length of receiving the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome, while admitting that those doctrines find no support, or none but the most dreamy, in the Bible; and that many of the peculiarities of that Church have been developed in a way, of which the Ancient HERESIES were but the premature, and therefore abortive, anticipations;—whether or not they ever reach *this* extreme of bold but desperate honesty,—they, at least, cannot logically stop, till, like the Pharisees of old, they have, however unintentionally, yet virtually, "made the Word of God of none effect by their Tradition."

For, or against the Tractarian doctrine of Tradition?—this is the very heart of the contest, on the decision of which hangs, *for us*, the question, Papal, or Protestant?—whether this question respect the movement of the individual, or that of the Church. If either the individual or the Church declare *for* that doctrine,—adhesion to Rome is the only result, which lies in a right line before the mover. The individual may die before that result is openly reached: or various strong influences may hold him back, or turn him aside, from the advances of recilinear sympathy and logic: but nothing else can keep him from reaching and entering the gates, which open into the enclosure both of Romish Theology and of Romish Rites. If Protestants cannot be convinced of this by arguments, there is, at least, some prospect, that they may be convinced of it by facts.

As to the Theory of the Church, advanced in the ensuing pages,—the fact that this Theory is identical with that, embraced and defended by the leading writers of the English Church in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, is admitted,—indeed, it cannot be denied,—by the advocates of the Tractarian scheme. The testimony of those writers is too