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TWO LETTERS

WRITTEN

BY THE LATE BARON PIGOTT

AFTER

Taking his place among "Brethren."

"HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH."

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 25, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1875.

THE latter of these letters was the last from the hand of the late lamented Sir G. Pigott, Baron of the Exchequer, and allowed to be copied by him, though not written for publication ; the former was written but a few days before : both, one may say, from his death-bed. Reasons known to many make their appearance in print desirable ; many more will read with interest (and may it be with profit !) what came from such a man at such a time.

SHERFIELD HILL, BASINGSTOKE,

17th April, 1875.

MY DEAR ———,

Since you saw me, it has pleased the Lord to let me suffer by a fall from my horse, which has had the effect of laying me on my back in bed for the last fortnight! But though thus laid up in body, I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity for reading most of the works you so kindly sent me, and in thoroughly investigating and considering the subject of church-worship.

I have for a very long while been a dissenter from the English Church liturgy, and have rebelled at the propriety of forms of prayer being prescribed for mixed congregations, to be used under all circumstances and by all ages.

I have also long ceased to find either spirit or comfort in using them. This drove me, five years ago, to a very liberal Baptist chapel in ———, where ——— presides. But there, though form is absent, because the prayers are extempore, the worship of spirit could not be present; inasmuch as the whole body have to be silent throughout, and the minister alone, whether in the mood or not, must frame the prayer for all. Still I have thought this church to approach as nearly to a correct standard as any *beau-ideal* that could be imagined, and I saw no way of improving upon it.

Just before I saw you here, however, my son had called my attention to the three chapters in Paul's

Epistles, Ephes. iv. and 1 Cor. xii. xiv. (which you know so well), together with the various passages in the Acts relating to the assembling together of the Apostles and early Christians to break bread. A careful consideration of the above was an excellent preparation for your Lectures on "Christian Worship" and "Christian Ministry,"* &c. In thanking you for the copies sent me, I have much more pleasure in thanking you for writing them. They are, in my judgment, unanswerable, and have convinced me that the one president over a congregation assembled for worship is a human institution.

I had broken bread at ——'s humble room for the first time the very day before my fall from my horse; so that if my changed views had been the result of anything but well and long considered convictions, there would have been room for superstition! How great is the privilege of that light which a real knowledge of God's truth opens to us!

I have long enjoyed the study of God's word, and the peace and joy it affords to faith. But I had a want; and it was more communion with Christ in public worship. I think this is now supplied; and to such writings as yours I mainly owe it under God's grace.

As soon as I am able, we hope to return to London; and that I may have an early opportunity of a further personal acquaintance with you is the wish of, my dear ——,

Yours very sincerely,

G. PIGOTT.

To ——, Esq.

* By W. Kelly.—W. H. BROOM, 25, Paternoster Square. E.C.

SHERFIELD HILL,

[23rd] April, 1875.

DEAR ———,

I have had put into my hands a sermon published [? printed] by you "for private circulation only," but preached at ———, on ———, 1875. I have read it and re-read it; and the question I have asked myself is, "Ought I to lay it down without commentary or not?"

The subject is one of vital interest; and it seems to me that your errors of doctrine in the teachings of Scripture lie at the very root, and therefore should be pointed out to you. In order, however, that you may see *what can be said* on the other side, I send you two little papers,* which are only a summary of much more elaborate and deeply spiritual writings, but which embody views that you have probably not made your study. They are occupying thousands of thoughtful and religious minds at this time (who are not schismatics), and they are destined (I believe) to be acknowledged by all as unanswerable.

Your sermon singularly confounds "the Church" with the English Church, and argues that the English Form of Church Government was instituted by Christ, and all others by men. You construe Matt. xvi. 18

* "Is the Anglican Establishment a Church of God?" "Who is a Priest, and what is a Pr.est?"—W. H. BROOM, 25, Paternoster Square. E.C.

to mean Peter as *the Rock*, as though Christ had said, "And upon that rock;" but His words were, "Upon *this* rock." The theme they were upon gives the meaning, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" *I.* It was Christ's own character and work that were under discussion. Peter's name does not signify a "Rock," but a *Stone*. (John i. 42.) Your view is the Pope's, and is the title of the Church of Rome; which is proved in a thousand ways to be a false church, though there are, no doubt, true believers in it.

You say further that Bishops, *Priests*, and Deacons are instituted by the Apostles: can you refer me to your authority for saying this of Priests? As to bishops (or elders), I refer you to the papers I have sent enclosed; and see Acts xx.: verses 17 and 28 clearly state the duties of elders (or presbyters or bishops). This office was essentially different from an English Bishop, or the Bishops of early Christian times (as see Waddington's *History of the Church*). But you say in your sermon also, that the Apostles were the first Bishops. What authority have you for such a statement? I am interested to know if you have any.

You next jump to the conclusion of an authorised Apostolical *succession* by the short argument and in the few words; viz., "And so on, on and on for these 1800 years, the chain has been unbroken." This is also another Roman Catholic doctrine. No one tells us who was the immediate successor of Peter or the second link in the chain; nor is it shown that there was ever a delegation of successorship.

Passing from the question of officers of the Church, I come to the most serious point of your sermon, which seems to me a plain heresy, and that is where you teach that the Church is a field* of tares and wheat, of false and true members. Your text is, "Christ is the Head of the Church." The Church is therefore *His body*; and would it not be strange if His body can either now or ever be made up of what is false? The idea of being simply baptized into the body of Christ, and then of being able to separate ourselves from it, seems to be a confusion of ideas for which Scripture has no warrant whatever.

Your corollary is, that if we separate from the English Church (by you called "the Church"), there is no other to which we can belong; so that not to belong to the English Church is not to belong to Christ at all. With such views I do not wonder that your notion of church membership is of paramount importance; and because I think your views quite erroneous and unscriptural, and likely to lead you into uncharitableness, I have written you, in all good feeling and friendliness, these few observations from my bed.

In one thing I quite agree with you, and that is, there is no warrant in Scripture for people choosing their own ministers. But my view is, that the Holy Ghost alone can make a minister or teacher, and so the Bible everywhere says.

If you desired it, I should be very glad to send you the works from which (with the perusal of Scrip-

* ["The field is the world" (Matt. xiii. 38), *not* the Church.]

ture) I have arrived at these views. They are not speculative or merely theoretical writings, but entirely built upon the plain meaning of the Acts and Epistles.

One other error I should like to glance at; you share it in common with all who are uninformed on the subject, and that is as to the position of Brethren (called contemptuously "Plymouth"). You suppose them to be a sect, dissenters, and schismatics! Do you know what they profess? It is that they are members of the body of Christ; and they gladly receive any one who has a like faith. They believe that the whole Bible is the word of God. Such a profession can hardly designate a sect.

I have written a long letter, but I deem the subject of eternal interest. Of course personal feeling can have no place in such a matter.

Yours very truly,

G. PIGOTT.

To the Rev. _____

