LETTERS

ON THE

"TRACTS FOR THE TIMES,"

BY

THE OXFORD PARTY.

BY

W. I. P. WILKINSON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following letters having recently appeared in the "Somerset County Gazette," were considered sufficiently important to appear in another form before the public.

In yielding to the wishes of others by publishing these letters, I considered that it was the best mode of bringing the important subject of them before the religious world, and submitting it to the ordeal of public opinion.

I was induced to write them, in consequence of seeing that attempts were being made to prove the statements put forth by the Oxford Party in the "Tracts for the Times" untrue, and unscriptural. These attempts appeared to be inconclusive and sectarian: the controversy was
nothing more than the priesthood of one deno-
mination railing at the priesthood of another.

The whole system of the supporters of "The
New Faith" appeared to hinge upon Apos-
tolical Succession, and I conceived that the only
mode of examining its continuing or not with
any order of men, was by an appeal to the scrip-
tures. I have therefore adopted this course and
confined myself to the evidence afforded by the
Bible, believing this to be the only rule for a
christian's faith and practice.

In this feeble attempt to explain the subject I
have no wish to escape censure, nor do I seek
after applause; one fervent, anxious wish I have,
that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
the truth may be known, believed in, and uni-
versally acknowledged, for the good of mankind,
and for the glory of the only wise God our
Saviour.

W. I. P. WILKINSON.

Exeter, July 13, 1839.
LETTER I.

Mr. Editor,

I am well pleased to see that you intend to devote a portion of your interesting Journal to the topic of "The New Faith." "It is sure in its progress to command the most anxious attention of public journalists of all parties," and in this age of enquiry it will engross the attention of a large part of your numerous readers. Will you allow me a portion of your paper from time to time to remark on this subject—most important in itself as it respects revelation. If you should not find that I side with either party engaged in this controversy, you will not, I trust, discover me using abuse instead of argument or invective in the place of truth. When I mention truth in connection with this topic, I wish to be understood; truth must be found somewhere when God and religion are concerned. Revelation is the
standard, and that revelation I believe is to be found in the BIBLE. By this all men's pretensions to religion must be tried: and if you Mr. Editor, had gone to that source for the true meaning of the term "Church;" I very much doubt whether you would have admitted that this term means, according to the scriptures, "the English Ecclesiastical Establishment —its clergy, revenues, and edifices." But I agree with you, that it is desirable when it can be done, "to define terms which must be of frequent occurrence." At the proper time I may venture to show that this term "Church," is misunderstood and misrepresented by not a few sects.

These Oxford tracts, are called "Tracts for the Times." In the words of a learned and pious modern writer, I would say, "no reflecting man, contemplating the signs of the times, can possibly doubt that we are on the eve of a more tremendous conflict of opinion, in regard to the Established Church of the country, than any which the nation has yet witnessed. The subjects debated hitherto have been of comparatively minor importance—whether Dissenters shall have the privilege of celebrating marriage and of burying their dead with their own religious ceremonies, in those places of sepulture which partly at least belong to them. The all engrossing question will, ere long, become—Is it compatible with the rights of conscience, with the principles, and laws, and spirit of christianity, and is it the best mode of providing for the religious institution of a country, for the state to take any denomination of christians into union with itself; to employ the ministers of that denomination
as its agents in teaching religion to the nation at large, and to compel all its inhabitants to contribute to their support."

This is a great question, and has been repeated for the thousandth time. But who would have expected that a party within the bosom of the establishment—within the walls of one of the universities—would have arisen vigorously to propel forward this question to an issue, and not this only, but others of vital consequence. Who is it that has bid defiance to the state to control it religiously? Who is it that has mocked at Protestantism? Who that ridicules the Reformers? Who that would conform their practices of the church, to those which has preserved its traditionary practices unbroken? Who that would claim infallibility of the church? Who that would establish in this country the monastic system? Who that vaunts apostolical succession? THE OXFORD PARTY! And who can prove them wrong? Not the bishops and clergy of the popish protestant establishment of England, consistently with their order of prelaty, ritual, services, and traditions.

Nor, Mr. Editor, can the Dissenters prove them wrong, for what is "Presbyter, but OLD PRIEST WRIT LARGE." And while the different sects oppose one another as to form, creed, and ceremonies, they all agree that some parts of the PRIESTHOOD are continued and proper. Thus, "bit by bit the whole is swallowed."

You, Mr. Editor, have said, that you "offer no opinion upon the truth or error of the creed itself;" Will you therefore allow me to test it by the scriptures
which will either establish it as the truth or prove it to be an error: it will stand or fall upon the result of the enquiry as to APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

Waiting your permission to proceed,

I am, &c.

Amen.
LETTER II.

Mr. Editor,

The disinterestedness and liberality with which your very valuable paper is conducted, in some measure prepared me for your favourable answer to my application, to be allowed to test the subjects of the "Tracts for the Times" by the scriptures, and occasionally to occupy a portion of your columns. I thank you for this indulgence, and if I deal with this subject as a theological one, I beg to assure you that I by no means disregard its political influence, but while I consider that the happiness and prosperity of a nation depends mainly upon the political liberty it enjoys, and that as good citizens it is our bounden duty to promote this as far as we have opportunity, I still consider that this is subordinate to those higher privileges connected with religion, and "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." My own views on this point will be best expressed in the words of an old
writer, who might be said almost to have been endued
with a prophet's spirit.

"The property of truth is, where she is publicly
taught, to unyoke and set free the minds and spirits
of a nation; first from the thralldom of sin and super-
stition, after which, all honest and legal freedom of
civil life cannot be long absent.

"For although the prelates in time of Popery were
sometimes friendly enough to Magna Charta, it was
because they stood upon their own bottom, without
their main dependance on the royal nod: but now,
being well acquainted with the Protestant religion, if
she will reform herself rightly by the scriptures, must
undress them of all their gilded vanities, and reduce
them, as they were at first, to the lowly and equal
order of * * * * * * *. They know it concerns them
nearly, to study the times more than the text, and to
lift up their eyes to the hills of the court from whence
only comes their help; but if their pride grow weary
of this crouching and observance, as ere long it would,
and yet their minds climb still to a higher ascent of
worldly honour, this only refuge can remain to them,
that they must of necessity continue to bring them-
soever and us again to the Pope's supremacy: and
this we see they have by fair degrees of late been
doing."

I have ventured to say, that the opinions of the
Oxford party will stand or fall, upon the result of the
inquiry as to Apostolic Succession. This is necessarily
connected with the Priesthood, and that Priesthood
must be the one united to the other, of apostles:...
hood under the law of Moses, only to observe, that the scriptures make mention of but two orders of priesthood, under two distinct laws, in two distinct dispensations; Aaron was high priest under the first covenant or law—Jesus Christ was high priest under the second covenant or law—and "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law," Heb. vii. 12. I presume, then, that no one will attempt to claim a succession from the Aaronic priesthood, seeing that the scriptures have made known to us the change that took place upon the introduction of a new and "better covenant or law, which was established upon the better promises," Heb. viii. 6, 7. This may be, hereafter, of considerable importance, in the discussion of this subject, to have clearly defined and admitted; but for the present I would take it for granted, that the succession meant by the Oxford party, is purely apostolic, and has flowed downwards from the times of the twelve apostles, in their priesthood and ministry, and that there has been a continuous, unbroken, uninterrupted order of men, from that time to the present, possessing themselves, and having power to impart to others, as their successors, the same powers, gifts, and knowledge, as the apostles possessed. By this term succession, I take it we are not to understand a mere succeeding to office, with diminished powers: one ambassador may be sent to a distant kingdom or dependency with unlimited powers—another may succeed him in his office with very limited powers; this is a succession to office, but not in the same degree. I argue, that I shall not be misrepresenting those parties who hold
the apostolical succession, by supposing that their
meaning is this:—that if the apostles were full of the
Holy Ghost, and understood all mysteries, and were
led into all truth, and knew all things, and could by
laying on of hands communicate the Holy Ghost to
others, and could remit or retain sins, and were the
only teachers and feeders of the flock of Christ; their
successors possess the same powers, gifts, knowledge,
and understanding, in the same degree, without
any limitation whatever. Taking this for granted, it
becomes our bounden duty to inquire into the original
formation of this body of men, so distinguished at the
first, and also what power they possessed themselves,
and what authority they had to convey this to others:
for this purpose we must “search the scriptures,” and
be satisfied with their testimony—“To the law and
to the testimony; if they speak not according to this
word, it is because there is no light in them,” Isaiah
viii. 20. In the Gospel by Luke (x. 1), the Lord ap-
pointed seventy of his forerunners to proclaim this fact,
“The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you;” he
sent them “before his face, into every city and place
whither he himself would come;” having gone forth
with this message, and exercised the powers with
which they were entrusted—to heal the sick—and
thus finished their ministry, they returned (verse 17)
“with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject
unto us through thy name.” I beg to refer to this
fact, in the first place, in order to establish a great
principle of the scriptures, that there never was an
imperfect ministry sent forth by the Lord; and also to
shew, that when the Lord sent forth any man, or any
set of men, to do a special work, he fitted and qualified them for the work, and enabled them to complete and finish it.

John was the forerunner of Christ (Matthew iii.) "Preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John did not preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, but he instituted this inquiry, "Whom think ye that I am? I am not he, but behold there cometh one after me, whose shoes latchets I am not worthy to loose." Paul (Acts xiii. 25.) speaks of this in these words, "And as John fulfilled his course." John's course or ministry was to bear witness to Christ: it was perfected and fulfilled, and then he was cast into prison and beheaded. So it is true of the seventy; their business was not to preach the gospel as apostles, but to go from city to city, and from place to place, to announce the coming of Christ in person to those cities and places, under this phrase, "Be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." When they had done this, and finished their course and ministry, they returned unto the Lord. John bear witness of Christ, "And I know," said Christ, "that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." This was an infallible, perfect ministry, and testified of as truth, by signs and the word of the Lord. I proceed, in the next place, to the calling of the twelve apostles, but considering, Mr. Editor, that I have occupied a sufficient portion of your valuable columns this week, I defer any further remarks until the next.

I am, &c. Amen.
LETTER III.

Mr. Editor,

In continuation I come to the calling, and appointment, and qualifying of the apostles of Christ. In the gospel by Matthew (chap. x.) it is thus related, "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out; to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." At verse 5 it is said, "These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them, saying, go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand; heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." It will be readily admitted that these powers were very extensive with which Jesus invested his apostles when he called and sent them forth so to preach; and especially when the
Lord added, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." It is not my intention at present to show the reason why the apostles were at that time limited in their work—why they were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any city of Samaria. My chief design is to show that when our Lord sent forth his apostles or ministers upon any errand, whether limited or extended, he gave them power, and that power was spiritual and miraculous. In this case their mission extended no further than this, "Preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this purpose (Mark vi. 7.) it is said, that "he called unto him the twelve and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits;" and Mark iii. 14., we have the object defined more particularly of the twelve being so called before the Lord's crucifixion and death—"He ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." And it is further shown by the Lord, that it was needful that they should be with him, and so become witnesses (see John xv. 26). But "when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father even the Spirit of Truth; which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning." Therefore in reference to this promise, when the day of Pentecost was fully come, Peter declares (Acts i. 21.) in order to supply the place of Judas, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up
from us—must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.” The scriptures serve to show that when the Lord called, ordained, and sent forth the apostles, he gave them powers, gifts, and miracles for the due performance of the work which he had committed to them. We next proceed to the more extended and enlarged commission of the Lord to his servants; “Go ye therefore and teach ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matt.xxviii.19. This is a very positive direction connected with a special promise, “Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world:” that is literally translated, even unto the consummation of the age. And the true meaning of what the Lord promised in these words, is most clearly explained by another scripture, “And he said unto them, go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken to them he was received up into heaven and sat on the right-hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Mark xvi. 15.
Thus scripture most clearly explains what the Lord did mean by this phrase, "Lo! I am with you alway," that when the apostles went forth and preached, the Lord was working with them, and confirming the word with signs following: not that the apostles went forth until they were endued with power from on high on the day of Pentecost; for although the Lord is said to have sent them forth, and Luke (xxiv. 45) writes thus, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures," yet the Lord expressly tells them (verse 49), "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Thus the testimony of these three sacred writers, goes to explain the vast powers of the heavenly commission which was given to the apostles, that they as ambassadors of the King of kings, should proclaim it to the nations of the world. Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things, Luke xxiv. 46, 47. The apostles having been thus called and appointed by the Lord Jesus before his ascension, did remain at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of that other promise, namely, the promise of the Father. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of
fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." And while some were amazed and doubted, and others mocked, Peter standing up said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, &c.;" and again (ver. 32), "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

The examination of the scriptures up to this point, most clearly proves a divinely appointed ministry, an inspired order of men, a miracle-endowed priesthood. We have not only got the declarations of the Lord and the promises of the Father, but we see the performance of that which was promised; and in the recorded Acts of the Apostles, we shall find most ample testimony confirmatory of the whole fact. I have thought it desirable to trace these events in their order, and to present to the mind the origin of apostolic offices. And I again repeat, that God never sent forth an imperfect, fallible, uninspired ministry. The Oxford party claim succession from these apostles: do not let us denounce them without inquiry, how do we know that they are not successors to the apostles? how do we go about to disprove this? let us see what kind of standard there is; let us see how any come up to it. We must first enquire who and what kind of persons the apostles were; who sent them; how
they were fitted and qualified; what was their authority; what their powers; how they exercised them; and what says the scriptures on these subjects. I trust that I shall be pardoned in being thus particular in the groundwork of my plan, for if my foundations are not substantial and good, the superstructure may be damaged: I wish to see the truth for myself, and for others to see it. If the Church of Rome is right, according to the truth and revelation of God, let all flock to it, and let every sect and denomination strike their colours, and seek safety and repose within its bosom. If the Oxford party are right, who profess a hatred for Popery and popish domination, let us join them, and make common cause against all opposers. The Church of England, the prelacy and clergy as by law established, are at any rate in great danger between these conflicting parties; but still, if this is right, let us rally round it and strengthen its tottering walls. I have referred to the commission given to the apostles in general terms, but there are some distinguishing and particular powers delegated to them, which it would not be wise to pass over unheeded, before I examine how far their actions correspond with their high commission. When the Lord called his twelve disciples and gave them power, he said (Matt. x. 9), "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat;" and further (verse 16), "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, but beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues,
and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Verse 23) "But when they persecute ye in this city, flee ye unto another; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come."

I think we cannot fail to see in these directions an elevated heavenly standard, requiring supernatural aid to imitate; and may we not, in the year of our Lord 1839, look round on all sects, and enquire where we are to find successors to the apostles. We exclaim, in mercy shew us apostolical succession. When our Lord put this question to his disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" Matt. xvi. 15, "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven," (see chap. xviii. 18, and John xx. 23). "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

I am, &c. 

Amen.
LETTER IV.

Mr. Editor,

The last quotation from the scriptures in my third letter, exhibits the climax of apostolic power and authority, for all other gifts are comparatively insignificant to this, the forgiveness of sins; but such is the testimony of God in the sacred volume, that after the resurrection of our Lord, it is recorded, that "He breathed on them (his apostles) and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." This royal prerogative was clearly delegated to the apostles, and if there be apostolical succession in the full, and enlarged, and extended sense of this term, it must belong to some order of men to exercise this power of the forgiveness of sins; and it must be a matter of infinite importance to weak, erring, sinful man, to know with whom this power is entrusted, and what is required
of him to be a partaker of this heavenly boon. If there be one sect or party possessing this power or privilege exclusively as successors, and the only authorized, legal, and spiritual successors to the apostles, possessing in degree the same power as the apostles possessed to forgive or remit sins: surely every man would be heard to exclaim, As the hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after this sect, that I may receive at its hands the forgiveness or remission of my sins. It may be that apostolic succession has flowed down through, and is confined to the Church of Rome. It may be found limited to the Church of England, to her bishops and clergy, who not only are privileged to declare and pronounce to all them that are truly penitent the absolution and remission of their sins, but authoritatively to pronounce over the dying, “By Christ's authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from all thy sins;” or, as the Church of Rome holds, that after death their prayers and intercessions are available, for pardoning and remitting the sins of an individual which were unpardoned before he died. I feel it to be a matter of deep interest; surely in the nineteenth century it ought not to remain a matter of doubt, if there be a possibility of proof, nor ought the professing christian world to manifest indifference on such a momentous subject as this, nor should the press—that mighty engine—treat this all-absorbing subject with inattention. The time is come, Mr. Editor, when I trust every newspaper in the kingdom will follow the liberal example which you have set them.

It is however quite certain, that the Lord gave this
power to his apostles, and if there be successors they
ought to possess the same power: "By their fruits ye
shall know them." Before I proceed I will notice the
other expression which denotes power, a similar power,
"THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN;" that this power was given to Peter, no one
can deny who believes the scriptures, that whatsoever
he should bind on earth should be bound in heaven,
and whatsoever he should loose on earth should be
loosed in heaven. It will be observed that the term
is in the plural, not the key but the keys, and it is
easy to understand by this figure, that as a key is for
the purpose of unlocking a door, and so gaining ad-
mittance to a house, or city or domain, these keys en-
trusted to Peter were for the purpose of opening the
kingdom of heaven; that is, that he should have the
power, for a key is an emblem of power: and in the
execution of the trust reposed in him by the Lord of
life and glory, we observe in the recorded Acts of the
Apostles, that Peter was faithful in the due discharge
of his official powers. In the second chapter of the
Acts, if I mistake not, Peter uses the first key, when
filled with the Holy Ghost, he began to speak with
other tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, and
expounded the scriptures of the prophets to the
"JEWS, devout men out of every nation under hea-
ven;" and in conclusion he said (verse 36), "There-
fore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that
God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have cru-
cified, both Lord and Christ," and the result of this
was, that of these Jews three thousand souls believed,
and were added to them, and continued stedfastly in
the apostles' doctrine: thus Peter used the first key, in opening the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, in the preaching of the gospel to them. It was also reserved to him, to be the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and thus, according to his high and heavenly commission, made use of the second key to unlock and open the kingdom of heaven to the uncircumcision, the heathen or gentile world, in contradistinction to the nation of the Jews. For this purpose Peter has a vision (Acts x. 11), in order to remove his Jewish prejudices against the gentiles, for when he was come to Cornelius, who was not a Jew, he said (verse 28), "You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Peter then preached to Cornelius, his kinsmen, and near friends, whom he had called together, the same gospel that he had preached to the Jews; and "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word, and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." It was thus that Peter used the keys to unlock the door of the kingdom of heaven, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: and if it was said by Christ, in the Revelation by John to the church in Philadelphia, "Write these things, saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and
shutteth and no man openeth;" so likewise of his servant the apostle, when he with the keys (or power) opened the kingdom of heaven, first to the Jews and secondly to the Gentiles, no man would shut this door of gospel truth, the very gates of hell should not prevail against it.

If this should be the true interpretation of this passage, it would seem that the kingdom of heaven, or the door of the gospel once opened by Peter to all nations, no man could afterwards shut it; it is nowhere said that Peter kept on unlocking and locking up again the gate or door of the kingdom. One cannot help remembering what the Lord said of himself in a parable (John x. 9), "I am the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." This looks like a door that always stands open after it was once opened, never to be shut again, and being set wide open by him who had the key of David, "he that openeth and no man shutteth;" there would be no further use for the key. Such also appears to be the meaning of Paul (Heb. x. 19), "Having therefore, brethren, boldness (or liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated (or new made) for us, through the vail, that is to say his flesh, &c.; let us draw near with a true heart, &c." This appears to be a further illustration of the subject; to draw near, to enter into, by a way, a new made way, is very similar to the opening of a door or a gate to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is also figuratively set forth by a city with twelve gates, "And the gates of it (the city) shall not be shut at all by
day, for there shall be no night there," Rev. xxl. 10, 12, 25. If there was to be no night, and the gates should not be shut at all by day, it is quite evident they never should be shut at all; and then, if never shut, there could be no use for the keys; the power was to open the kingdom and exhibit its glory under the new covenant to every believer; universal, to all nations, to all kingdoms, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, that they might come and stand before the throne. This may be the truth of scripture, at any rate scripture can only be properly explained by scripture; and if we closely examine the passage (Matt. xvi. 19), there seems something express and personal to Peter, "I will give unto THEE the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” This power did not extend to, or was not given to the other disciples or apostles, the keys were only for Peter to possess and use: and if the interpretation which I have mentioned for consideration be correct, there was no necessity for any one else besides Peter to have them: but still, if there be apostolical succession, some party must have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and Peter must have a successor.

Trusting, Mr. Editor, to your indulgence for a continuation of this subject next week,

I am, &c.

Amen.
LETTER V.

Mr. Editor,

I am not ignorant of the almost endless controversies about the keys, and of the unwillingness of the opposers of the Church of Rome to yield anything like supremacy to St. Peter. I am not entirely unacquainted with the fiery disputes of the clergy of all sects respecting the meaning of our Lord in that celebrated passage—"and I say also unto THEE, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give unto THEE the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xvi. 18. I do not intend entering the lists with the champions on either side; nor will I attempt to wrest a passage of scripture from its true, simple reading and meaning because such passage might powerfully oppose my views if taken strictly and literally. It is the men who have to uphold some favourite or powerful sect
of religion, and who find passages of scripture militating against their system, that move heaven and earth in their natural wisdom, philosophy, and false glosses, to avert the force of the powerful weapon of God the "Sword of the Spirit"—the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Alpha and Omega.

I have not to do with these disputes of opposite and contending parties—with the opinions of men who are all too much interested to think, or write, or expound the scriptures without prejudice or partiality. I have to do with the Bible. And part of my plan is, according to my proposal in former letters, to examine into the character, power, and authority of the apostles: and then endeavour to find THEIR SUCCESSORS if they are to be discovered on the earth. I do earnestly entreat all parties to bear with me, while in search after truth I seek for it as for hid treasure in the rich, prolific mine of that revelation which God as given to man as his guide, his only guide into the truth as it is in Jesus.

In my last letter I stated that to Peter alone were the keys entrusted: and I ventured to explain in what manner he used them, and that in this he was distinguished from the rest of the apostles. He had the pre-eminence: for the keys are emblematical of government and power (Isaiah xxii. 22). Paul was not one of the twelve, but was miraculously called by the Lord, who said of him, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," Acts ix. 15. Therefore at the church of Antioch as they ministered and fasted, "the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and
Saul for the work where unto I have called them. So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed unto Selucia," &c. And when they had gone through the several regions and countries preaching the word of God, they returned to Antioch, and "gathering the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how HE had opened THE DOOR OF FAITH UNTO THE GENTILES," Acts xiv. 27.

From this it seems plain that God by his servant Peter had opened the door of faith: and Paul in consequence goes and proclaims this to the Gentiles. Like the judges in our land, one of them (the comparison is obviously fitted) breaks or opens the commission of assize before the business of the assize can commence. And when Peter had opened the commission of the gospel to all nations, Paul and the other apostles according to the warrant and commission of the Lord, would go forth in their official characters—in official order—under the great seal of heaven—judicially executing the powers entrusted to them. Paul had not the keys, nor had any of the apostles, but Peter only. Peter therefore had the pre-eminence. There are other keys which never were entrusted to Peter, which I mention for fear I may be misapprehended: these are the keys of hell and of death. He that hath the key of David, He that "openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth," is the same who says "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of
death,” Rev i. 18. John in the ninth chapter when the fifth angel sounded “saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit, and he opened the bottomless pit.” And in the 20th chapter John “saw an angel come down from heaven having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years: and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.” And being shut up by Him who had the key, “who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth,” it is said (verse 7) “when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,” that is by him who had the key to unlock or open; and finally (verse 10) the “devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone;” and (verse 14) death and hell are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, by Him who had the keys of hell and of death, which are emblematical of government and of power (Isaiah xxii. 22. ix. 7). I have very briefly referred to these keys, or power, to show that they are perfectly distinct from Peter’s keys, and that they never were entrusted to him or to any other apostle or servant of the Lord. No, it is He alone that liveth and was dead, the Amen, who says, I HAVE the keys of hell and of death. He is the same that John saw on the great white throne, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and the dead were seen to STAND BEFORE GOD. He it was with the keys to open and shut for ever, that cast the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and
death and hell into the lake of fire. No man can open what God hath shut.

The Protestant church on the one hand denies to Peter the supreme power with which the Lord invested him; and the Roman Catholics on the other hand aim to give him more power than the scriptures award to him. Therefore the Oxford party attempt to adjust the differences of these two parties, and to establish apostolical succession apart from the Roman Catholics.

I have endeavoured to show in the first place, the calling of the apostles by the Lord—and the Lord sent them forth—(Matt. x. 5., xxviii. 19., Mark xvi. 15). In the second place I have examined the scriptures for the purpose of seeing what power, authority and gifts the Lord bestowed upon these his servants, in order to their exercising and discharging their ministry agreeably to his mind and will.

I propose in the next place to examine the account which we possess of the recorded acts of these servants of the Lord—the apostles and ministers of God—in order to see whether what the Lord promised did truly and actually occur or come to pass; because if their be a divine appointment connected with peculiar promises to a certain class of men, we are bound to see whether the things promised to those men were fulfilled according to the promise. This can only be known by consulting the scriptures which bear testimony of them and of their acts. Thus when the Lord said "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues,
they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any
deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay
hands on the sick and they shall recover. And they
went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord work-
ing with them and confirming the word with signs
following;" what we want to do is to enquire whe-
ther this promise to the apostles before the death of
Christ did really come to pass, and whether we have
any account of it; that is, did the Lord confirm the
word or preaching of his servants the apostles with
signs, did they lay hands on the sick and they reco-
dered—did they heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,
raise the dead, cast out devils—have we any, and
what proof of these things? My next proposition is
to examine whether these things be so or not—whe-
ther the scriptures recount any acts of the apostles
 corresponding to this commission; and then to en-
quire whether the office can be separated from these
powers, and gifts and signs; or the signs, powers, and
gifts cease, and the office continue. We will then
take these things in order, as briefly as possible. 1st.
Did they cast out devils? see Luke x. 17., Acts v. 16.,
viii. 7., xvi. 18., xix. 12. 2nd. Did they raise the
dead? see Acts ix. 40. 3rd. Did they heal the sick
or cleanse the lepers or diseased? see Acts ix. 34.,
xix. 12. But there is in this somewhat peculiar;
that is, "they shall LAY HANDS on the sick and
they shall recover," Acts xiv. 3. It is said the Lord
"granted signs and wonders to be done by their
hands." And James in his epistle gives directions in
this manner, "Is any sick among you? let him call
for the elders of the church; and let them pray over
him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him," v. 14.

I am, &c.

Amen.
LETTER VI.

Mr. Editor,

In continuation, I think it needful to examine into this act of laying on of hands of the apostles and elders, because not only the Church of Rome, and the Church of England, but many denominations of Dissenters observe this practice, and would thereby appear severally to lay claim to apostolic succession; at least all parties lay claim to one portion or another of apostolic power. Which ever sect or party can show that they possess the same power as was possessed by the apostles, will be entitled to our credit, and confidence, and approbation. But I see nothing in a bishop of the Church of Rome or England, or a presbyter, elder, minister or pastor of the several denominations of dissenters, LAYING ON OF HANDS for any supposed purpose, unless they can at the time shew me that something results from it. James in his epistle very pointedly addresses such persons, when he says, "Shew me thy
faith without (or as it reads more properly in some copies, by thy works) thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works,” ii. 18. The fact was, in the days of the apostles they manifested plainly to the people that they were the true servants or ministers of God, by the miracles or works which followed all that they said, preached, or did; and in this epistle, James is testing those persons who, as false prophets or false spirits, arose that they might deceive many, and he says, “Wilt thou know, O vain man! that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” That is the open, visible, act or work of Abraham, was an open, visible justification to all parties who should hear of it, that Abraham had faith; and in like manner the apostles demonstrated their faith, by the works which they were enabled to perform. Thus Peter when he came to Lydda, “found a man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years and was sick of the palsy, and Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole! arise and make thy bed: and he arose immediately, and all that dwelt in Lydda SAW HIM and turned to the Lord,” Acts ix. 34. Now might Peter say to any false spirit or vain man, Shew me thy faith by thy works; in this I shew thee my faith by my works! This applies with equal force to the laying on of hands; if there be no visible result from this, what is it more than James’ illustration, “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things
which are needful to the body, what doth it profit? even so faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone," verse 15. . The meaning of which is obvious—it is saying and not doing. A man may say he hath faith; shew it me, says James, by thy works and not by talking. A man may say, I am an apostle, a minister, a pastor, or deacon; shew it me by thy works. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, speak with tongues, take up serpents, drink some deadly thing without hurt, lay hands on the sick that they may recover; but if the sick should not recover, nor any visible result follow from this act, it is like saying to a hungry, destitute, naked brother or sister, depart in peace, be ye warmed or filled: the hungry brother would remain as hungry as ever, and the laying on the hands of an elder, minister, priest, or deacon, without the power, would leave the sick person as sick as ever, nay instead of recovering he might die under the operation. Our Lord directed John when writing to the church at Ephesus to say, "I know thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars," Rev. ii. 2; and the Lord thus warned his disciples of the scribes and pharisees, who sit in Moses' seat, "Do not ye after their works, for they SAY AND DO NOT," Matt. xxiii. 3.

But the apostles had the power and did lay on hands, not only for the purpose of healing the sick, but for the purpose of imparting the Holy Ghost, and the gifts with the signs following; and this power belonged solely to them. Some were evangelists or preachers, but they could not exercise this power,
which was the prerogative of the apostles only: there is no instance in the scriptures, of any one on whom the apostles had laid hands, and communicated the gifts of the Spirit, communicating this to others: I do not forget what Paul said to Timothy, "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2. I may hereafter deal with this in connection with another subject, but this does not affect my present statement, that none but apostles had the power by the laying on of hands, of communicating the Holy Ghost, and the gifts with the signs following. Paul does say to Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, BY THE PUTTING ON OF MY HANDS," 2 Tim. i. 6. Timothy did receive this power from Paul, but in no place is it said, that Timothy had power to impart or give the Holy Ghost, or the gifts with the signs following. That this exclusively belonged to the apostles, will I trust appear clear from a reference to the testimony of the scriptures; and that it will also be most important in considering the subject of apostolic succession, will I think appear plain to all persons interested therein. In Acts viii. 4—7, it is stated, that they "that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word; then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them, and the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did, for unclean spirits crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed; and many
taken with palsy, and that were lame were healed." And Simon the sorcerer continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. I beg to call attention to the peculiar features of this case: Philip was a DEACON chosen by the twelve (see Acts vi. 2), of him and the rest it is stated that they were full of the Holy Ghost, and being chosen, they set them before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Of Stephen one of the deacons it is written, that he "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Stephen was one of the seven deacons, Philip was another; the twelve had laid hands on them, and if Stephen was enabled to do great wonders and miracles, we see that Philip, another deacon, in this eighth chapter of the Acts, when at Samaria, did miracles and signs which the people heard and saw. These deacons were not apostles, and did not possess apostolic power, but the power they did possess, they had received from the apostles by the laying on of hands, so that "Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people," and when called upon to make his defence before the council, they "looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," Acts vi. 15.

This that occurred at Samaria is remarkable, and sets before our minds the supreme power of the apostles; for although it is quite manifest that these deacons had the gift of miracles in signs and wonders by the laying on of the apostles' hands, yet were they inferior to the apostles; they had gifts, but it is written (1 Cor. xii. 4), "There are diversities of gifts,"
therefore they had not the gifts peculiar to the apostles. The order therefore of this scriptural history is this: that when Saul was making havoc of the church, they were scattered abroad, and Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to them, he did miracles, casting out devils or unclean spirits, healing the palsied and lame, and when the people saw these things they believed Philip, who preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. This was the extent of Philip's mission as a deacon, and therefore it is added, "When the APOSTLES which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus) then LAID THEY HANDS on them, and they received the Holy Ghost," Acts viii. 14. While this plainly shews us, that with the office of a deacon was connected the gift of miracles, yet this office in the constitution of the spiritual BODY, was inferior to that of an APOSTLE, and while the apostles were empowered by the laying on their hands to communicate the superior gift of the Holy Ghost, it was not entrusted or delegated, committed or communicated to others, even to those who possessed miraculous powers, such as Philip or Stephen.

It was no doubt in this manner Paul is said to have passed through Syria and Cilecia, confirming the churches (Acts xv. 41). So that while Philip, Stephen, and others, went forth teaching and preaching
the gospel, and baptizing, the apostles not being present, were required for the discharge of their particular office; and as to baptizing, Paul does say, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," 1 Cor. i. 17; because Paul was a minister to the gentiles.

I am, &c.

Amen.
LETTER VII.

Mr. Editor,

A few passages only remain to be examined respecting the act of laying on of hands. The Lord said to his apostles, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father,” John xiv. 13. Our enquiry here is, did the Lord exercise this act of laying on of hands? and for what purpose? for if he did, this would be among the works that his disciples were to do. It appears (Mark v. 22.) that one of the rulers of the synagogue came to Jesus, and besought him greatly, saying, “my little daughter lieth at the point of death, I pray thee come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live.” The sequel of this story shows, that although the little girl had died before Jesus reached the ruler’s house (which event was told the ruler before their arrival), yet the
Lord entered into the room "where the damsel was lying, "and he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is being interpreted Damsel (I say unto thee) arise; and straightway the damsel arose and walked." Again (Luke iv. 40), after the Lord had cured Simon's wife's mother of a fever, it is stated, "all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him: and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, thou art Christ the Son of God." A woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, the Lord "laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God," Luke xiii. 13. When therefore the disciples saw these wonders, and heard the Lord say, "the works that I do shall ye do also," and when he sent them into the world to preach the gospel, amongst other things he said of them, "they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover;" we ought not to feel surprise at the direction of James—"is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church," &c. v. 14. Indeed when Paul on his way to Rome was cast away on the Island of Melita, the promise of Christ (Mark xvi. 18) was fulfilled to the very letter—"they shall take up serpents" without hurt, "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." For when "Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand, and he shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm," Acts xxviii. 3. It is further stated (verse 8), "And it came to pass that the father of Publicus lay sick of
a fever and of a bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him."

This is a clear and satisfactory evidence, that the promise of the Lord was fulfilled in his servants and ministers; and that this laying on of hands as regards healing the sick, was attended with power, and was one part of the commission given by the Lord when he sent them forth to minister, and exhibits to us a DIVINELY-INSPIRED, MIRACLE-ENDOWED MINISTRY. Those men to whom the power of forgiving sins was entrusted, and of imparting and giving the Holy Ghost, were the men who could heal the sick, and restore the dead to life again. And it is therefore written in the BIBLE, that "GOD wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Acts xix.11. But let it be observed in what follows in this chapter, "when certain Jews took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of Sceva a Jew, chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leapt on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." And this was known to all, Jews and Greeks; and the consequence was, that "the
name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." The same thing is recorded of Peter (Acts v. 12), &c.

Upon looking at this evidence with the calmness and earnestness of a serious mind anxiously searching after truth, and taking this one part of apostolic power alone—as it regards laying on of hands and healing the sick—is it not natural to enquire, where are the SUCCESSORS OF THE APOSTLES? And with what body of men or church are these miraculous powers connected. This question however presents itself very forcibly, that is, if the Church of Rome—the Church of England—with their ministry and priesthood, or any other priesthood or ministry of any other sect, cannot by laying on of hands heal the sick, how can they satisfy our minds that they can by laying on of hands impart or bestow the Holy Ghost? I have shewn that the apostles did heal the sick, did cast out devils or unclean spirits, did raise the dead; and not only had the apostles these gifts, but I have also shewn that the Deacons as in the case of Stephen and Philip had the gifts of healing, &c., but the apostles alone had the power of laying on of hands that believers might receive the Holy Ghost. The deacons could do the lesser things but could not do the greater, the apostles could do all in common with the other members of the body; of which body the apostle thus writes, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues," 1 Cor. xii. 28. This is the order of the body incorporated together in the act of grace, under the authority and
command of God. Therefore Paul says, "ye (the
different members of this corporation) are the body of
Christ, and members in particular," 1 Cor. xii. 27.;
some having superior and others inferior powers or
gifts officially in the body.

It will be observed that the gift of healing is the
fifth downward from the apostles; and is in the com-
parison with the first or highest, so much inferior; so
that we may understand how a member of the body
could possess the inferior gift of healing, and not
possess the superior gift of the Holy Ghost. But
this rule by no means proves that a member of that
body having the superior gift, did not possess the
inferior also; indeed I have proved that this was the
fact. Then it does appear somewhat extraordinary
that any sect or professing religious denomination
should presume to reverse this order, and say that
they have the superior gift, while they do not pretend
even that they have the inferior. This is contrary to
the practice of Christ, it entirely reverses the order
of the Lord, for the lesser things are taken to demon-
strate the greater. Paul says, "the invisible things
of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being understood by the things that are made, even
his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are
without excuse," Rom. i. 20. In this passage the les-
sser or inferior things in creation, are brought forward
to demonstrate or establish the greater—the eternal
power and Godhead of the Creator. So also when
the Lord wished to give a proof to the scribes and
others of his power to forgive sins—which is the
greater or superior power—in what way does the Lord
do this; by the performance of a lesser or inferior act; and so it is written, “And behold they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. And behold certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think you evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.” Matt. ix, 2. In this case the Lord performed the lesser miracle, to convince the scribes that he had power to do the greater. And when the multitudes SAW the palsied man arise and depart to his own house, “they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.” Again, I repeat, that if we saw any body of men possessing this power of healing, which was an inferior gift in the apostolic body, we should be constrained to imagine that they had the superior gift of forgiving sins, and then when they laid hands upon sick persons that they would recover. I have heard that the Church of Rome retains the act of anointing, and that that church has professed to have the power of miracles. The Church of England does not, I believe, make the least pretension to this gift of healing, which gift or power I have shewn to have been possessed by deacons. I have heard of Mr. Irving and his party, and several who hold the millenarian opinions, who maintained that
these gifts did belong to the office of apostles, presbyters, or ministers, up to the present time: and they did seriously set about reviving them in the churches. Experiments were tried on the sick, attempts were made to speak with tongues, or unknown tongues, and for others to interpret; the orders of the twelve apostles were set up; and I confess that this appeared to be the right way to go to work, for had they succeeded by any means—by continued prayer, &c.—in the restoration of this inferior gift, there would have been more pretence for assuming the superior gifts, than by others who say they can forgive and absolve from sins and bestow the Holy Ghost on others, and yet make no pretensions to having the lesser or inferior gift of healing. But we still return back to our examination of the apostolic body, as instituted by Christ for "the work of the ministry." It is further stated, that they shall speak with NEW TONGUES.

I am, &c.

Amen.
LETTER VIII.

Mr. Editor,

They shall speak with NEW TONGUES. The apostles did so on the day of Pentecost—"they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with TONGUES as the Spirit gave them utterance," Acts ii. 4. And so it followed, that when Peter was at Cæsarea, and preached to Cornelius and his friends, Jesus Christ and the resurrection, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word: and they (that is the Jews) heard them speak with TONGUES, and magnify God," Acts x. 44, 46. The same thing occurred during the ministry of Paul: for Paul coming to Ephesus found certain disciples, and "he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's
baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." Acts xix. 2—7. In these several instances from the scriptures, we may clearly perceive what were the powers of the apostles—these servants of the most high God; and that this divinely-inspired ministry, this miracle-endowed ministry, did not make use of the form of laying on of their hands without power; but when God would have them perform this ministerial act, it was accompanied with power, not only, as I have already shown in healing the sick, but as the cases now produced prove, in imparting the gift of tongues, and thus fulfilling the promise of the Lord, "They shall speak with new tongues." "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following," and by this, showing his own meaning in the other promise, "lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world." Therefore, as long as the office continued, the power continued, for they were endued with power from on high; and when the power ceased, the office ceased, for with the office was connected all those things which the Lord promised, when the Lord told them, "I am with you alway, working with you, confirming your word with signs, even unto the end of the world;" that period terminated with the apostolic ministry, or it would
prove the Lord unfaithful to his promises. But, as it is not my intention in this stage of the investigation to enter upon the argument of this most interesting subject, but merely to give an outline of APOSTOLIC OFFICE, and to pencil on the ground of the picture some of the leading or prominent features of their official character, in order that we may form a judgment of any persons who say that they are their representatives or successors, enabling us thereby to discover the strong family likeness and resemblance; I shall at once forsake the disputable or argumentative part of the subject, and endeavour to sketch some other features of the beautiful original. At best, it will be only a copy by a very unskilful hand, it may turn out with all its faults to be at least a faithful one.

That which has given rise to this investigation is the pretension of some persons to Apostolic Succession. THE OXFORD PARTY lay claim to this Succession, and repudiate Protestantism—another section of the English Catholic Church lay claim to Apostolic Succession, but say that they are Protestants—the Romish Catholic Church claim Apostolic Succession to be with them, and unite with the Oxford party in repudiating Protestantism—The Dissenters heartily rejoice in the reformation from the Roman Catholic form of worship and discipline—in the protestation against its forms, and also in their forefathers who dissented from the requirements of the reformed English Catholic Church—but the Dissenters with the other sects, Romish-catholic, or English-catholic, lay claim to Apostolic Succession in part, because
they continue to observe the laying on of hands, and the perpetuation of a ministry or priesthood. Now, whether the priesthood be perpetuated under the names of pope or archbishop, bishops, priests, presbyters, pastors, ministers and deacons—it is a matter of small amount, they all put in their claim to a priesthood, and thereby necessarily to Apostolic Succession, in whole or in part; and all true christians are bound to examine which party has the fairest claim to this, and if there be Apostolic Succession, that party which can prove the fairest claim to it ought to absorb all the rest.

The term Succession ought to be defined. Its definition, according to the general construction of words and ideas, seems to be this:—A successor to an emperor, is an emperor; a successor to a king, is a king; a successor to an admiral of a fleet, is an admiral; a successor to a general of an army is a general; a successor to an overseer of the poor, is an overseer; a successor to a bishop, is a bishop; a successor to an apostle, presbyter, or deacon, is an apostle, presbyter, or deacon: therefore, when we think or write of apostolic succession, I take it that successors to the apostles must be apostles, both as to office and also as to power, communicating the Holy Ghost, for giving sins, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out devils, healing the sick, speaking with new tongues.

"The second part of confirmation is the prayer and benediction of the bishop, the successor of the apostles in this office."—Hammond on Fundamentals."
In the Catechism printed by the Oxford party is this question (No. 10), "From whom did the bishops receive such authority?" And the answer is—

"From the apostles, who having received authority from Christ, appointed the first bishops, and gave them authority to ordain others with the same powers; so that there should never be wanting a succession of rulers to rule the church of Christ (John xx. 21. Matt. xxviii. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 2. 2 Tim. iv. 5, 6)."

I have referred to this question and answer, to prove that I am not misrepresenting this party, nor others who contend for the priesthood and apostolic succession, that it is not a mere succeeding to office with diminished powers, but that there has been an unbroken succession of men from the days of the apostles, with full apostolic authority and power to rule the church of Christ.

The answer given in this tract is rather wary; the question is about bishops and from whom they receive their authority, the reply is from the apostles, who received their authority from Christ: by this might be intended Timothy and Titus, but not one word is said about them. Then it is said, that they (the bishops) were to ordain others with the same powers, but it is not quite clear what is intended by this, whether the same powers that Timothy and Titus had, or the same powers that the apostles had; this is left to be implied by the introduction of the name apostles; notwithstanding this caution the whole is grasped in another term, less obvious but equally extensive, "a succession of RULERS to rule the church of Christ." This word rulers is not one jot less than apostle: it is not
an inferior office, but is equally extensive with the enlarged powers and authority of the divinely-inspired and miracle-endowed ministry of God. It is in the first place applied to Christ by the prophet Zechariah, as priest and king: "Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH, he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both," Zech. vi. And when the wise men came to Jerusalem at the birth of Christ, the chief priests answered Herod's enquiry where Christ should be born, they said in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet. "And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel," Matt. ii. 6. Not only was Christ a Ruler, but his apostles were rulers also, not merely by implication, because they were sent forth by the Lord, but when our Lord addresses them, and warns them of his speedy coming, saying, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler of his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods," Matthew xxii; see also Luke xix. 12, 13. We see from this passage that the apostles were the rulers, and that the office of a ruler (which may be
interpreted, one to feed, to give the household meat in due season) was contemporaneous with apostolic office; and it almost seems implied in the Lord's repeated reference to his coming, that the disciples or rulers were to be so occupied till his coming, and that the Lord at his coming should find them so doing.

Seeing then that they were so appointed, we can the more readily understand Paul's exhortation to the Hebrews, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God," xiii. 7; "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you," verse 17. See where Paul gives this direction to Timothy, "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine," I Tim. v. 17.

By these references I have intended to shew that the apparently softer term ruler in the catechism of the Oxford party, is of the same extent and meaning as that of apostle. That the apostles were to watch over and rule or feed the church, until their Lord should come, is quite clear; and that it was right for believers to be exhorted to obey them that had the rule over them, who watched for their souls as those who were to give an account, is very obvious, and without entering into the discussion, I again repeat, if there be APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION and it can be proved, then this power or office exists, and there must be "A succession of rulers to rule the church of
Christ," and that this succession is co-extensive in authority and power with that of the apostles.

Having now, I hope, fairly determined this point, what is to be understood by the term succession? I will resume the enquiry as to the gift of tongues, which followed the laying on of hands by the apostles.

That this gift of tongues was possessed in the churches is clear, because the apostle gives special directions about the use or abuse of it, in his epistle to the Corinthians, in chap. xiii; he also declares that these gifts should cease, "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away; for we (apostles, &c.) know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." This is rather an important scripture: first, it declares that these gifts should end, terminate, fail, cease; secondly, it states when—when that which is perfect is come. Whatever is meant by this phrase, we are involved in one of two difficulties, either that which is perfect did come, and the gifts ceased, or if that which is perfect be not yet come, the gifts have not ceased or failed, and ought to be possessed by those who are the successors to the apostles, because it is quite clear that the apostle plainly declares that the gifts should fail, for his argument is, that charity (which means love) never faileth or ceaseth; he exhibits the durability of the one, and therefore its greater value, by contrasting it with that which was perishable. Again, some men
might say, but the gifts have ceased. Ergo, that which is perfect did come; and again, as there is no evidence of these miraculous gifts continuing after the days of the apostles, we safely infer that the time of their ceasing or failing, was when the spirit of prophecy ceased and failed, for the apostle lays stress on this—"WE know in part, and WE prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Now surely prophesying was one part, and the use of the pronoun WE in this passage, applies to the apostles in their official character. We the apostles see through a glass darkly; but then face to face, &c. Some men may therefore say, we have the evidence of our senses that these gifts have failed, therefore it follows necessarily, that that which is perfect did come at the end of the apostolic ministry and office. I say some men might so argue, and in this way get out of the two difficulties, in which this question is otherwise involved.

I cannot presume to occupy a greater space in your valuable paper this week, therefore I close for the present, and am,

Mr. Editor, your's &c.

Amen.
LETTER IX.

Mr. Editor,

Paul, addressing the church at Corinth, thus exhorts them—"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy;" and, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues," 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 39. It would seem from this chapter, that these believers at Corinth had abused the power they possessed in the gift of tongues, and that Paul was desirous of correcting this fault. It is supposed by many that prophesying in this chapter means nothing but speaking or preaching, "but he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort," ver. 3. It is not necessary to determine this matter for my present purpose, but I am inclined to believe that it embraced not only speaking and praying in an unknown tongue (as verses 14 and 15), and also foretelling future events, for Paul says, "Now, brethren, if
I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine,” verse 6. In this verse it is quite clear that by prophesying we must understand something distinct from mere speaking or preaching. And again, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion (tumult or unquietness), but of peace, as in all churches of the saints,” verses 29—33. These last verses, prove that they possessed the gift of prophesying according to the order in the body corporate—“God set some in the church; first apostles, secondarily Prophets.” Therefore Paul places these gifts in their proper order, when he says, “Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret,” verse 5; and again, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe,” verse 22. Could this mean preaching? If so, preaching or speaking serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. Our Lord told the Jews, “Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,” Matt. xxiii. 34. This then that the Lord promised, was fulfilled in the churches of the saints, and in
the year of Christ 59 this gift, or spirit of prophecy, was exercised for the benefit of believers—for confirming them in the faith, and for establishing them in the expectation they entertained, of the speedy coming of Christ in power and great glory. It is to this effect Paul writes to the Ephesians, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in (into) the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature (age) of the fulness of Christ," chap. iv. 7—13. In this passage we find a confirmation of Paul's statement to the church at Corinth. "Prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe"—"for the perfecting the saints—the work of the ministry—the edifying the body of Christ." Again, it limiteth this to a certain time: "TILL we all come into the state of the unity of the faith," &c.

Do we not clearly see from this, that the work of the ministry of the Lord needed these several gifts to be bestowed,—of prophets among the rest,—therefore are they found among the churches of the scriptures. This work of the ministry, implies that as long as the work was to be done, there must be persons to do the work, and these were MINISTERS, and they
were divinely-inspired and miracle-endowed men, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, who gave gifts unto men for the work of the ministry. If the work was to be done—and in order to do the work it was necessary that gifts should be given to men, the nature of which gifts is enumerated—the work has either been done, and the Lord withdrawn the ministry and the gifts, or else the work is still going on, and with the work the ministry, and with the ministry the gifts; inasmuch as the gifts while possessed in the churches, were manifest and visible, some as signs to unbelievers, and others serving for the edifying of the body of Christ or believers; or else the gifts no longer being exercised or visible in professing churches of any denomination, some men might say that the gifts being withdrawn, the ministry is withdrawn, and the work has been done; for it is expressly stated by Paul, that the work was to continue “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

This appears a simple, scriptural truth, that this form of government—this cabinet—these official characters—this body corporate—with the several members, apostles, prophets, &c., were instituted, appointed, incorporated by the royal charter of heaven to do the work of the ministry; and in order to perform the work of God, Christ gave them gifts, special privileges, and powers, for he hath said, “Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” It might be said more properly to be a
commission for special purposes, so that when the object of the commission should be accomplished and done, then the office of commissioners for that particular work should cease and terminate. Thus our government appointed a body of commissioners for the commutation of tithes; they entered upon their labours, they are pursuing them, but as soon as they have settled this matter of tithes throughout the kingdom, they will cease to be commissioners for commuting tithes; the work being done and finished, the continuance of the office is unnecessary.

The priesthood of all denominations will say, We quite agree with this proposition; but they will ask, Are we all come "to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?" This they say is not yet fulfilled, nor will it be while man is found upon the earth; nay, believers in Christ are not come to this state, and therefore the ministry must continue till the object of this commission has been accomplished, till the will of heaven has been done on earth, till the officers of the heavenly commission have nothing more to do. I readily admit that till this should come to pass, the work of the ministry, the office of ministers, should continue; but then the original powers granted to these commissioners for the due execution of the trust reposed in them must continue also, or else it might be said with regard to their corporate character, that they had lost their charter. Therefore it is that I look at the commission, and examine the powers of these said commissioners. If the work has not been
done, I look into the act, and I find that while the work was to go on to completion, that the crown of heaven gave to these commissioners GIFTS for the work, and these are set forth in the act. "Some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." And the nature of their work is defined, it was "for the perfecting the saints—for the work of the ministry—for the edifying the body of Christ." And there is a limitation fixed for the work, "Till we all come," &c. I say again, that the great state of the unity of the faith, &c., is come and established; therefore believers are come to it, and the commission has long since ceased: or, the work is not done, the commission is not ended, or has not ceased, because the state of the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God is not yet consummated.

I venture to leave persons to take their choice of these two positions; take which they like best. Let the ministers of any sect or party, the priesthood of any form or establishment, make choice of one or other of these two propositions, and then let us try by the standard of truth their claim to consistency.

The question will stand thus, If the state described by Paul by the unity of the faith, the perfect man, &c., did come at the end of the ministry of the apostles and God's priesthood, then the apostolic office and the whole order of the priesthood failed and ceased, and at the same time all the gifts peculiar to that priesthood failed and ceased, and Paul's prophecy was fulfilled in due order—"Whether there be prophesies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they
shall cease." The result of this proposition would be, that from the days of the apostles to the present, there has not been any priesthood or ministry.

The contrary to this will stand thus, If the state described by Paul by the unity of the faith, a perfect man, &c., be not yet come and established, then the entire order of officers in the fullest extent, with all the powers and gifts appertaining to that body, remain, and must remain, "TILL WE ALL COME in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." That is, there must be APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS, PASTORS, and TEACHERS able to cast out devils, to speak with new tongues, to take up serpents, and drink any deadly thing without hurt, to lay hands on the sick that they might recover, to lay hands on believers that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and to forgive sins; for the Lord hath said, These gifts and powers I bestow unto you in your ministry, and "Lo I am with you alway, unto the end of the world, working with you, and confirming your word with signs following:" and Paul says, that Christ gave these several gifts unto men, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry," &c. If there be APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION in whole or in part, or if the WORK OF THE MINISTRY be continued under any name, form, or denomination, give us the signs, let us have full proof of this ministry.

Some men might say there are no signs, no proof, no apostles, prophets, &c., for the work, therefore
there is no apostolic succession, no work of the ministry, no priesthood, no ministers, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. Nay, a man may argue thus, suppose a certain nobleman intended to build a splendid mansion that might endure for ages, he determines to spare no expense, he engages the most skilful men—architects, builders, artizans, &c., gives them a plan or model, and says, I have engaged you for this work, continue in the work to which I have chosen and appointed you, till it is completed. If the work should continue seven years or forty, while the work was going on the workmen would continue in the employ, but when the mansion was perfectly finished—the work completed—the workmen would cease their labours, and the nobleman would not appoint successors to them, for the noble mansion so erected with skill, adorned and beautified with all manner of riches and precious stones, would remain and stand forward the admiration of all succeeding ages.

It is time that I returned to the examination of this special gift of prophecy during the existence of the ministry of the apostles, &c., as I have examined the gift of tongues; but as I have trespassed sufficiently on your columns for this week, I must defer this subject to the next, and am,

Mr. Editor, your's, &c.

Amen.
LETTER X.

Mr. Editor,

The question to be answered is this.—Is there any proof in the scriptures of the gift of prophecy being exercised by any person during the ministry of the apostles? I think that I have furnished the most clear and satisfactory proof from the scriptures, that the church was to possess this gift amongst others, as long as the work of the ministry continued; but according to my plan in investigating this subject of THE MINISTRY and APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION, I think it not only necessary to shew this, but to prove by the recorded acts of the apostles and others, that this gift was exercised for a given time, and that the facts I shall produce, prove also that this term prophesy or prophesying does not mean, or at least is not restricted to teaching or preaching, but means foretelling future events.

It would be a waste of time to adduce cases from
the scriptures of the prophets under the first covenant, to illustrate the meaning of this word all through the Bible. See Deut. xviii. 15; John i. 45, vi. 14; Acts iii. 22.

It is stated generally (Acts xiii. 1) that “there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers,” thus simply and plainly distinguishing between a prophet and a teacher; besides, it will be observed, that others besides the apostles had this gift. There were in this church Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, besides Paul, &c. And “Judas and Silas being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them, and after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles,” Acts xv. 32. From this passage let us observe first, these were not apostles; secondly, that whatever is meant by confirming, this act required the gift of prophesy in order to perform it. Therefore to establish the general principle, I will produce one or two cases direct to the point. Paul laid his hands on twelve men, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied (Acts xix). It is recorded, that in those days “came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch, and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar,” Acts xi. 27. Again, Philip the Evangelist (which was one of the deacons of whom it is said that he was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among
the people, Acts vi. 8) had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy, and as Paul and his companions "tarried there (with Philip) many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the gentiles," Acts xxi. 9, 10, 11. Which came to pass on Paul's arrival at Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 33). It is quite manifest that the people were accustomed to these prophecies, or the prophets foretelling events which were to come, for when Agabus had foretold that which should befal Paul, they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. And Paul also was used to this spirit of prophecy being exercised in the churches, and believed the Holy Ghost speaking by Agabus, is clear from his answer to their entreaty, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Another thing seems clear, that this gift extended to different members of the church or body, and that it was enjoyed alike by men and women, according to the will of God, and appears a very simple, and beautiful, and literal fulfilment of the prophesy by Joel (ii. 28), to which Peter made reference, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Some persons may object and say Paul directly contradicts this, and
thus commands, "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, &c., and if any of them will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church," 1 Cor. xiv. 34. And in Paul's instructions to Timothy, he says, "Let the woman learn in silence with all submission. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man," 1 Tim. ii. 11. In these quotations there is not the slightest contradiction to the other parts of God's truth, they only go to confirm what I have before stated, that preaching and teaching are not prophesying; a woman was not to teach or preach in the churches—but a woman was to prophesy when the gift of prophecy came upon her, when the Lord poured out of his Spirit upon all flesh, and said your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. It was one thing for the women to ask their husbands at home if they would learn anything, and another thing for God to teach the women by his Spirit in order that they might prophesy; and when this was poured out upon a woman in those days, she would not have acted obediently to God, to have gone to her husband first for leave to prophesy, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." And Paul says again, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order," 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

I must entreat attention to this part of the subject to which I am arrived, with regard to the Ministry, &c. I take it that no candid reader will deny that I
have proved—first, that the Lord gave gifts unto men for the work of the ministry; secondly, that a certain order of men did so exercise these several gifts officially, as the ministers of God; thirdly, the purpose for which such gifts were exercised, was the peace of the churches, that all things might be done decently and in order. When then the church was to be put in order and regularity, Paul told the brethren to covet to prophesy, and that they were not to forbid to speak with tongues. It is not manifest that these gifts were requisite in order to rule and regulate the churches ministerially. Thus in his letter to the church of the Thessalonians, amongst other general instructions for the ORDER of that church, he says, "QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT, DESPISE NOT PROPHESYINGS," 1 Thess. v. No one can quench the Spirit, or despise prophesying, unless the gift of the Spirit and prophesying continue with ministers or apostles, and their successors: and again, the churches would not be ordered without them, and the conclusion seems inevitable: the ministry continues, or it does not. If it does, there must be prophets. If there be no prophets, then there is no ministry; if no ministry, then no priesthood, no apostolic succession, no bishops, presbyters, pastors or teachers for the work of the ministry. But it is answered, that Timothy and Titus form the link between the apostles, &c. and their successors; and that they—Timothy and Titus—being the first bishops, the first, bishop of Ephesus, the latter, bishop of Crete, were not divinely-inspired, miracle-endowed men; and therefore the present church, as by law established, is not a divinely-inspired, mira-
cle endowed church, but merely such as was constituted under Timothy and Titus, the first bishops. If this were universally admitted by Episcopalians, there would be an end of all disputes on this subject, and their usurped authority of forgiving sins, imparting the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, setting up a Priesthood, &c. on the ground of apostolic succession, could not be maintained by an appeal to our Lord's declaration to his apostles, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

This opinion will be investigated as the subject progresses, at present it will suffice to shew that Paul in his instructions to Timothy, says, "Neglect not the GIFT that is in thee, which was given thee by PROPHESY, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery," 1 Tim. iv. 14; and, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the GIFT OF GOD which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands," 2 Tim. i. 6. Every honest mind will ask, What gifts did Timothy receive from the presbytery, or Paul, by the laying on of hands. Were they less than those received by the seven deacons? What, a bishop to receive less power than a deacon? Stephen was enabled to do great wonders and miracles among the people, and the bishops of Ephesus and Crete nothing! In due time all this shall be examined. I have yet to do with the spirit of prophesy, as connected with the priesthood and ministry, and will therefore leave the advocates of an un-inspired, and un-miracle-
endowed church, and ministry, and priesthood, to this seemingly fatal refuge to which many seek for shelter in the approaching storm—when the weight of scriptural testimony is made to bear upon the outworks of their citadel.

It cannot be disproved, that all the gifts of the Lord were bestowed upon, and exercised by his servants; and that what the Lord said, with regard to being with them in the work of the ministry to the end of the world, is most entirely true, working with them unto the end. This the Lord illustrated by a parable, "And as they heard these things, he added, and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, OCCUPY TILL I COME," Luke xix. 11, 12, 13. That this parable means Christ and his apostles, is plain from a similar passage, "For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping," Mark xiii. 14. And that both these Evangelists mean Christ and his servants the apostles, is confirmed by Matthew, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh; for the
kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods,” &c. Matt. xxv. 13.

This parable, repeated by three Evangelists, with some trifling difference, represents the same great truths. It appears to have been occasioned by the disciples improperly expecting that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, and this was occasioned by the discourse of the Lord (Matt. xxiv, and Mark xiii.) concerning his coming. To correct this, the Lord points his disciples to himself as the nobleman, &c. going away and leaving his servants—the apostles—till his return. By the money and goods, authority and work, must be understood the power and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the true riches of his gospel kingdom, and the work of the ministry; and then the Lord says unto them, Occupy as my servants till I come, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter iv. 10); as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. iv. 1). Occupy all, continue officially and ministerially to minister the goods and money of my kingdom as the spiritual riches: as you have received the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers; as ye have received power from on high, go ye forth and preach, prophesy, raise the dead, speak with tongues, &c. for lo I am with you even to the end of the world. I have told you to occupy till I come; I have told you that I am with you to the end of the world; I have told you that these signs shall follow them that believe; I have told you that ye shall do greater works than ye saw me do; I have given you all my goods,
all my riches, all my estate or inheritance, all my authority and power: freely ye have received, therefore freely give. In our Lord's prayer, he says to the Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii. 18. And, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples," John xv. 8. In this parable of our Lord's to which I have referred, I take it for granted that no one will dispute that the principal circumstance set forth therein, is the COMING OF CHRIST; and until this event should come to pass, they—his servants and apostles—should continue in their occupation with power and authority. Luke states it thus, "OCCUPY TILL I COME;" Mark says, "Watch, for ye know not when the Master of the house COMETH;" Matthew, "Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the SON OF MAN COMETH." I think it will be admitted from this testimony, that they should not be called upon to give an account of their stewardship, until the Son of Man should so come; therefore it is written, "After a long time the Lord of those servants COMETH, and reckoneth with them," Matt. xxv. 19; and "It came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading," Luke xix. 15. That is what Paul meant, "Obey them that have
the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, AS THEY THAT MUST GIVE ACCOUNT,” Heb. xiii. 17. This also must be admitted, that at the coming of the Lord, these servants, ministers, apostles, &c. were to give up their official appointment or occupation; that is, their labours were to cease, because they would have finished the work of the ministry. Again it will be admitted, that our Lord's saying, “LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD,” and this saying, “OCCUPY TILL I COME,” must refer to the same event and period of time, and that which is meant in one passage is intended in the other, and the opinions founded on these passages will stand or fall together.

Some men may say, it is certain the end of the world is not yet come—the Lord has not yet come, therefore his servants continue in the occupation, and there is, and must be APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION till he come. Another man might say, but the Lord gave his servants authority and power—“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” He gave them the gifts of miracles to heal the sick, &c. Seeing then that the power is gone, it is strong evidence that the Lord has come, and dismissed his stewards; besides which, the gift of prophesy was to continue till the work of the ministry was finished: these things must stand or fall together.

If it can be proved from the scriptures, that the end of the world means the end of the Jewish age or dispensation, and the coming of Christ was at the time of the destruction of the city and temple of the
Jews, these conflicting opinions may be reconciled; and this, Mr. Editor, shall be my endeavour to do in the following letters, which by your kind indulgence I may be allowed to insert.

I am, Sir, your's &c.

Amen.
LETTER XI.

Mr. Editor,

I have endeavoured in examining the subject of the claim to apostolical succession, to explain, according to the testimony of the revelation of God, what was the nature and character of the apostles, what powers they possessed, and what evidence we possess of their exercising these powers in the churches. I sat out with this design, and having possibly, sufficiently exhibited these great and holy men in the supernatural garb in which they are clothed—with that Spirit of wisdom above the wisdom of the world, by which they were guided into all truth, and spake and wrote as the Spirit gave them utterance and directed; their authority and power were from heaven; they had the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of men. It is true the Lord had told them (not without deep concern and manifest affection for them),
"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Nevertheless they were spiritually to sustain the high and distinguished office of kings and priests, and so reign with Christ in the first resurrection. In the spirit of this triumph, they sang, "Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." They were indeed invested with power from above, and exercised this power with kingly authority, according to the appointment of Him who is styled Lord of lords and King of kings. Peter had enquired of the Lord, "What shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matt. xix. 28. And so the apostle John describes them in the vision the Lord shewed to him, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them," Rev. xx. 4. And thus Paul states their mission, "He that is spiritual, judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. ii. 15.

These offices of supremacy, kings and priests, denoted their power and authority as the messengers and angels of God; they were ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who should be heirs of salvation. Look at their recorded acts, and they all
exhibit the majesty of their office in proclaiming the law of heaven. Paul reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, although in chains, makes Felix tremble, and king Agrippa confess "Almost thou persuadest me to be a christian." There are recorded some manifestations of this power of judging as kings and priests of God, of so plain and unquestionable a nature, that we can neither doubt nor misunderstand them. Such is that of Peter, when Ananias with Sapphira his wife had kept back part of the price, "Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost;" in the case of the wife, Peter said unto her, "Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost." Acts v. This exhibits the power of the apostles judicially; they had the power of discerning or judging all things, yea, the deep things of God. They searched the heart, and tried the reins, and knew the secrets of man by the Spirit, pronounced the sentence, and carried it into execution; combining in their own person the judicial and kingly office. The case of Paul is similar, "Sergius Paulus the deputy of the country, called for Barnabas and Paul, and desired to hear the word of God; when a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, called Elymas, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost,
set his eyes on him, and said, Full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” Acts xiii. 7—11.

These cases prove the mightiness of the power and authority of these kings and priests; but it was more especially in their ministry that they so judged, and Paul could truly and properly say, “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,” Gal. i. 9. I have been tempted again, to draw this other picture of apostolic power, but the time would fail me to delineate all these mighty acts, I can at best only make a selection of a few more prominent and striking features from the magnificent original, before I proceed to shew the duration and termination of the signs and wonders which God wrought by the hands of his servants, in order to assist every one to test and prove the pretensions that are being put forth by the OXFORD PARTY in particular, and by many others, in some shape or other, to the right of APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION. The claim set up by some parties to apostolical succession through a certain order of men, in an unbroken line to the present time, ought not to be rejected without examination: the confirmation or rejection ought to result from the testimony of God in his revelation. It is deeply to
be lamented that the subject has scarcely ever excited the earnest enquiry of the believer, and very rarely been examined by a simple reference to the scriptures.

The Roman catholic church claim succession from the apostles to be with them. This they do very honestly without disguise, and therefore set up the office of St. Peter, claim the power of forgiving sins, healing the sick, and performing miracles, and perpetuating the priesthood.

They have been assailed, defamed, belied by protestants, and many passages of scripture not having the slightest reference to them, such as "THE MAN OF SIN;" "THE ANTICHRIST;" "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS," have been prostituted to the basest purposes of the priesthood of other denominations. The attempt to disprove their pretensions to apostolical succession by a reference to the revelation of God alone, has, for ought I know to the contrary, never been made. The protestant priesthood never durst attempt to refute them by an appeal to the scriptures, and the scriptures alone fairly quoted and applied; for that which disproved apostolical succession in the Roman catholic church, would have been equally fatal to all pretensions to apostolical succession in the English protestant church. Both claimants are in the same predicament—destitute of the authority, power, gifts of the apostles of the Lord—and each dreads the mirror of truth. The Oxford party see that the very name protestant is fatal to apostolic succession; they at once take a bold step, and renounce it. In the bosom
of the reformed protestant English church, they repudiate protestantism, and take the title of the English catholic church, upholding apostolic succession and the priesthood. They are not likely to commence a crusade against the Roman catholic church on the question of apostolic succession by a reference to the scriptures; like the other two claimants, they are destitute of the authority, power, gifts, of the apostles of the Lord, and dread the mirror of truth. That which would destroy the claims of one party, necessarily involves and destroys the pretensions of the others.

In what respect then do the presbyterians, the several denominations of dissenters, not excluding the Quakers and Wesleyans, differ from these Romish and English catholics as to these their claims? It is true that they do not lay claim to apostolic succession, but they do lay claim to the ministry and priesthood, and laying on of hands, ordination, and the direct operation and influence of the Holy Ghost, officially and ministerially; exclusively to exercise the power (most of them) of administering the ordinances of the gospel, and of preaching and teaching as pastors, according to the gift of Christ when he ascended up on high; and thus perpetuating THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, for which they can shew no more right or claim, than those who claim apostolic succession to the fullest extent: they are in the same predicament as the other claimants, being destitute of the authority, power, gifts, of the apostles and ministers of the Lord, and dread the mirror of truth.

Nor is it likely that any of these will use the
weapon of pure scripture truth against the Romish or English catholic church to prove them in error—for it is sharper than any two-edged sword—and while they might only intend to destroy the ivy of one system, the same blow would cut down the tree of their own, and both would perish together.

What indeed is the language of dissenters? We do not wish to see the protestant church of England injured, for it is "the very bulwark of dissenters." This is true, for while the one upholds a priesthood and ministry and perpetuates the work of the ministry, it is a sanction to the other to do the same; although differing in some slight degree as to form, the principle is the same, and it is quite as easy to believe that their is apostolic succession, as to believe that there are now evangelists, pastors, presbyters, deacons, and elders. Priesthood is ever priesthood in all its forms, shapes, and creeds.

Seeing then that I have undertaken to write these letters on account of the pretensions of the Oxford party recently put forth, it is the more needful that I endeavour occasionally to set myself right with all parties. In order to prove them in error I must take the Bible, and with the sword of the Spirit make the attack. In the onset I put this question, Who can prove the Oxford party wrong? Not the bishops and clergy of the popish protestant establishment of England, consistently with their order of prelaty, ritual, services, and traditions. Nor can the dissenters prove them wrong, for what is "presbyter" but "OLD PRIEST WRIT LARGE." And while the different sects oppose one another as to form,
creed, and ceremonies, they all agree that some parts of the PRIESTHOOD are continued and proper. Thus, "bit by bit the whole is swallowed."

Seeing then again that I include all ministers and priests of every sect—the church of Rome, the church of England, both the protestant and catholic sections of it, and every denomination of nonconformists or dissenters who uphold a ministry or priesthood, or the continuance of the work of the ministry either stated or occasional, it may be enquired what course do I intend to adopt. My answer is the same that I have adopted and pursued hitherto, a strict adherence to the scriptures and the testimony and revelation of God in his written word. I consider that I have clearly demonstrated that all the gifts of the Lord conferred on his servants in their official or ministerial character, were to remain and continue and be exercised for the edifying of the body of Christ, for the work of the ministry, UNTIL THE LORD SHOULD COME AGAIN, as the Lord said "OCCUPY TILL I COME." "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD."

These two phrases signifying the same period, one will be governed by the other. What then did the Lord say, regarding his coming or second appearing? It is scarcely necessary for me to say, that this appearing or coming of Christ, could have no reference to his first advent, when he appeared on earth in fashion as a man. The scripture speaks of the first and second coming or appearing of Christ, as "Now ONCE in the end of the world hath he appeared, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the SE-
COND time," Heb. xi. 26. Paul wrote this epistle, according to common consent, in the year of our Lord 61, and therefore directed the mind of the Hebrews to a future appearing, as "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise; for yet a LITTLE, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 36.

It is then the second coming or appearing of the Lord that is meant, and agrees with what the Lord told his apostles (Matt. xxiv). In addressing the Jews, he says, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Matt. xxiii. 38. After the Lord had spoken to the Jews of his coming, in the hearing of his disciples, they it is said departed from the temple, and the disciples pointed to the building of the temple, when the Lord told them there should not be left "one stone upon another that should not be thrown down. These things gave rise to the inquiry of the disciples as they sat upon the Mount of Olives, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy COMING? and of the end of the world? Or, as the question is put in Mark xiii, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Or, as the question is varied, "But when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" Luke xxi.

These questions stand thus—

When shall these things be? What shall be the
sign of thy coming? And (the sign) of the end of the world? The Lord gives a brief answer (verse 34) to the men of that age concerning these coincident events: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Or, as it is varied, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man COMING in his kingdom," Matt. xvi. 23.

For the present,

I am Mr. Editor, your's &c.

Amen.
Mr. Editor,

In my last letter, I referred to some of the sayings of Christ to his apostles, wherein he plainly told them of his coming, and connected this with the end of the world, and the destruction of the temple of the Jews at Jerusalem. All these events are inseparably connected and joined together, and no subject was more emphatically impressed upon the minds of the apostles.

It was the cordial with which their Lord and Master cheered the spirits of his servants, as he sent them forth to fight in the great battle—to conflict, to wrestle—with the spiritual wickedness in high places. On the one hand he told them, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." On the other hand he said, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I
said unto you, I go away, and COME AGAIN UNTO YOU. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father,” John xiv. 27.

The coming again of the Lord was to terminate their labours. The warfare would be accomplished. Their stewardship and their occupation ended. Therefore the Lord told them, “Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth COME. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when HE COMETH, shall find so doing,” Matt. xxii. 42.

These quotations not only go to prove, that the second appearing or coming of Christ, and the end of the world, and the destruction of the temple of the Jews, are inseparably connected as to their fulfilment; but also prove that at the same time the apostolic office was to cease, yea that all the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and all the gifts connected with these offices, for the perfecting the saints, for the work of the ministry by the faithful and wise servants whom their Lord had made rulers over his household, that all should terminate and cease—when their Lord should come—so that all these things are governed by this great event, and furnishes the only answer that can be given to the question. How do you prove that there is not apostolic succession? That there is now no priesthood, no rulers, bishops, priests, deacons, ministers, pastors or teachers? All these offices were to continue till the second appearing or coming of the Lord, and no longer. If then it can be shewn from the scriptures,
that this event did take place according to the predictions of Christ, and the uniform testimony of the apostles, that the end of the world meant the end of the Jewish age or dispensation, and that the coming of the Son of Man was at the time the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed; we overthrow at once all the structures of man’s devising, connected with the systems of priesthood, power, rule, authority, either under the name of successors to the apostles, or ministers and presbyters.

It is needful, therefore, that I should endeavour to shew what evidence Revelation affords as to the coming of the Son of Man, and also the time of this coming; for upon this event the whole question of apostolic succession and power rests: there is a succession or there is not, and this must be determined by the evidence afforded by the written word.

Before however I proceed to quote the authority of the scriptures on this subject, I may be allowed to shew how much the subject of the coming of Christ has occupied the attention of the ablest writers, both christian and infidel. Gibbon, in his ‘Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,’ brought forward this subject as an objection to christianity. “In the primitive church,” says the historian, “the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found to be agreeable to experience. It was universally believed that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles: the tradition of it,
was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood, in their literal sense, the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth. Yet the revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the language of prophecy and revelation. But as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment when the globe itself, and all the various race of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of the divine Judge.” The passages of scripture on which this historian founds his opinion are the following:—“Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come,” Matt. x. 23; “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom,” chap. xvi. 28; “They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,” chap. xxiv. 30; “When ye see these things come to pass, Know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled,” Luke xxii. 31, 32. Upon this subject, a writer in the ‘Theological Repository’ says, “We find it very evident that our Lord is recorded by his historians, Mathew, Mark, and Luke, to have declared, that his second coming was one of those events which would happen during the lives of some of his contemporaries. We find ourselves obliged to make this
concession, and let Mr. Gibbon make every advantage of it that he can." The Bishop of Llandaff, in his 'Apology for Christianity,' in answer to Mr. Gibbon, has said, "The apostles knew but in part; and concerning this particular point (to wit the coming of Christ to judge the world) Jesus himself had told them, just as he was about finally to leave them, that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

This is true before the death and ascension of Christ, but it is not true after these events had taken place, for Paul writing to the Thessalonians says to them, "But of the times and the seasons you have no need that I write unto you; for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, for when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief," 1 Thess. v. 1.

One of the questions put to the Lord by his disciples was this—What shall be the sign of the end of the world, or age? The answer which Christ gave is related thus, "When ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled, for such things must needs be; but THE END is not yet," Mark xiii. 7. Luke says, "When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass; but THE END is not immediately," Luke xxi. 9. Matthew relates it thus, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must
come to pass, but THE END is not yet," Matt. xxiv. 6. If the answer which our Lord has here given, as related by these several Evangelists, and particularly by Mark and Luke, has any relation to the questions of the apostles and his own prediction—THE END—so distinctly pointed out, and connected with wars and rumours of wars, and with wars and commotions; must, as it should appear, relate to THE END of the Jewish state: And if so, it is submitted to the judicious reader, to consider, whether it is not the same in signification, with the more full expression which is contained in the additional question recorded by Matthew—What shall be the sign of THE END of the world, or age?

In the prophecy of Ezekiel, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the language which is there adopted, so strongly resembles that which is made use of by the evangelical historians upon this subject, that it cannot fail to make a considerable impression upon the mind of the reader; especially, as it appears to relate to that very destruction predicted by our Lord. "Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, AN END, THE END is come upon the four corners of the land," Ezek. vii. 2. "Now is THE END come upon thee," verse 3. And at verse 6 the same language is again repeated, as if on purpose to make the strongest impression upon the mind: "AN END is come, THE END is come, it watcheth for thee, behold it is come." It seems impossible to doubt that THE END here mentioned by the prophet Ezekiel, with so particular an emphasis, and so closely adhered to by all the three evangelists, means THE END of
the Jews, as a nation. And it will not perhaps be thought very improbable, that when the disciples put the question—What shall be the sign of THE END of the world? that Jesus, in his answer to it, might have had this passage immediately in view. But however this be, there seems to be good reason for thinking that the phrase THE END of the world, signifies the end of the Jewish dispensation, or the destruction of Jerusalem; to which the prediction of our Lord most indisputably was confined. Dr. Lardner says, "Our blessed Lord speaking of the difficulties of these times, and the declensions of some of his followers, encourages faithfulness in strong terms. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure unto THE END shall be saved," Mark xiii. 13. "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess your souls," Luke xxi. 17. These gracious assurances were fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem. The difficulties which the followers of Jesus met with, were very great. And the love of many waxed cold, and some apostatized to Judaism, to avoid sufferings. Nevertheless they gained nothing by it. They joined themselves to the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation, and had part with them in the heavy calamities which befell them. But the faithful followers of Jesus, who were steady to their profession, and attended to his prediction concerning the coming calamities, and observed the signs of their near approach, escaped and obtained safety, with only the lesser
difficulties of a flight, which was necessary in the time of a general calamity."—Vol. 1, p. 26.

I am indebted to a work of N. Nisbett, A. M., published 1802, for some of the remarks in the latter part of this letter, which to save time I have not always distinguished as quotations, fearing to trespass too much upon your space.

I am, Mr. Editor, your’s &c.

Amen.
LETTER XIII.

Mr. Editor,

Apostolic succession is true, or it is not true. This subject is not idle and speculative, it is connected very closely with religion, and the religion of protestants, or I ought to say with the religion revealed in the scriptures—the religion of God. There is or there is not a standard of truth, I mean religious truth. If there be a standard, it is the Bible, that book is a record of God's dealings with his creatures; and in a country professedly christian, acknowledging the scriptures as the basis of christianity or real religion, I need not urge this point, that this holy book must or ought to be our only guide—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. iii. 16, So that whatever pretensions men may put forth as to religion, either as it regards doctrine, discipline, or
practice, we must go to the fountain head for direction and see whether these things be so or not.

It is perfectly useless to refer to human authority when we have divine. The opinions of men are fallible, whether they might have been denominated divines, or fathers, or commentators. God has given to us—even the meanest—his word, to be a light to our feet and a lantern to our paths, and I trust that the time is come when Christians will pay less attention to human authority and more attention to divine, that every opinion, and sect, and denomination, and doctrine, will be brought to the crucible of revelation, and tried as silver and gold is tried on the fire. This furnace of divine truth, is wisely adapted for purifying, so that all wood, hay, stubble, may be consumed, and that alone which is precious remain.

I might have multiplied authority upon authority, from mere human writers, in examining this subject of apostolical succession, as put forth by THE OXFORD PARTY in the nineteenth century; but of what avail would this have been? It would only have been opposing the opinions of one set of men against another, and thus have left the sincere and anxious enquirer at a loss to decide which was right: something like an ancient custom in this country, when the truth and justice of a man's cause was decided by an appeal to arms.

I have endeavoured to examine this pretension by the scriptures—the safest, the surest, the best, the only directory—believing this to be the proper standard, the only guide, respecting a subject that is primarily a religious one, although it may be regarded
by the *mere* politician a fearful engine of party or political power, to be used and directed against the liberties of the people. I take it that we are not to judge of a subject as to its truth or falsehood by its effects or consequences, and reject a *truth* because we apprehend certain consequences will result; but if we have the means of testing an original subject, it must stand or fall on its own merits irrespective of all consequences. The real question—the original subject—the genuine primary truth involved in this enquiry is a religious one, and there is no other mode of testing its truth or falsehood for our approval or disapproval, but by that assay of truth, the revelation that God has made to man.

If my political liberty were to be endangered by the truth of God as it regards religion, I must not as a religious or christian man seek to evade the truth for fear of my political privileges. If apostolical succession were of God, I am bound to obey God rather than men. But in order to try this question whether it be true or false, I must not try it by its effects or consequences civilly or politically, but I must try it religiously, and abide the consequences.

There can be no doubt that our civil and religious liberties are alike threatened and endangered by this question, and if it should be proved to have no foundation in the scriptures, then, not only religion, but civil and religious liberty would be benefited. But abstractly the question must be tested by the scriptures—whether apostolic succession be of God, or whether it be a pure invention of man.
for religious, civil, and political domination over the rights, privileges, and consciences of his fellow men.

In my last letter I endeavoured to show that all apostolic rule and power was to cease and determine at the *second appearing or coming* of the Lord, and that this event had occupied the attention of christians and infidels. I then gave a few quotations to justify this remark, and will now proceed to the only proof that we have upon this vital subject.

Peter says, in the year of our Lord 66, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Peter i. 16 James, in the year 60, writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, in the midst of their persecutions from their unbelieving brethren, and encourages them in the midst of the fiery trials which they had to endure for Christ's sake, in this manner—"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, behold the Judge standeth before the door," chap. v. 7. This is sufficient to show that all through the apostolic ministry, they were "looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God."

I have already directed attention to the question put by the disciples to their Lord "Tell us 'when' shall these things be? and what shall be the 'sign' of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Matt. xxiv. The matters then about which they so anxiously enquired, were the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, the coming of the Lord, and the end of the world (or age), and what should be the 'sign' of
these things—"But 'when' shall these things be, and what 'sign' will there be, when these things shall come to pass?" Luke xxii. That the Lord did not tell them the precise time when all these things should be fulfilled, that is within forty years, is accounted for by his declaration, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is." Matt. xiii. 32. But that the Lord would have them know the time of the fulfilment of these things 'by the signs' is manifest, therefore our mode of ascertaining when the coming of Christ, &c. should take place, must be by attending to the signs. If we can prove by the scriptures the signs fulfilled, we necessarily prove that the events connected with those signs are also fulfilled.

What then are the signs? They are enumerated by the Lord, who said, "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ: take heed that no man deceive you. Ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars; see that 'ye be not troubled:' for all these things must come to pass, but 'the end' is not yet. Nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, &c. But he that shall endure unto 'the end' the same shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 5—8.

I beg to remark, that all these were to be signs to the apostles; they were some of them at least to
witness these things, and to share in the calamities; and these things were to be to them, "the beginning of sorrows," and they were to be to them the signs of the approaching 'end'—the destruction of the temple, the coming of Christ, the 'end' of the world or age.

Another sign was this—"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and 'then' shall the 'end' come," verse 14.

If the scriptures afford us proof of the fulfilment of this event during the apostolic ministry, I take it that this will evidence the near approach of the end, or the things signified. Paul, in the year 60, testifies that the gospel had been preached in all the world; speaking of the gospel he puts this question, "But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound 'went into all the earth,' and their words 'unto the ends of the world,'" Rom. x. 18. Again, writing to the Colossians, and speaking of the word of truth, he says, "Which is come unto you, 'as in all the world,'" i. 6; "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which 'was preached to every creature which is under heaven;' whereof I Paul am made a minister," verse 23. This is, I presume, sufficient evidence from the word of truth of Paul's having lived to see this sign come to pass which the Lord had given. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and 'then shall the end come.'" Let it be borne in mind, that the 'end' applies to the question, 'When' shall these things be
—the sign of thy coming, and of the 'end' of the world.

Another sign is, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains," &c. Matt. xxiv. 15, 16; so also Mark xxii. 14. And varied thus by Luke, "And when 'ye' shall see 'Jerusalem compassed with armies,' then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains, &c. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled," xxi. 20, 21, 22.

This sign, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel—"In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate;" or, as it reads in the margin, "Upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolater:" ix. 27. that is according to Luke, when "Jerusalem was compassed with armies, then know that the desolation is nigh." This was fulfilled when Titus the Roman general besieged Jerusalem, surrounded its walls with his army, and finally planted the Roman eagle upon the battlements of the temple, for "upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolater." Then followed the destruction of this ancient city of the Jews, and the temple—not one stone left upon another that was not thrown down. And it is further declared, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall the
COMING OF THE SON BE. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the 'eagles' be gathered together."

These signs then in their entire accomplishment, predicated the 'coming of Christ,' and 'the end' of the world, or age—they are parallel and coincident events.

It may be said very fairly that there are other signs—signs in the sun, and moon, and in the stars—and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, &c. And when shall these be? Matthew says, "IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the 'sign' of the Son of Man," &c. chap. xxiv. 19. And Mark, "And 'then' shall they see the Son of Man COMING in the clouds, with great power and glory," chap. xiii. 26. See Luke, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh," chap. xxi. 27. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer 'is nigh:' so likewise ye, 'when ye shall see all these things, know that it (or He) is near,' at the doors. Verily I say unto you, THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS, TILL ALL THESE THINGS BE FUL-FILLED," Matt. xxiv. 32, 33, 34; Mark xiii. 24—30; Luke xvi. 27—32. 'There is this variation, "When ye see these things come to pass, 'know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.'"

I am, &c. Amen.
LETTER XIV.

Mr. Editor,

In reply to the pretensions of THE OXFORD PARTY respecting APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION, I have in my former letters again and again maintained from scripture evidence, that all apostolic rule, power, office, miracles, were to cease, determine, end, at the second appearing or coming of the Lord; and that this event was plainly made known to the followers of Christ, by the signs given to them, and his express declaration, that some of his apostles should not taste of death, till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is a favorite text with all parties, Dissenters as well as Catholics, Roman or Protestant, Bishops, Deans, and Precentors, to prove succession—apostolic and ministerial. But this passage goes only to prove 'the end' of the Jewish dispensation. I
have shewn that this passage must be taken in connection with "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord "working with them, and confirming the word with signs following,'" Mark xvi. This is the meaning of the Lord being 'with them' alway, even unto the end of the world. "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." This was the way that the Lord was with them, working with them, confirming the word with signs following, and this continued all through the apostolic ministry; as long as the office lasted the gifts continued, but when the gifts—speaking with tongues, working miracles, prophesying, &c.—ceased, it was a sure sign that the apostolic office ceased, and the result of this is that there never was any apostolic succession, and that the Lord is not now with any set of men, working with them, and confirming the word with signs following, according to the sense and meaning of that passage, "Lo, I am with you alway to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20, connected with Matt. xvi. 15—20. The apostle had a clear perception of this truth, I mean the total cessation of this office, its power and gifts, when he states this fact, "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies 'they shall fail;' whether there be tongues, 'they shall cease;' whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away," for we (apostles) know in part and we prophesy in part." 1 Cor.xiii. 8. In this it is clear and manifest
that he regarded the apostolic office as connected with the gifts, and their being able to know in part, and prophesy in part: that is, fill up the whole measure of prophesy, complete that spirit of prophesy which had been begun by the prophets of old, and possessing that knowledge respecting the fulfilling and accomplishing of all prophesy, at the time the Lord should come to take vengeance on his enemies, and appear for the salvation of his believing people: which events and their entire accomplishment, were to be known 'by the signs' which the Lord had so plainly given them of his coming, and of the end of the Jewish age, or dispensation, or world, when every prophecy should be fulfilled, not only the things foretold by the prophets before the first advent of Christ, but all those things foretold by the apostles: prophecies failing; tongues ceasing, knowledge vanishing away, and Paul's other prophesying fulfilled, such as "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry," Heb. x. 37. For Christ had told them in answer to their eager inquiry, "Tell us Lord 'when' shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" This is the Lord's answer: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, 'then' know that the desolation thereof is nigh; 'then' let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto, for these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled," Luke xxii.

This is the end. The end of what? Of all things
which are written; of all gifts, all prophecies, all tongues, and all apostolic office, for the apostles were the 'last.' As it is written, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles 'last,' as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," 1 Cor. iv. 9. There is a slight variation in reading this passage, which is not unimportant, and it will read thus: "For I think that God hath set forth us—the last apostles," &c. If persons object to the latter reading and prefer the former, let us see how apostolical succession will be maintained and proved by this scripture. "God hath set forth us the apostles 'last,' as it were appointed to death." In what way does Paul prove his assertion? He says, "for we are made a spectacle (or a theatre or exhibition) unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Now if they were the last appointed to this, where are their successors? To what were they appointed as apostles? Set forth last—or the last apostles appointed! Let us read and mark what was apostolic appointment; it may govern and guide us in our researches after their successors, or in testing the pretensions of any set of men who say that they are so. They were set forth as a spectacle, theatre, or exhibition to the world, to angels, and to men; as fools, weak, despised, hungry, thirsty, naked, buffeted, having no certain dwelling-place, labouring, working with their own hands, being reviled, persecuted, defamed, and made as the filth of the earth, the off-scouring of all things.

This was apostolic appointment; and connected outwardly with apostolic office. "In the world,"
said the Lord, "ye shall have tribulation, but in me peace." In reviewing the claims which are being put forth to successors of the apostles, we want to be satisfied of the resemblance. When several gentleman at Oxford, it may be of large property, or some gentleman who holds office as a Precentor, talks, or writes, or preaches upon this subject, and maintains that they are the successors of the apostles; we very naturally enquire, how a man with £2,000 per annum income as a Precentor, or the Oxford gentleman, can be in this deplorable situation to have no certain dwelling-place; in what way they are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, to men, and whether it be true of them, the professed successors to the apostles, that they are weak, despised, hungry, naked, thirsty, buffeted, and that they are compelled to labour, 'working with their own hands?' &c. This inquiry cannot in fairness be confined to gentlemen of large incomes, but must extend to every curate, methodist preacher and dissenter, whether they receive £50 a year or £15,000. It will be remembered, that in my former letters I have endeavoured to exhibit the lofty character of the apostles, the mighty gifts and powers they possessed, in healing the sick, casting out devils, laying on of hands, imparting the Holy Spirit, forgiving sins, &c. Now I have brought forward 'another picture' of these holy and heavenly messengers of mercy and peace: and while on the one hand these pretended successors, could give no proof of being their equals as to power, gifts, miracles, so neither can they on the other hand give evidence of following them in their deep privations.
and sufferings, for his body's sake, which is the church. But it is a little curious to see the eagerness with which they claim to be successors to the apostles, as to the priesthood, laying on of hands, ordaining, forgiving sins, &c.; but shake off the connection, when poverty, persecution, or working with their own hands, in order that they might not be burdensome to the people, is a part of apostolic succession.

I come now to a few remarks on that great and conclusive subject the 'second' coming of the Lord; trusting that it will be remembered that I have repeatedly stated, that if this event did not entirely take place and receive its accomplishment at the time the Jewish temple was destroyed at Jerusalem, and that this was the 'end of the world' spoken of by the Lord, then no man, nor any set of men, can disprove apostolic succession, for the Lord said occupy till I come. Therefore I have put the question, Who can prove the Oxford party wrong? Neither churchmen nor dissenters, unless they admit to the fullest extent the 'coming or appearing' of the Lord the 'second' time before all the twelve apostles ceased to live naturally. What then, it may be asked again, will prove them in error on this subject? The answer is, Nothing but the Bible in its genuine and simple interpretation. But I am free to confess that I have little hope of convincing the authors of the Oxford tracts, who deny 'that' holy revelation to be sufficient to instruct and teach us on this or any other religious subject. Observe what they have written—

"The argument of ultra-protestantism may be taken, and we may 'say' the 'Bible and nothing but
the Bible;" but this is an unthankful rejection of [tradition] another great gift, 'equally from God.' "—*Tract 71*, p. 8.

"Scripture and tradition taken together, are 'the joint rule of faith.' "—*Tract 78*, p. 2.

"The sacred volume 'was never intended, and is not adapted, to teach us our creed;' however certain it is that we can prove our creed from it, 'when we have been taught.' "—*Newman's History of the Arians*, p. 56.

In making these quotations from the Oxford writings, it will too plainly appear that the evidence which I have sought for, from the only unadulterated source of truth—the Bible—will, by the writers of such sentiments, be considered as no evidence at all; my path is plain and simple, upon the entrance is written, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness." Proceed we now to the subject. The Lord said, "So likewise ye, when ye see 'these things' come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke xxi. 31. It may be asked what is meant by "these things?" The answer must be, All the things of which Christ had been discoursing as he sat upon the mount of Olives with his disciples; in particular the destruction of the temple, the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the signs determining these events. What if there were no means of determining the meaning of the figurative expressions: the sun being darkened; the moon not giving her light; the stars falling from heaven; and the powers of the hea-
ven shaken; and the end of the world. What, I say, if it were difficult or impossible to explain these terms satisfactorily, surely it is enough for the believer to place against 'all these things' the solemn and repeated declaration of Christ, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass away till 'all these things be done.'" And 'when' ye see these things come to pass, "'then' shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory," Luke xxii. 26, 27. Matt. xxiv. 64. Mark xiv. 62. See also, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed 'when he shall come' in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some 'standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God,'" Luke ix. 26, 27. Thus when Christ had told Peter by what death he should glorify God, Peter seeing John following, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? what death shall he die to glorify God? "Jesus saith unto him, if I will that 'he tarry' till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me," John xxii. 18, 23. "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him he shall not die, but, if I will that he tarry 'till I come,' what is that to thee?" John lived the longest, he lived to the last time (1 John ii. 18), to the destruction of the city and temple, to the second coming of the Lord, and of the end of the world, or Jewish age or dispensation. Thus, "Lo, I am with you alway, unto the 'end of the world.'" Matt xxviii. 20.
John Locke translates this passage "unto the end of the age," and gives this note—"So I think it should be rendered 'and not contrary to grammar,' the end of the world. These words signify, in different places, different periods of time, as will be manifest by comparing these texts where they occur. Matt. xiii. 39, 40. xxiv. 3. 1 Cor. x. 11. Heb. ix. 26."

Having given sufficient evidence of the second appearing or coming of the Lord, and fixed the time to be at the ruin of the Jewish people, nationally, civilly, politically, and ecclesiastically, and that that was the end of the world according to the scriptures; I venture to state that it was also the end of the apostles' office, an end of the office of ministers, whether called apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, or bishops, priests, and deacons, elders, or presbyters; and also an end of all the gifts belonging to this holy order, and consequently an entire end of all priesthood, in office, power, and emolument, and a perfect barrier to apostolic succession, claimed by the Romish or English catholics, or any ministerial succession claimed by nonconformists of every name and grade. The kingdom of God in glory 'IS COME,' that all flesh may see the salvation of God, and every one that believeth may be saved.

I am, &c. your's truly,

AMEN.

THE END.
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