The particular, the general, the universal reason for the
suspense of faith, we have now successively set forth. It
remains only, in conclusion, to look at the form in
which we may hope that faith will rally and go on. And
this brings us face to face, at last, with what we have
been secretly envisaging all the time, the Church question,
which is the real question of the earnest, religious thought
of the time, and agitates itself and us, under all sorts of dis-
guises. Many, indeed, are striving with all their might, to
prove that there is no such question; that we have got by
it; that it is treason to the nineteenth century, to human-
ity, and to the future, to allow any reality in it; that only
priest-craft and quackery give it a seeming importance for
their own ends; that the world is going on well enough
upon its present tack, and wants only more of what it has
already got so much. But these encouraging skeptics cry
Peace, peace, when there is no peace. The Church ques-
tion is a real question in all Protestant countries—most so
in Germany, in England, in America;—and it must be met
and discussed with a courage which it does not yet find out-
side of the innermost circles of confidential scholarship, and
the private communion of hungering hearts.

Who does not see that the fatal misgiving at the bottom
of the mind of Protestantism is this—Have the external insti-
tutions of religion any authority but expediency? Do they
stand for and represent any thing but one portion of the
human race educating another portion of the human race,
which, in the last analysis, is self-culture? And if they stand
only for self-culture, on what other basis do they stand than
schools and colleges? None whatever, the logical mind
will answer, except that they are religious schools and col-
leges. Make your ordinary schools and colleges, your
family education, religious, and you may dispense with the
Church, which has no basis but expediency, and is founded
wholly in man's wit. Accordingly, it is a very common
and spreading feeling, that our religious institutions are ap-
proaching their natural term of existence. I know, by per-
sonal conference with some of the most living minds of Italy
and Germany, that patriotism is fast getting to be the only
religion of the upper classes, and while their ritual is music
and revolution, their immortality is to die for fatherland.
And why not, if religion means only human development

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and self-perfection? What furnishes these, is the highest interest of society and man; and if the school does it better than the Church, the school ought to, and will, supersede the Church, as, indeed, it already occasionally has done in what are thought to be very advanced neighborhoods of this country. But the Protestant of a less uncompromising kind, may reply, You overlook the fact that Christianity is a positive revelation of truth and duty, and that the Church, having to embody this revelation, has an excuse and a reason, nay, a necessity for existing. But suppose he is asked, Has not this revelation emptied its contents into human reason, into history and civilization, until the Gospel of Christ is so mixed with the moral and spiritual life of society, that philosophy and practical wisdom, nay, that Society itself, is wiser than the Church? What special or exclusive custody of the Gospel given to the world has the Church? and if we have the Gospel, what want we of the Church? I know no answer to this question, if the Gospel mean only or chiefly what it now passes for with most noble spirits, a mere revelation of truth. It is more. It is a gift of life, or communication of power, which is continuous, its force and virtue always residing in its living fountain, making the Church, through which it is given, not a mere reservoir that may be emptied, but a permanent conduit, or channel, through which flows down the eternal river of God. But is the Church, in fact, such a channel, supposing even that the fountain be alive and flowing, that God be really immanent, communicating a force not merely in but to our souls through His Gospel and by His Son? Is not society itself now, in its total organization, the vehicle through which the consciousness of God, opened by Christ,
reveals itself to, and nourishes and makes divine, the life and heart of man? In short, is not that invisible Church, which, without noise of hammer or saw, secretly builds itself up in the spiritual life of humanity, far more real, life-giving, and sustaining, than the visible Church, which the extant religious institutions of Christendom claim to be? The query is plausible; and is proposed by noble men among us. But has it only an affirmative answer? Far be it from me to deny that the Holy Spirit, to an extent seldom appreciated, that God himself, to a degree infinitely beyond any ordinary or possible recognition, that Christ, in these latter ages; in an immeasurable sum, is the secret life of humanity. Were there not a vast deal more of God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost in the world than the world knows of, or thinks for, we should go to ruin swiftly indeed. But I am persuaded that we have, as social and terrestrial beings living in definite historical relations, a great deal more of obligation to the visible than to the invisible Church. The invisible Church takes due care of itself and of us; the visible Church is committed to our hands. I do not say that the visible is as important as the invisible, or as great in its influence, but only that it is our charge, because, of the two, it alone is within our voluntary reach. Moreover, I am convinced, that, in accordance with the whole analogies of Providence, every radically important relationship of humanity is, and must be, embodied in an external institution; the relation of the exclusive affections in the family, the social relations in society, the political in the state, the religious in the Church.

I am well enough aware that the εκκλησία of the Scriptures is the collection or congregation of the κλητος, the
called. But it is only an illustration of the common rule governing our humanity in all things, that the collection or calling together of human beings in any one of their radical relationships, or about any one of their essential needs or aspirations, develops at once something which none of the individual parties could have predicted or anticipated, or in himself possessed—a pre-ordained consequent of relationship—a "tertium quid," which is very different from any of the elements of which it is composed. Thus Man is a domestic, a social, a political, an ecclesiastical being; but it is absurd to say that any individual man is this, each one of these things, the family, society, the State, the Church, being impossible to an isolated being, and even inconceivable until it has been experienced as the fruit of a community of life. There is a Church in humanity, as there is a family state, a social state, and a political state—a Church which has always been developed, and has been the principal source of the religious life of humanity. Christianity takes advantage of a previously existent institution, which was not simply Jewish, but human, when she pours her life through the Church. This is the reason why Christ established his Church, but not the Church; and why so little of the thought and inspiration of our Lord is used to re-construct an institution already organized, through which his spirit was to flow; but that spirit was no less shut up in an institution and an organization than is the family, differing by various shades and usages as that does, but always tending to its pure and holy type of strict monogamy; or than the State is, or than society is.

Would that I could develop here, at a time so forgetful

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and reckless of the dependence of society on organization, the doctrine of institutions, the only instruments, except literature and the blood, by which the riches of ages, the experience and wisdom of humanity, are handed down; institutions the only constant and adequate teachers of the masses, and which are to the average mind all that honor, conscience and intellect are to exceptional men and women. But I forbear.

Christianity, nothing until an institution, seized the Church as the pre-established channel and organ of her influence and transmission, the conduit of her living water, the vehicle of her Holy Spirit; she put her own external marks upon it, as well as her own interior life into it, and has at length made the Church to mean her Church, as the Bible has come to mean her sacred books. All sacred books predicted the Bible, which has summed them up, and dismissed them from duty; and the Church in the wilderness predicted the Church in Christian civilization which should publish the eternal Word. Thus the Church is neither new nor old, neither fixed nor transitional; it is simply living, and, therefore, like the family and the State, is costumed and uncostumed, is cold, is warm, is recognized, is unrecognized, is Roman, Greek, English, American, but always the Church, the organic, external vehicle of God's Word and the Holy Spirit to aggregate or congregate humanity. The individual can join the Church only in his capacity of a member of the human race. It is his humanity, or oneness with and dependence upon his race, that makes him eligible to Church membership, as it is his relationship to his kind that alone makes the bond of the
family, of society, or of the State, and existence in them, possible to him.

The common consciousness of God, which is the Gospel, none partake who wilfully cut themselves off from the body of Christ. It is therefore a fact (and anybody may see it who reads the recent letter to his congregation of the gifted heresiarch of this neighborhood, the ultimor of Protestant negations) that hostility to the Church is fatal to the memory of the spirit of Christ once possessed, much more to the attainment of it; that the union of the Holy one is lost even by those unconscious of their misfortune, in this only possible form of concision.

In his individual capacity as an inorganic, unrelated, independent being, a man has not, and cannot have, the affections, internal experiences and dispositions, or the powers and blessings, which he can and may, and will receive in his corporate capacity—in either or any of the great departments of his Humanity, the family, the state, the Church. Nor is there any complete and satisfactory, perhaps no real way, to come into this corporate capacity, except through a publicly recognized and legitimate organization, whether domestic, political or religious. "The powers that be are ordained of God";—the laws governing the family order, are, in each country for the time, divinely empowered, to shield what society did not make and cannot unmake; and the Historical Church for the time being, and the place in which it organizes the Word of God, and institutes the channel of divine grace, is a divine institution, connection with which, is the normal, not the only, condition of salvation. I am not to be driven from this ground by arguments drawn from the number and variety of churches,
or the profitless character of many of them, or their often imperfect and miserable administration; any more than the unhappy marriages, or the wretched laws applicable to them, should drive me from my reverence for the family, as a divine institution and order. I recognize the fact that in all Christian countries the main channel of the religious life of the people is an external organization. I know that the whole Gospel cannot be taught to individuals as individuals. I believe that the Holy Spirit communicates with Humanity, and not with private persons. God speaks to men, individual men, through their consciences; but the Holy Spirit is God coming into the world through his Word, a living word, but still a word, a spoken, taught, published word, which is neither communicated to individuals, nor from individuals, but from the Church to Humanity. This doctrine does not deny open relations between individual men and their Maker; does not deny spiritual influences to private souls; but it denies that the Holy Ghost is to be confounded with these private whispers, or that the religious life of the world is mainly due to these independent and inorganic suggestions.

"No prophecy is of any private interpretation." That view of Christianity which makes it the magnificent out-birth of a great private individual, the Galilean peasant, saint, philosopher, and seer; or of the Gospel which makes it a business between one private man, namely, one's-self, and another private man, Jesus Christ; or of religion which, leaving out the bond which is the Church, makes it a matter between a man and his God; or of the Church which establishes it fundamentally in the personal experience and worth of every good man, is a view false to the constitution
of humanity, the conditions of man's historic existence and
development, a profound psychological, or a wide practical
analysis—false to the wants, experiences, instincts, and in-
imaginations of men. It is the cause and consequence, the
consequence and cause, of the disintegrating ideas and
usages which are now creating the injurious and unsatis-
factory aspects of our Christian civilization—and as such, I
have now, in conscious infirmity, and with an appalling
sense of crudity and blindness, excusable only because the
age is crude and groping, attempted to set forth the prin-
cipal grounds of it.

What, then, have we to do, waiting on God's help, to re-
animate the Church, but heartily to recognize the existing
religious institutions of Christendom as the chosen channel
through which the divine Word is seeking to descend into
Humanity and the world? Do you ask whether, upon the
theory that the Church contains the power of God, and is a
channel of influences independent of human will, we have
any ability to increase or diminish its contribution? or wheth-
er our recognition of its presence and working can touch its
efficacy? I reply, that whatever else we know not, we may
safely assume to know this, that no view of God's agency,
or Christ's, or the Holy Ghost's, which sets aside human
responsibility, or ignores human will, or makes the action
of any of them independent of the mental, moral, and spir-
ital organization of humanity, which they are aiming to
bless and save, can be a sound or true view. You might
as well attempt to disconnect the freedom of the arm that
moves the organ barrel from the previously arranged teeth,
and springs, and pipes of the organ itself, or the freedom of
the stream from the configuration of the banks that make the
river, as disconnect man's freedom and responsibility from God's freedom and help. A revelation comes only to a being made to receive and capable of receiving revelations; the Holy Ghost comes only to a being made to receive and capable of receiving the Holy Ghost; the Church exists, and is designed for a being fitted to receive spiritual life and salvation through a Church, and his fitness lies in his having faculties and powers corresponding to, not in any degree identical with, the faculties and powers of the Being who makes revelations, sends the Holy Spirit, and animates the Church. The seed has relations to the sun, and it must germinate in the dark, and press up to the surface, before it can receive the direct beams of its God. There are faculties in man that must lay hold on God, as there are powers in God that will lay hold on man; the initiation is to be taken now by one, now by the other—but any theory of the Church, or of the Holy Spirit, which violates, paralyzes, or in any way disparages the activity and responsibility of man's own will in seeking God, is false to human nature and to God.

Meanwhile, the Church, as a divine and specific institution, having the stewardship of the Holy Ghost and the dispensation of the Word of God, is to be maintained and upheld in its external form as a separate and distinct, a precious and indispensable interest of humanity. All the tendencies to merge it in other interests and organizations, to break down the barriers that define its sphere, to extinguish the lineaments of its supernatural origin and superhuman functions, to secularize (I do not say to liberalize) its sacred day, to empty its rites and forms of mystic significance, to rationalize its teachings, are to be resisted. The
Church is to be content with its religious function and office. It is not the source and vehicle of the general culture of society; it is not the guide and critic of science, and art, and social progress. These precious interests have other protectors and inspirers. Let science and philosophy, the schools and the journals, the critics and the social reformers, fulfil their own high and important tasks. The Church would be blind to her own interests, not to rejoice in, and to bless their exertions, and to pray for their success. But she has her own peculiar and precious work to do, her own sacred department to fill, which cannot be administered with the highest success in commixture or in partnership with other important offices. States of society may arise in which all institutions, organizations, and offices are temporarily confounded, compelled to interchange functions and functionaries;—as, in a fire, or a shipwreck, or a wilderness, age, sex, grade, decorum, order, and usage, are necessarily and usefully forgotten and superseded. But as nobody can desire to return to that semi-barbaric condition in which our American pioneers lived, when one and the same room served as hall, kitchen, parlor, and bed-chamber for the household and its guests—although, no doubt, that compact and versatile style of housekeeping had its charm and its disciplinary influences—so we are not wise nor considerate of the laws and wants of our nature, when we seek to level its great partitions, and to confound the professions and institutions auxiliary to them. It was a great convenience in our early New England life to have what was called a meeting-house, to serve as church, town-hall, concert-room, and exchange, in which, perhaps, a fire-engine shed stood at one corner, a gun-room at another, and a hearse-house at
a third; and it may have been economical, at a later era, to occupy the cellars of our city churches for storage of spirits and molasses; but nobody who has considered the law of association can regard such a state of things as one to be cherished, however it might be tolerated.

That alleged superiority to prejudices which would dance in a church, or worship in a theatre, play cards on a Sunday, or end the ball with a benediction, preach and pray in the striped costume of a harlequin, or invite a promiscuous company in the midst of jollity to unite in prayer—is a coarse trampling upon the delicate perceptions of fitness, a rude obliteration of the nicer distinctions of human feeling—which, if carried out, would end in barbarizing humanity. The author of "The Roman Question" wittily complains of the Pontifical rule, that under it "one sole, identical caste possesses the right of administering both sacraments and provinces, of confirming little boys and the judgments of the lower courts, of despatching parting souls and captain's commissions." The transcendental philosophy which generalizes away all diverse concretes into monotonous abstractions, and delights in making the secular and the sacred, the right and the wrong, the grave and the gay, the male and the female, the world and the church, the human and the divine, the natural and the supernatural, one and the same, pursues the exact reverse of the order of creation, which is a steady multiplication of distinctions, a growth of diversity, an ascent from roots into branches, twigs, flowers, and fruits. The alleged simplification of our modern medico-philosophic theology, is a simplicity like that which might unite and conduce family life, by dismissing the servants and burying the children.
Let the Church feel that it has a sphere quite as important as it can fill, in maintaining the worshipful and God-fearing affections—in supplying the purely religious wants of the people. I would have it undertake less, in order to do more; it would exert a larger influence in the end by confining its work to the illumination of the spiritual interior, the communication of the Holy Ghost.

If we imagine this to be a short, a vague, a monotonous work, it is only because we have not considered that the communication of the contents of revelation, the supply of the Holy Spirit, and the publishing of the Word, the conversion, regeneration, and sanctifying of the souls of men, involves the perpetual reproduction of Christ's life, precepts, history, and spirit. I know how degenerate a sense of Christianity, the so-called advanced feeling about the Gospel is. The words of the Bible pass for the Word of God, which that Bible is; the words of Jesus, for Jesus himself, the Word that came down from heaven. But God's Word, is God's power, God's wisdom, God's love made known in the great language of natural and supernatural events. God talks in creation, in history, in revelation. Nations are his alphabet, epochs his syllables, humanity his discourse. The Bible is God's Word, because it is the record of his dealings with nations and ages—the religious and priestly nations and ages. More especially, and in the most pregnant and peculiar sense, Christ is the Word of God; not what he said, but what he was and did and suffered, and thus showed and taught; and his words and promises and precepts are only part and parcel of his life and death, his resurrection, and perpetual epiphany in the Church. Christ must be formed in
us, the hope of glory. God speaks peculiarly and savingly to every soul in whom he makes Christ live. And the work of the Church is so to speak to the world, in the ordination of great historic incidents; so to preach by emphasizing the commemorative days, and illuminating the holy symbols—and pausing on the successive events which made the doctrines of Christianity—as gradually to thunder into the deaf ear of humanity the saving lesson of the Gospel.

No lecture-room can do this; no preaching-man can do this; no thin, ghostly individualism or meagre congregationalism can do this. It calls for the organic, instituted, ritualized, impersonal, steady, patient work of the Church—which, taking infancy into its arms, shall baptize it, not as a family custom, but a Church sacrament; which shall speak to the growing children by imaginative symbols and holy festivals—and not merely by Sunday-school lessons and strawberry-feasts; which shall confirm them and take them into the more immediate bosom of the Church as they attain adult years, and are about to step beyond the threshold of domestic life; which shall make both marriage and burial, rites of the immediate altar—and give back to the communion-service the mystic sanctity which two centuries has been successfully striving to dispel, without gaining by this rationality any thing except the prospect of its extinction. A new Catholic Church—a Church in which the needed but painful experience of Protestantism shall have taught us how to maintain a dignified, symbolic, and mystic church-organization without the aid of the State, or the authority of the Pope—their support being now supplied by the clamorous wants of our starved
imaginations and suppressed devotional instincts—this is the demand of the weary, unchurched humanity of our era. How to remove the various obstacles, how to inaugurate the various steps to it—is probably more than any man's wisdom is adequate to direct just now. But to articulate, or even to try to articulate the dumb wants of the religious times, is at least one step to it. It is a cry for help, which God will hear, and will answer by some new word from the Holy Ghost, when humanity is able and willing to bear it.